Square Lake Special Recreation Feature Master Plan
Washington County

May 17, 2021
Community Development Committee
Square Lake Special Recreation Feature
Partner and Public Engagement

Technical Advisory Team
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Metropolitan Council
- Washington Conservation District
- Washington County Park and Open Space Commission
- Carnelian-Marine St. Croix Watershed District
- May Township
- Square lake Homeowners Association
- Square Lake Film and Music Festival

Engagement Tools
- Project website
- County newsletter
- Online engagement events
- Targeted stakeholder outreach
- Listening sessions and site visits with underserved populations

Public Engagement Outcomes
- Protecting and enhancing water quality and clarity is a key priority
- Significant demand for improving non-motorized watercraft site amenities and programming
- Preservation of natural, scenic setting is desired
- Improvements are needed to better connect and access upper and lower areas of the park
- Crowding at the beach and high use of the lake impacts the park user experience
- People are interested in visiting the park more in non-summer months
Equity Analysis

Project Data
• Focus on engaging existing and potential park users with a 30-minute travel shed
• Disparities in Washington County park visitation included age, household income, educational attainment, and physical or mental ability
• Plan recognizes the impacts that past decisions have had on present-day inequitable outcomes

Public Engagement and Participation
• Provide information in multiple ways with an emphasis on trying to make it easy and accessible for people to participate
• Supplemented engagement strategies with additional outreach
• 17 of 23 plan recommendations directly address input received by underserved populations

Evaluation Summary
• Targeted engagement led to a better and more inclusive master plan
• Washington County was able to create relationships and built trust with community stakeholders
• Underserved groups were followed up with as the final draft plan was out for public comment
• Washington County will continue to engage the community on plan implementation
Boundaries and Acquisition

- Two locations have been identified for potential acquisition
- Sites identified for their ability to address project goals, criteria for Square Lake’s inclusion in the regional park system
- Golden Acres RV and Picnic Area
  - 9.5 acres immediately south of existing park
- Wilder Property Parcel
  - 55 acres on northwest shore of Square Lake
Development Concept

- Enhance park’s infrastructure to address stormwater runoff while enhancing park’s ecological qualities
- Propose non-motorized watercraft launch and rental opportunities
- Also propose small group picnic shelter, fishing pier improvements, and expanded shoreline fishing amenities
- Renovate and expand beach building with ADA upgrades, access to facility from parking lots
- Restore shoreline
- Develop additional trails to provide more accessible connections, fitness loop
Natural Resources

• Protecting the water quality of Square Lake is critical
• Upland areas of the park are dominated by mixed woodlands, planted pine stands and oak savanna
• Field surveys noted opportunities for oak savanna restoration, pine grove management, prairie restoration, shoreline restoration, and invasive species control
• An adaptive management approach is recommended
Estimated Project Costs

• The Plan estimates:
  – $1,760,804 in acquisition costs
  – $8,696,116 in development and infrastructure costs
  – $543,200 in natural resource management costs
  – $2,711,434 in contingencies

• Total estimated costs are $13,711,554

• Approval of master plan does not commit the Council to any funding at this time
Rationale for Proposed Action

• The Square Lake Special Recreation Feature Master Plan is consistent with the requirements of the:
  – 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan
  • Planning Strategy 1
  – Other Council policies
Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve Washington County’s Square Lake Special Recreation Feature Master Plan
Thank you

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