

Community Development Committee

Meeting date: May 18, 2020

Subject: Regional Parks System Additions Project: Process Update

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, Chapter 3: System Plan, Chapter 4: Siting and Acquisition Policy

Staff Prepared/Presented: Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst (651-602-1361); Emmett Mullin, Regional Parks Unit Manager (651-602-1360); Jessica Lee, Senior Planner (651-602-1621)

Division/Department: Community Development / Regional Planning

Proposed Action

None; information and discussion only.

Background

Minnesota Statutes 473.147, subd. 1 directs the Metropolitan Council (Council) to plan for the Regional Parks System. The updated *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* (RPPP) commits the Council to convene a region-wide discussion about system additions in 2019, which began in October last year. Council staff is in the process of engaging Regional Park Implementing Agencies, the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission and the Community Development Committee in this effort.

Council staff provided an update on the system additions project to the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission at its meetings in December 2019, and March, April, and May 2020. Council staff provided an update on the project to the Community Development Committee in April. Input from the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission and Community Development Committee is critical to the system additions process.

At the April Community Development Committee meeting, Council Members expressed an interest in the project's framing in statute and the RPPP, as well as the vision for the regional parks system. At the May Community Development Committee meeting, Council staff will begin their presentation on system additions with this information. In the coming months, the Council will consider Implementing Agency proposals to add regional recreational resources to the Regional Parks System based on criteria set forth in Chapter 4 of the RPPP.

At the May 7 Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting, Council staff proposed a process for how Implementing Agencies will present a summary of their proposals to the Commission in June. Council staff also outlined other important steps in the project timeline (Figure 1). In addition, Council staff shared draft language on bridging facilities (Attachment 1) and boundary adjustments (Attachment 2) and sought the Commission's feedback and advice on the proposed language. Council staff will share similar information with the Community Development Committee at the May 18 meeting, including the statutory and policy framing referenced above, to prepare the Committee for future consideration of regional park system addition proposals.

The results of the system additions process, including the proposed language additions, will be added to the RPPP during the amendment that is scheduled for the second half of 2020.

