

## Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission Report

For the Community Development Committee meeting of September 7, 2021

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of September 22, 2021

**Subject:** Mississippi River Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment and Land Conversion and Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park Acquisition Master Plan Amendment, Anoka County, Review File No. 50042-2

### Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Mississippi River Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment.
2. Approve the Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park Acquisition Master Plan Amendment.
3. Approve the release of the restrictive covenant on 0.33 acres of land within the Mississippi River Regional Trail in exchange for adding 0.33 acres of land with a restrictive covenant to expand the boundary of the Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park.
4. Require Anoka County, prior to initiating any new development of the regional trail corridor, to send preliminary plans to the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager.

### Summary of Committee Discussion/Questions

Tracey Kinney, Senior Planner, presented the staff report to the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission at its meeting on September 2, 2021. Karen Blaska, Park Planner for Anoka County Parks, was in attendance and responded to questions.

Commissioner Dillenburg asked about the different property valuations of the removal and replacement lands. Kinney responded that the statements of value were based off of standard 2020 tax assessments. Blaska responded that the valuation did not fully consider the natural resources of the two parcels. The removal land was valued higher due to the parcel's road access, whereas the replacement land's shoreline and restoration potential is of higher value to the County and the Regional Parks System. Blaska added that the City of Minneapolis will be naturalizing and restoring the replacement property. Chair Yarusso stated that the added restoration investment is an even better benefit to the system that is over and beyond the land valuation.

Commissioner Peichel appreciates that the replacement land will be restored.

Chair Yarusso appreciates that this land conversion was a land for land exchange.

The Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission voted unanimously to approve the proposed actions.

## Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Committee

Meeting date: September 2, 2021

For the Community Development Committee meeting of September 7, 2021

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of September 22, 2021

**Subject:** Mississippi River Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment and Land Conversion and Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park Acquisition Master Plan Amendment, Anoka County, Review File No. 50042-2

**MPOSC District, Member:** District A, Monica Dillenburg

**Council District, Member:** District 2, Reva Chamblis

**Policy/Legal Reference:** Minn. Stat. § 473.313; *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*: Chapter 6, System Protection, Strategy 2 Conversions; Chapter 5, Planning Policy Strategy 1, Master Plans; and Chapter 4, Siting and Acquisition

**Staff Prepared/Presented:** Tracey Kinney, Senior Planner (651-602-1029)

**Division/Department:** Community Development/ Regional Planning

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4. Require Anoka County, prior to initiating any new development of the regional trail corridor, to send preliminary plans to the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager.

### Background

Anoka County's Mississippi River Regional Trail and the Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park are located within the northeast part of the Regional Park System (Figure 1). The amendments are located in the City of Fridley in the southern part of Anoka County and the southern segment of the Mississippi River Regional Trail (Figures 2 and 3).

The Mississippi River Regional Trail is located within the Mississippi National River Recreation Area and Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area. The 24-mile trail follows the Mississippi River from the southernmost Anoka County border to the Sherburne County border. The trail has a 1994 master plan and a 2007 master plan amendment.

Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park is located in the City of Fridley just off of Interstate 694 and East River Road. The Park consists of approximately 140-acres split between two areas connected by the Mississippi River Regional Trail. The southern part of the park is named Riverfront and is 74-acres. The northern part of the park is

named Islands of Peace and is 66 acres. The Park has master plans from 1975 and 1980 as well as a master plan amendment in 2014.

The focus of these two amendments includes selling 0.3 acres of trail corridor land to the City of Minneapolis for expansion of the adjacent Minneapolis Water Works water treatment and distribution facility in exchange for adding 0.3 acres of riverfront land expanding the southern boundary of the Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park (Figure 4).

### **Rationale**

The Mississippi River Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment and Land Conversion and Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park Acquisition Master Plan Amendment is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* (RPPP) including Chapter 6, System Protection, Strategy 2 Conversions; Chapter 5, Planning Policy Strategy 1, Master Plans; and Chapter 4, Siting and Acquisition.

### **Thrive Lens Analysis**

The Mississippi River Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment and Land Conversion and Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park Acquisition Master Plan Amendment advances the Thrive outcome of stewardship by investing in additional Mississippi River shoreland for natural resource restoration. The amendment also advances the Thrive outcome of prosperity by removing redundant land important for expansion of the City of Minneapolis' water treatment and distribution facility.

### **Funding**

The 0.3 acres of regional trail land identified for removal was acquired with Metropolitan Council funds. When Metropolitan Council funds are used, an agreement and restrictive covenant is recorded on the purchased property that provides a higher level of protection to ensure regional recreational open space use in perpetuity. Approval of this amendment would remove the Council agreement and restrictive covenant on the identified land allowing Anoka County to sell the land to the City of Minneapolis.

Removing land from the Regional Parks System requires an equally valuable exchange and an equal level of protection; therefore, the 0.3 acres of land added to Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park will include a restrictive covenant.

The 2021 assessed value of the removal land is \$36,900 and the replacement land is \$33,500. The removal and replacement land were exchanged between Anoka County and the City of Minneapolis at no cost under a cooperative effort.

### **Known Support / Opposition**

The Anoka County Board of Commissioners approved a Resolution of Support (2021-46) for submission of this Master Plan Amendment to the Metropolitan Council in April of 2021 (Attachment 1).

Figure 1: Mississippi River Regional Trail and Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park (Anoka County) location in the Regional Parks System

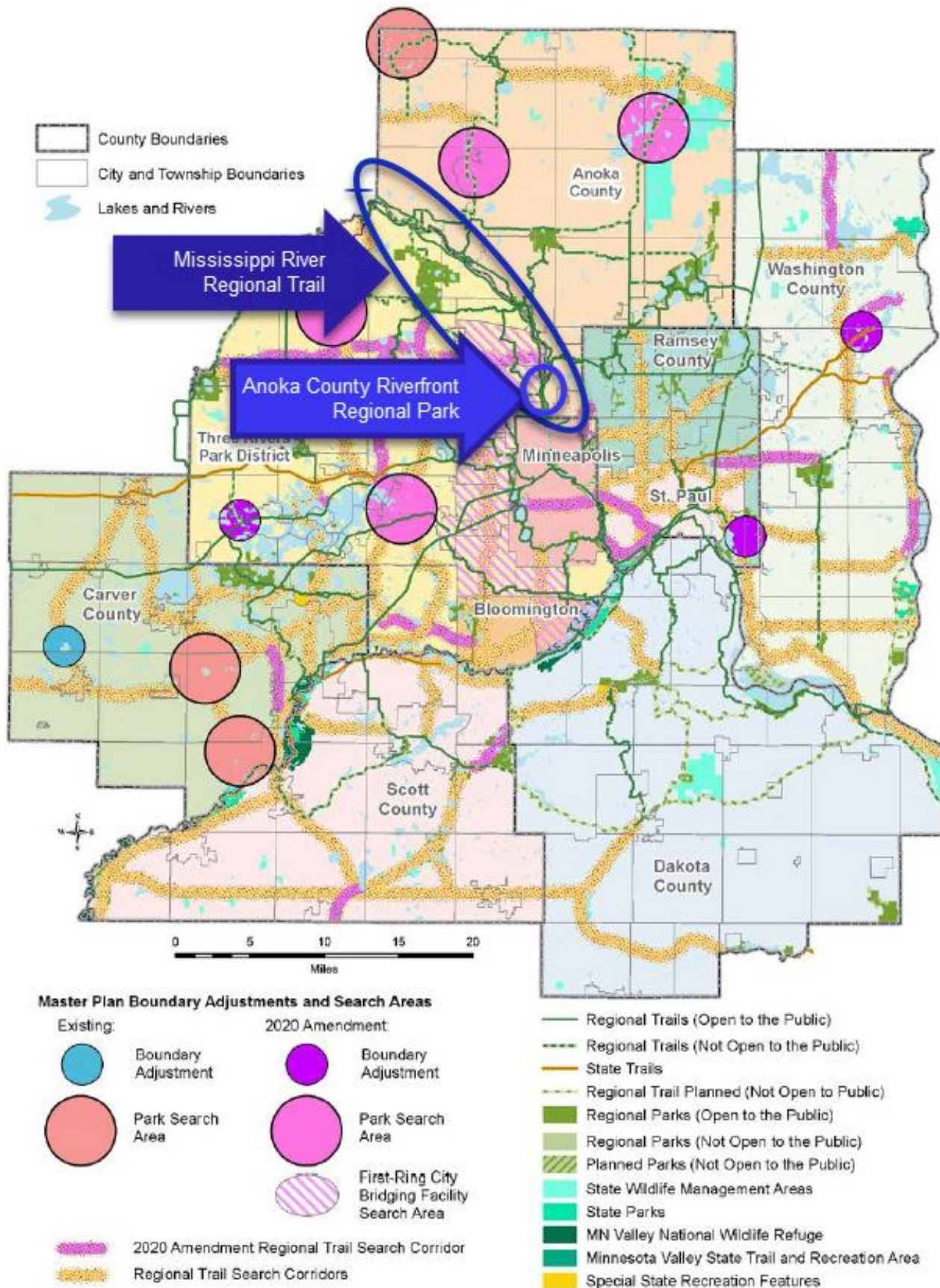




Figure 2: Location of the Amendments within Anoka County

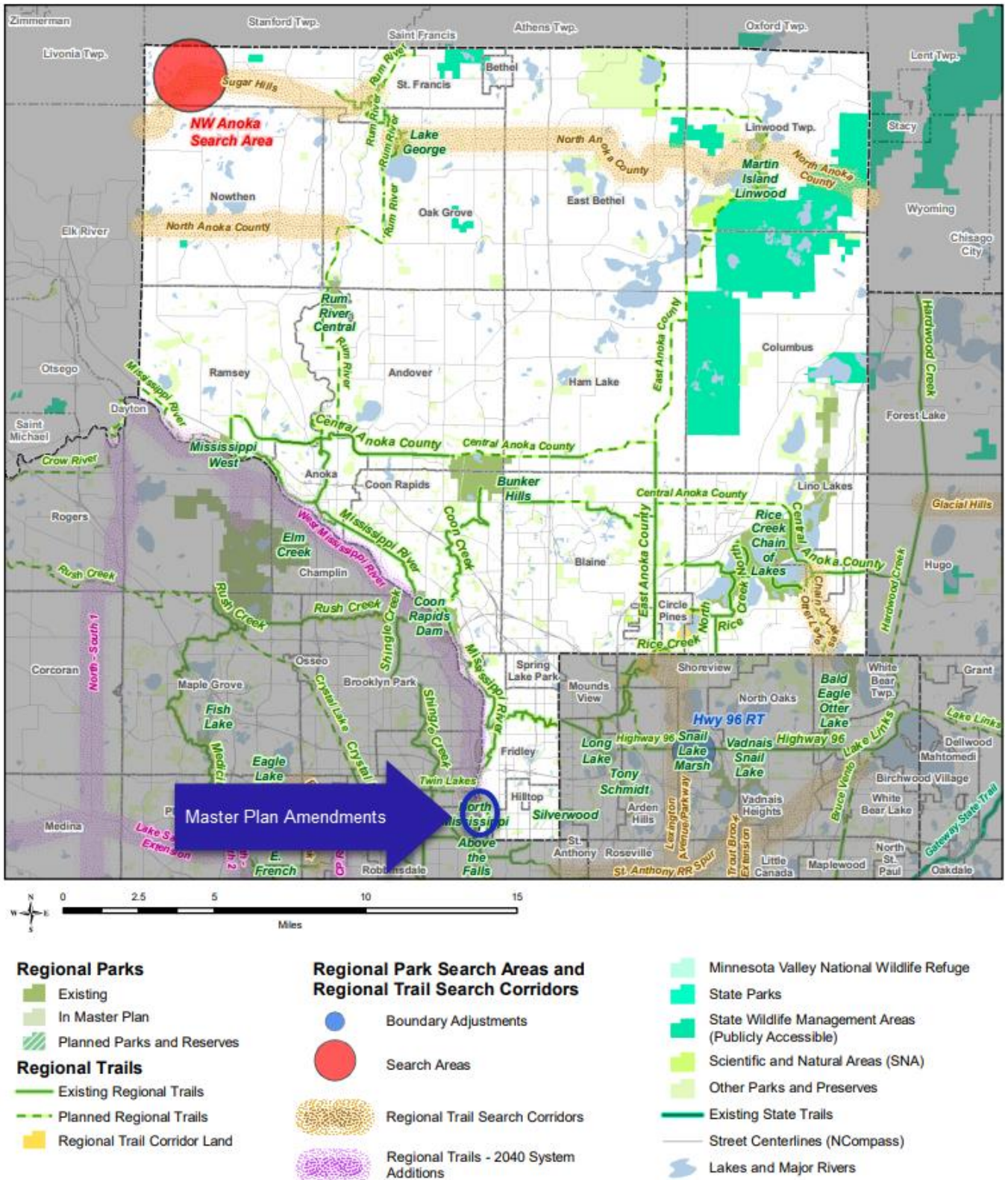


Figure 3: Location of the land conversion in relation to the Mississippi River Regional Trail