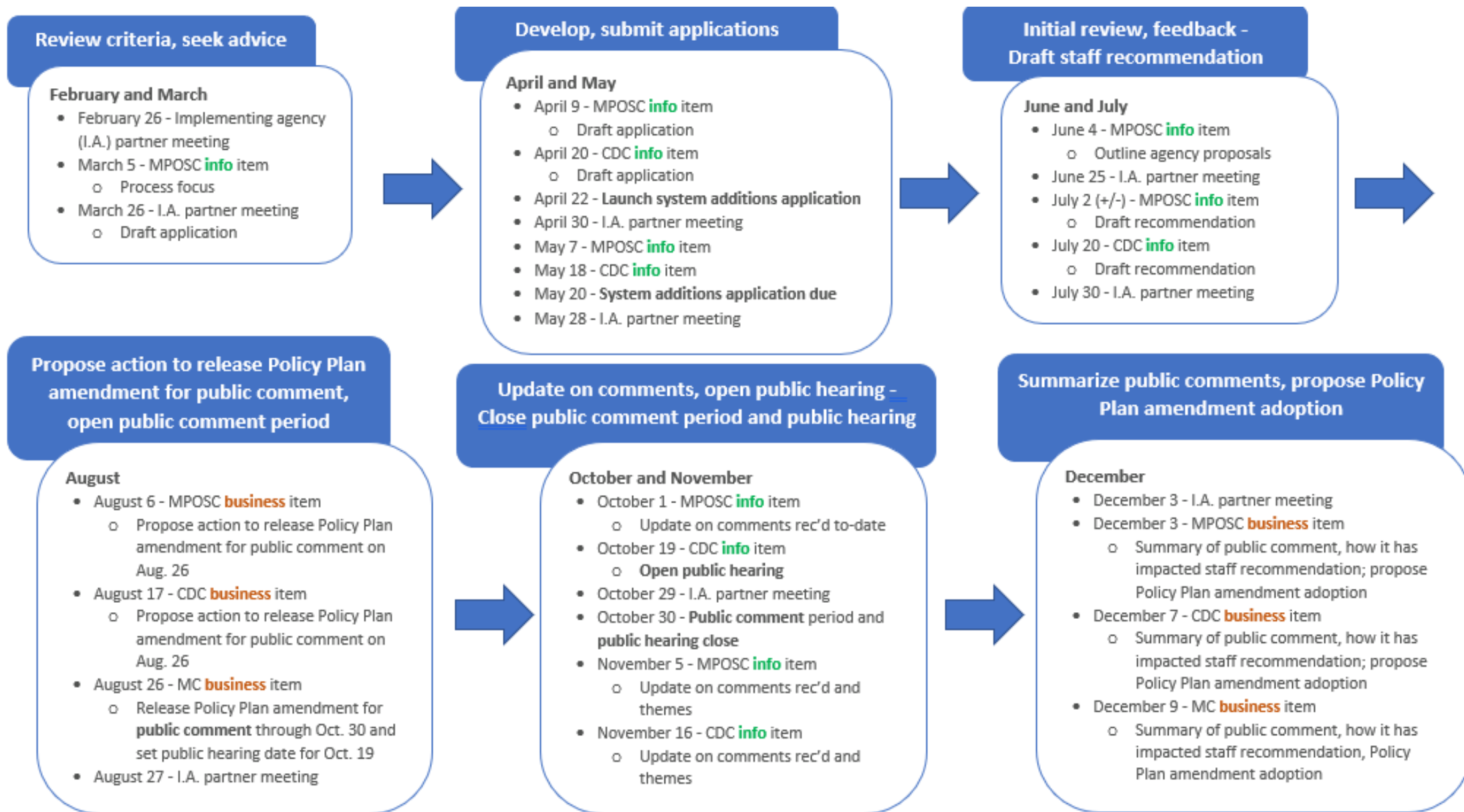
Thrive Lens Analysis

The System Additions project will advance Stewardship, Equity, and Livability. Stewardship advances the Council's mission of orderly and economical development by responsibly managing the region's natural and financial resources, and making strategic investments in our region's future. Additions to the Regional Park System that protect natural resources, adapt to changing conditions, and serve future residents advance this outcome.

Equity connects all residents to opportunity and creates viable housing, transportation, and recreation options for people of all races, ethnicities, incomes, and abilities so that all communities share the opportunities and challenges of growth and change. System additions that consider the context of geography and demographics have the potential to positively impact a variety of underrepresented groups. Bridging facilities are an area of particular interest in advancing the Equity outcome.

Livability focuses on quality of life and experiences in our region, and how places and infrastructure create and enhance the quality of life that makes the Twin Cities metro area a great place to live. System additions that create more opportunities for residents to recreate in the regional park system also improve the quality of life for the region's residents.

Figure 1: Regional Park System Additions Project Timeline



Bridging Facilities, DRAFT language

Proposal: Amend Chapter Four, Siting and Acquisition, Strategy 5: Special Recreation Features

Current 2018 Regional Parks Policy Plan language (including proposed changes)

Bridging facilities are specialized or single-purpose special recreation features that are intended to attract and introduce new outdoor recreation users to ~~the regional parks System~~ and trails. As of ~~2018~~2020, there are no existing or planned bridging facilities in the Regional Parks System. ~~As such,~~ ~~†~~This may be is an area for innovation, creativity and partnership for the Council, regional park implementing agencies, and community members. Bridging facilities are designed to ~~may offer an opportunity to~~ prototype new ideas that advance equitable usage, ~~of the system by~~ focusing on underserved groups in the Regional Parks System.

Proposed Language Addition for 2020 Regional Parks Policy Plan Update

Goal: Bridging facilities introduce and link new regional park visitors and trail users across race, ethnicity, national origin, income, ability, age, and other pertinent characteristics. These facilities engage people with the wide array of opportunities that exist across the Regional Parks System, through innovative strategies and partnerships.

Purpose of Bridging Facilities

Bridging facilities are different from local parks and community centers because their purpose is implicitly tied to introducing new visitors across race, ethnicity, national origin, income, ability, age, and other pertinent characteristics to the Regional Parks System through intentional and dynamic strategies. Bridging facilities have a clear and unique purpose. They are sited close to their target audience, which include historically underserved communities.