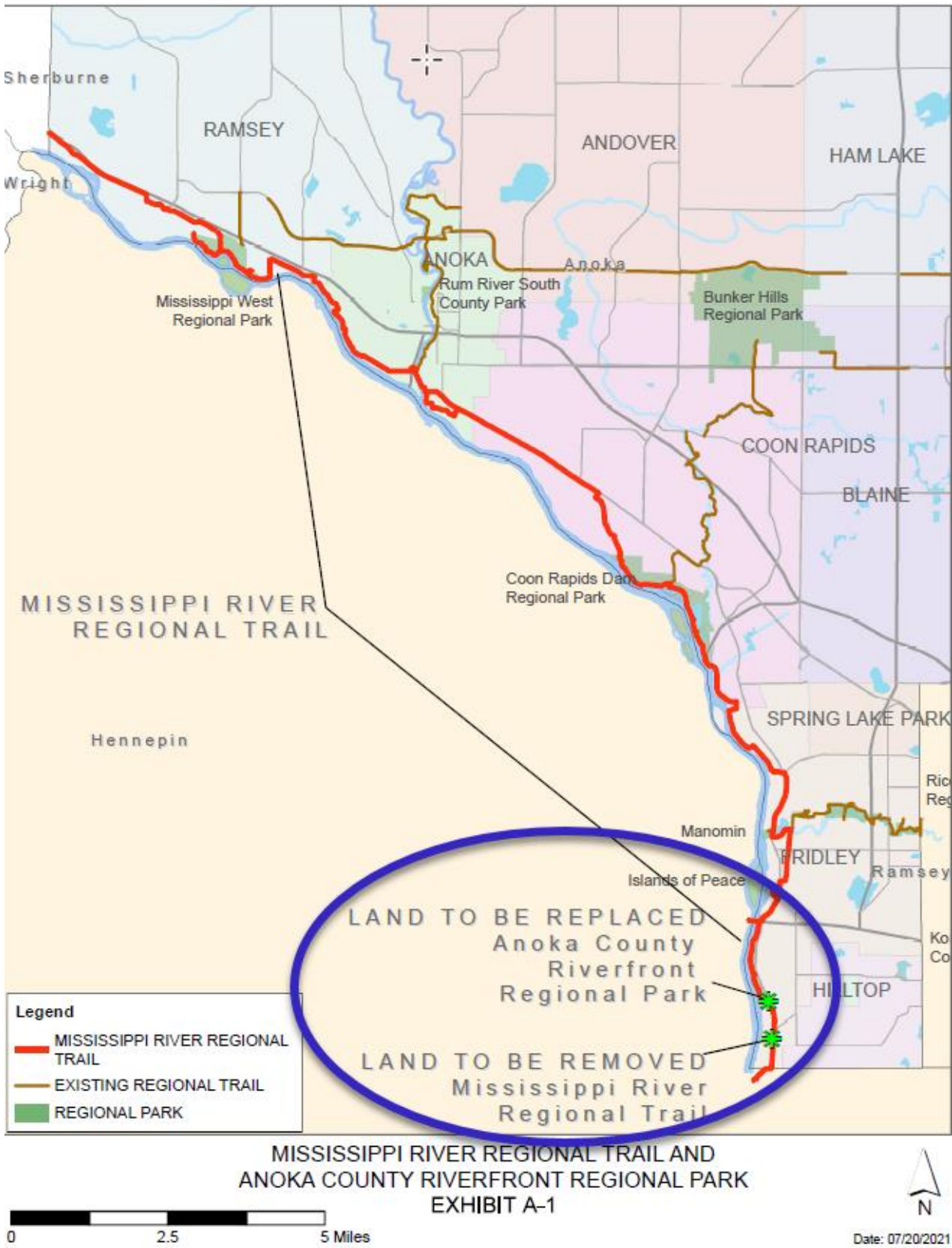
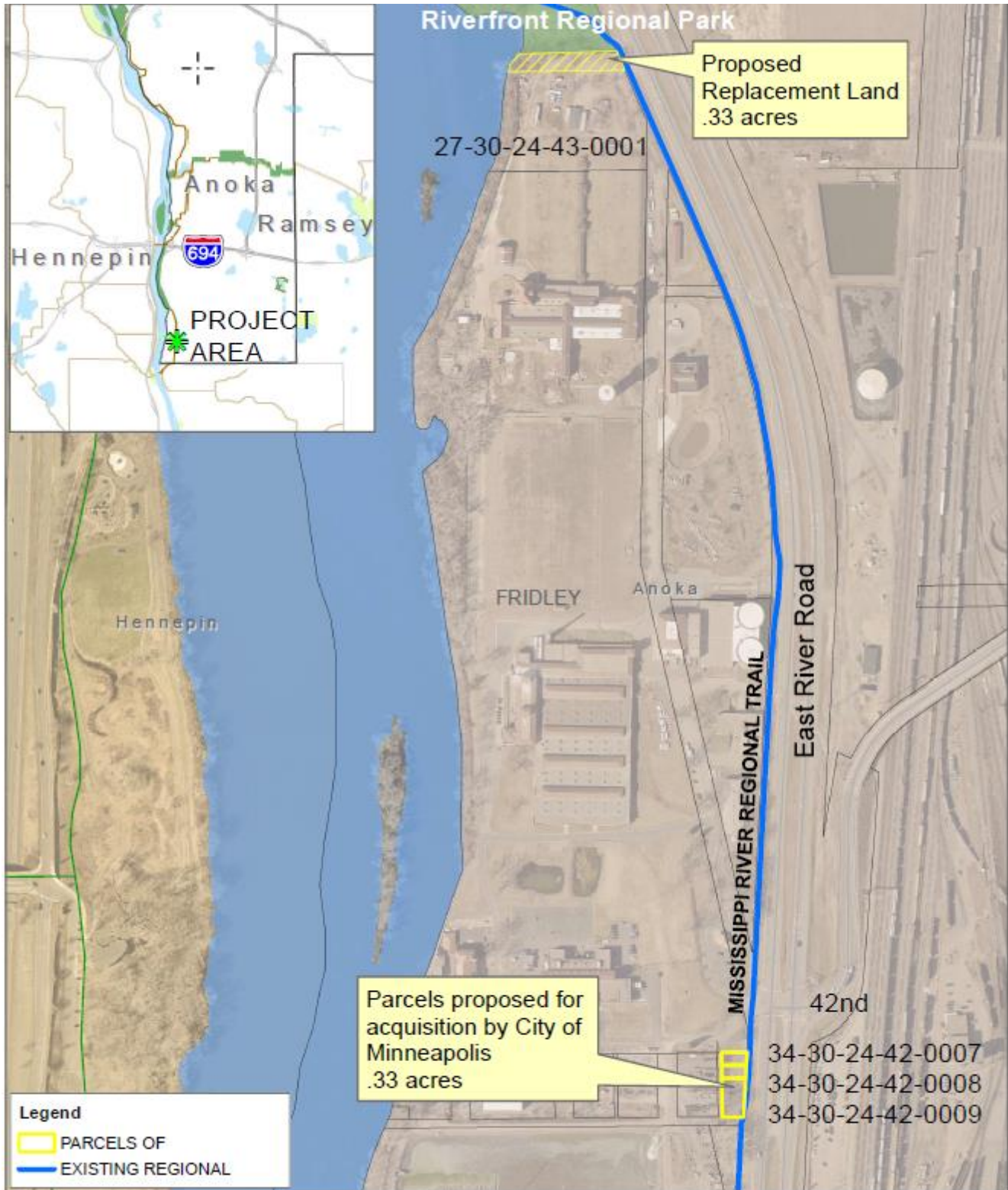




Figure 4: Location of the removal and replacement property



PROPOSED LAND EXCHANGE  
CITY CONTEXT  
EXHIBIT A-2

0 500 1,000 Feet



Date: 02/02/2021

## Analysis

The Mississippi River Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment and Land Conversion and Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park Acquisition Master Plan Amendment includes both the removal of land from the trail and the addition of land to the park (Table 1). The RPPP guides for land conversions in System Protection Chapter 6, Strategy 2, Conversion of Regional Parks System Lands to Other Uses. The addition of land to the park expands the current park boundary, which is guided by Chapter 5, Planning Policy Strategy 1, Master Plans; and Chapter 4 Siting and Acquisition Policy and Strategies, Strategy 1 Priorities.

Table 1. Land conversion value, acreage, and natural resource

Land Conversion	Appraised Value	Acreage	Natural Resource
Removal Land	\$36,900	0.33	Turf grass and trees
Replacement Land	\$33,500	0.33	Mississippi shoreland and trees

## Land Conversion

System Protection Chapter 6, Strategy 2, Conversion of Regional Parks System Lands to Other Uses of the RPPP requires that lands in the Regional Parks System only be converted to other uses if approved by the Metropolitan Council through an equally valuable land or facility exchange.

The RPPP defines “equally valuable land” as:

- Contiguous to the Regional Parks System unit containing the land proposed to be exchanged (within the same park/trail unit)
- Having comparable or better natural resource characteristics
- Potentially able to provide comparable or better recreation opportunities than the land being released from the covenant

The Council considers conversion of regional park land to other uses only if the conversion will not harm the Regional Parks System. The following section evaluates the proposal against criteria outlined in the RPPP to determine whether regional parks system lands may be exchanged for other land or a facility.