Bridging facilities are not designed as a one-size-fits-all approach. Their purpose is to help to address inequities that exist in our region. These inequities may include lower participation rates from some communities. Bridging facilities will also encourage greater participation by the future stewards of our region's natural and recreation resources, young adults, teenagers, and children.

As a special recreation feature, bridging facilities require a Council approved master plan, whether it is part of a stand-alone single purpose facility or as part of an existing regional park, park reserve, special recreation feature, or trail.

The intent behind the Metropolitan Council's direction to establish bridging facilities is to address inequities in the regional parks system. The following criteria will be used to evaluate bridging facility proposals for the Regional Parks System.

Bridging facilities will:

- Provide a clear statement of purpose for what it is intended to accomplish, consistent with the above defined purpose, recognizing that these facilities will differ within and across agencies, and must evolve and change over time, in order to stay relevant and effective.
- Identify the population to be served and the inequity that will be addressed.
- Site the facility close to the desired population.
- Include a plan for an awareness-building or marketing component, to promote regional parks and trails to new users.
- Include programming as an essential component of the design, such as outdoor skill-building or natural resources stewardship education. It may include active and/or passive programming approaches.

- Provide a programming plan through park agency staff or through a partnership arrangement.
- Not be included in the annual Regional Parks System use estimate. If designed to meet their purpose of attracting new users and connecting them to regional parks and trails, a facility's success will be reflected in increased visitation in future annual regional park and trail use estimates.

Bridging facilities may:

- Be a stand-alone facility, located in an area not currently well-served by existing regional parks, park reserves, and trails. "Stand-alone" bridging facilities that exist outside of a regional park, park reserve, special recreation feature, or trail, are eligible for Regional Parks System funding, as permitted through the appropriate state laws and statutes.
- Be nested within an existing regional park, park reserve, special recreation feature, or trail, welcoming new users to the unit and then connecting them with the opportunities that the broader facility provides.
- Have a mobile element, to allow outreach to extend beyond the existing boundaries of the Regional Parks System, going into communities that have been historically underserved. Mobile bridging programming will need to articulate, track and report their results.

Minor Boundary Adjustments for the Regional Park System, DRAFT language

Proposal: Amend Chapter Five, Planning and Policy Requirement, Strategy 1: Master plan requirements (insert after Page 84. Amending Master Plan)

In some cases, a regional park implementing agency has an opportunity to add, modify, or remove small land holdings from a unit's Council approved master plan (regional park, park reserve, trail, or special recreation feature). Changes may be needed for a variety of reasons. For example, the regional park implementing agency may better understand the land needed to implement the master plan vision, a previously unwilling land owner may become ready to sell property adjacent to the unit, land may be donated to the agency, or the inholding may be better suited to be managed by another public or private entity.

Boundary adjustments are normally handled through the Regional Parks Systems Addition *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* Amendment Process that occurs on an approximately four-year cycle. There are instances when opportunities arise off cycle. In these instances, a minor boundary adjustment to a Council approved master plan may be considered. Minor boundary adjustment proposals are considered through the master plan or acquisition master plan review process.

Minor boundary adjustments are additions or removals of small acreages of land to an existing Council-approved master plan boundary. The following criteria will be used to evaluate minor boundary adjustment proposals as part of the master plan amendment and acquisition master plan amendment processes.

Minor boundary adjustment proposal will:

1. Describe the purpose for the change and the extenuating circumstances.
2. Demonstrate the proposal's consistency with the general siting and acquisition criteria, located in the tables 4-1 and 4-2 on page 66 of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, and other applicable strategies in Chapter Four.
3. Be no greater than 20 acres in size.
4. Describe and map the boundary adjustment and identify the parcel(s).
5. Be contiguous to an existing Council-approved master plan boundary.

Minor boundary adjustments will be considered concurrent with a master plan amendment or acquisition master plan amendment. Once Council staff determines that a request for a boundary adjustment meets the above criteria, they will present the request to the Metropolitan Council for review and approval. If the Council approves the boundary adjustment, then the new parcel will be eligible for the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund (PAOF) program, if all Council requirements are complete.

If the above criteria are not met, then the boundary adjustment may only be considered through the Regional Parks Systems Addition process as part of a *Regional Parks Policy Plan* Amendment Process