### *Issues with respect to the existing park system unit:*

#### **1. Whether the regional park system unit can continue to function as originally planned, meeting Council standards for sites and site attributes established for the particular type of park system unit (regional park, park reserve, trail greenway or special recreation feature)**

According to the RPPP Chapter 4 Siting and Acquisition, regional trails:

- Must serve a regional audience, based on visitor origin and service-area research on regional trails,
- Should not duplicate an existing trail,
- Should connect two or more units of the Regional Parks System, and/or
- Should connect state or federal recreational units

The proposed exchange will still allow the regional trail to function as originally planned as well as continue to meet Council standards for regional trails.



**2. Whether environmental features (wildlife habitat, water quality) will be adversely affected and can be protected with the new use**

The current land cover of the removal parcels is maintained turf grass with some trees and does not contain any environmental or natural features of interest.

**3. Whether the loss of site or function will be made up through acquisition of a site with comparable characteristics adjacent to or in the immediate area of the current location**

The removal property consists of turf grass and an informational kiosk that is now redundant and no longer needed since a recent Anoka Riverfront Regional Park redevelopment relocated the trailhead to a location inside the park.

The replacement land, while currently being used as a construction access and storage area, consists of Mississippi River shoreline in which the County anticipates restoring along with the remaining parcel.

*Issues with respect to the alternative use:*

**1. The land area needs of the proposed project**

The 0.3-acre removal property is adjacent City of Minneapolis Water Works facility property that is located to the north, west, and south of it.

**2. Whether the specific site requirements for the proposed project are unique to the area proposed for conversion**

The City of Minneapolis is looking to remodel and expand the water treatment facility and is in need of additional space.

**3. Whether the proposed project is consistent with Council policies**

The water facility expansion project will allow the regional trail to function as planned. Removal of the land is consistent with the Policy Plan's Chapter 6, Strategy 2 and other policies as detailed in this report.

**4. Whether the proposed project is of greater benefit to the region than having the regional park system unit remain in place**

This project is of benefit to the region since it acquires additional Mississippi River shoreline for restoration and removes land that is not needed for the functionality of the regional trail.

**Acquisition Master Plan**

Anoka County is requesting to add 0.33-acres to the Anoka County Riverfront Master Plan in exchange for removing 0.33-acres of trail corridor land from the Mississippi River Regional Trail. The addition of land to the park does not include a development plan; therefore, it is an acquisition master plan subject to the criteria described below Chapter 5, Planning Policy Strategy 1, Master Plans and Consistency with Chapter 4: Siting and Acquisition – Strategy 1, including size/service area requirements of the RPPP (Figure 4). The following analysis describes the required criteria.

*Chapter 5, Planning Policy Strategy 1, Master Plans*

**1. Boundaries**

The addition of 0.33-acres will expand the southern boundary of the regional park increasing access and management of an additional 55-foot Mississippi River shoreline (Figure 5).

## **2. Acquisition Costs**

The 2021 assessed land value of the replacement land is \$33,500. There are no costs associated with this acquisition since it replaces regional trail corridor land being removed. Additionally, there are no special assessments or contamination issues with the parcel.

### *Chapter 4: Siting and Acquisition – Strategy 1, including size/service area requirements*

#### **1. Acquiring lands with natural qualities most desirable for outdoor recreational activities**

The replacement land will increase access to the Mississippi River by adding approximately 55-feet to the existing 1.3-mile shoreline within the park.

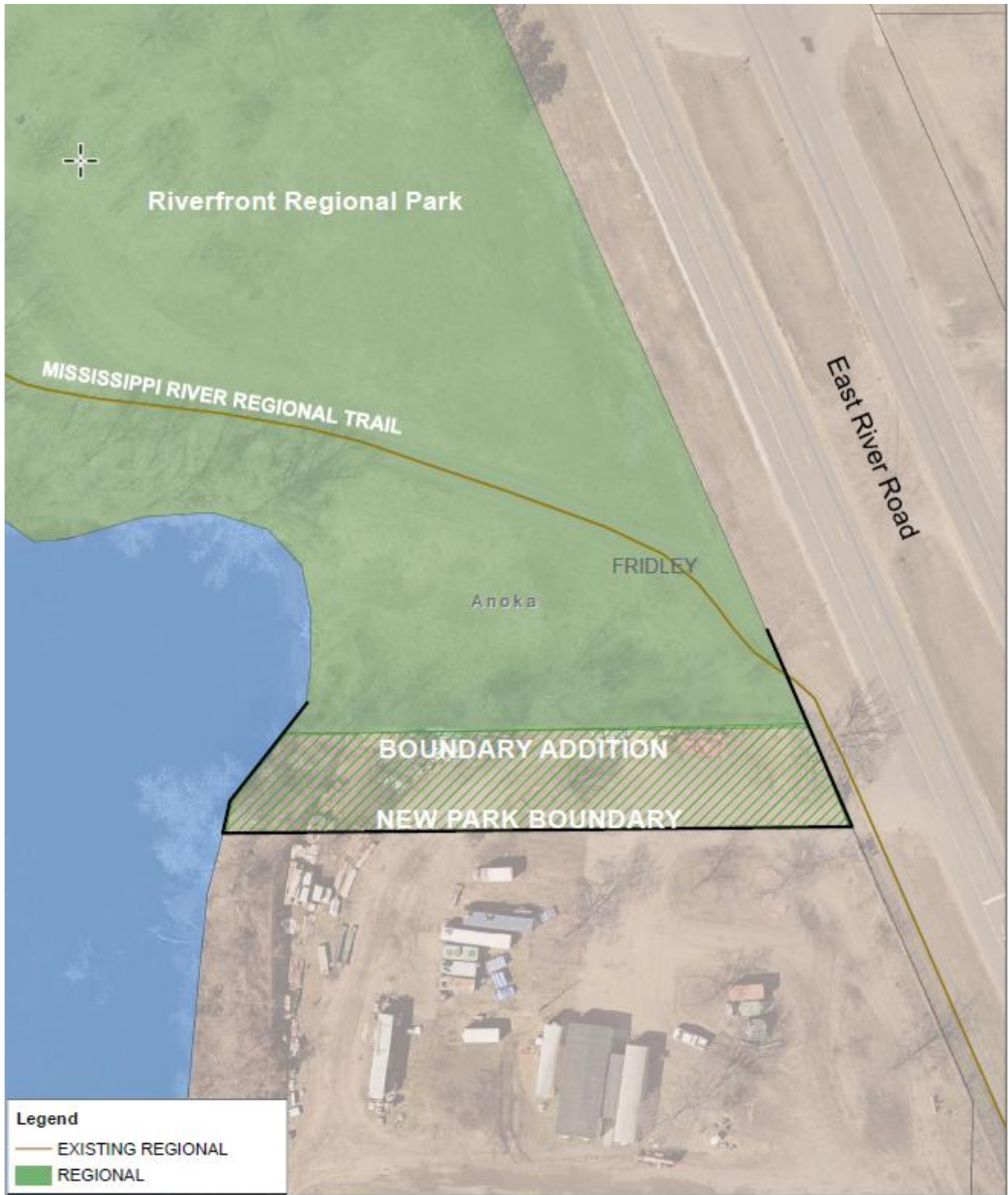
#### **2. Distribution of regional parks**

The expansion of shoreline access will serve a more densely populated area in Anoka County.

#### **3. Size/service area requirements**

The addition of 0.33-acres will increase the total acreage to a combined total of 139.3 acres for which exceeds the 100-acre minimum identified in the RPPP for regional parks.

Figure 5: Replacement land expanding the Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park boundary



RIVERFRONT REGIONAL PARK  
NEW PARK BOUNDARY  
EXHIBIT A-4

0 100 200 Feet

N  
Date: 02/10/2021



## Consistency with Other Council Policies and Systems

**Community Development – Housing** (Ashleigh Johnson 651-602-1106) – Anoka County Master Plan Amendment (50043-2) is consistent with the Council’s *2040 Housing Policy Plan*.

Council staff note for the County’s consideration that while the plan amendments do not require the acquisition of private residential land that could affect single or multi-family housing, the use of these two regional trail facilities affects nearby communities. Within a half-mile of the trail there are at least fifteen affordable housing developments, serving various household income levels at or below 30-80% of Area Median Income. The amendments affect various populations living in these developments—many residents have families with children, are seniors, live with disabilities, and/or need supportive services at their residence.

**Environmental Services – Sewer** (Kyle Colvin 651-602-1151) – Council staff have reviewed the proposed land swap between Anoka County Parks and the Minneapolis Water Works (Mpls. Water Works) and have no objections nor concerns regarding the land exchange as it relates to regional wastewater services.

We were also made aware of a proposed project by the Mpls. Water Works for an electrical transformer building on the property being acquired from the County Parks Board. We have been in contact with Water Works project manager to obtain additional information related to their project. The Council owns, operates, and maintains a 96-inch interceptor located approximately 20 feet within the west right-of-way line of East River Parkway. Depth to invert of the interceptor is approximately 20 feet.

The proposed project will maintain a minimum setback of about 10 feet west of the aforementioned right-of-way, resulting in an offset from the interceptor of approximately 30 feet. The proposed buildings on the project will be at grade with no sub-surface levels. The project site, if provided wastewater services, will be connected to an internal wastewater collection system owned by the City, and that a direct connection to the interceptor is not being proposed.

Therefore, we find that the Project also has no impact on the regional wastewater system.

**Local Planning Assistance – Land Use** (Patrick Boylan 651-602-1438) - The parcels in question are guided “Park & Recreation” as a future land use in the Fridley 2040 Comprehensive Plan and there does not appear to be any conflict with the removal of 0.33-acres of trail corridor land located alongside Anoka County’s Mississippi River Regional Trail. The proposed replacement 0.33-acre parcel appears to be guided “UTY – Utility” in the Fridley comprehensive plan. To conform with regional policy and to be consistent with the Fridley 2040 Comprehensive Plan, this parcel will need to be reguided to “P-Park & Recreation” on Figure 1.4 “Future Land Use Map.” The City may make this revision in a future amendment at their convenience.

**Department of Natural Resources – Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA)** (Dan Petrik 651-259-5697) - These changes do not appear to have a material effect on the MRCCA. If anything, they would appear to enhance access to the river along with an opportunity for restoration.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
*Anoka County, Minnesota*

**DATE:** April 13, 2021

**RESOLUTION #2021-46**

**OFFERED BY COMMISSIONER:** Meisner

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**RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT FOR  
ANOKA COUNTY'S RIVERFRONT REGIONAL PARK**

WHEREAS, Anoka County and the Metropolitan Council share common goals in providing quality natural areas for outdoor recreation; and,

WHEREAS, the County of Anoka ("County") has worked with the City of Minneapolis, Water Department ("City") in a cooperative effort to develop a land exchange plan leading to the County's conveyance to the City of certain land that is no longer needed for park purposes and which better serves Minneapolis Water Works; and,

WHEREAS, in exchange for the conveyance of land, the County will acquire from the City an equally sized parcel with significant restoration potential to be added to Riverfront Regional Park; and,

WHEREAS, the County, through its Parks Department, proposes to restore its acquired parcel to increase the amount of naturalized areas and green space within the metro area as well as increase the biodiversity along the river; and,

WHEREAS, the County also reserved a trail easement over the land to be conveyed to the City, to maintain the required easement area for regional trail purposes; and,

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Council requires an updated Master Plan, including the transfer of Restrictive Covenants from the County's existing parcels to its newly acquired parcels, in connection with the boundary changes to the regional park; and,

WHEREAS, the City representatives and Met Council staff have reviewed and commented on the land exchange and are in support of the plan amendment:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Anoka County, by and through its Board of Commissioners, does hereby adopt the Master Plan Amendment to the Riverfront Regional Park Master Plan, a copy of which is on file in the Parks Department, and authorizes its submission to the Metropolitan Council for its approval so that park development will be eligible for future Metropolitan Council grant funding.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Anoka County agrees to work with the Metropolitan Council to transfer any Restrictive Covenants from existing parcels to the County's newly acquired parcels.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Metropolitan Council, Anoka County Parks Department, and the City of Minneapolis.

**RESOLUTION #2021-46**  
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*STATE OF MINNESOTA*  
*COUNTY OF ANOKA ) ss*

I, Dee Guthman, County Administrator, Anoka County, Minnesota, hereby certify that I have compared the foregoing copy of the resolution of the county board of said county with the original record thereof on file in the Administration Office, Anoka County, Minnesota, as stated in the minutes of the proceedings of said board at a meeting duly held on April 13, 2021, and that the same is a true and correct copy of said original record and of the whole thereof, and that said resolution was duly passed by said board at said meeting.

Witness my hand and seal this 13th day of April 2021.

  
 DEE GUTHMAN  
 DEPUTY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
DISTRICT #1 – LOOK	<u>X</u>	<u>      </u>
DISTRICT #2 – BRAASTAD	<u>X</u>	<u>      </u>
DISTRICT #3 – WEST	<u>Absent</u>	<u>      </u>
DISTRICT #4 – MEISNER	<u>X</u>	<u>      </u>
DISTRICT #5 – GAMACHE	<u>X</u>	<u>      </u>
DISTRICT #6 – REINERT	<u>X</u>	<u>      </u>
DISTRICT #7 – SCHULTE	<u>X</u>	<u>      </u>