

Information Item

Community Development Committee



Meeting Date: June 6, 2022

Topic

Regional Parks System Competitive Equity Grant Program Timeline Update

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

Proposed Action

Information item; no action is proposed at this time.

Background

The 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan committed the Council to developing a set-aside, competitive equity grant program to strengthen equitable use of the Regional Parks System. The Regional Parks System Competitive Equity Grant Program (Equity Grant Program) was formally established in 2019 through a pilot program with capital funding that resulted in awards for three Regional Park System equity projects. The pilot program illustrated the need for non-capital funding to support equity programming projects. The Council responded by setting aside \$1.4 million in 2018 and 2019 Parks Interest Earnings for the 2021 program, which was used to support non-capital equity programming projects. In addition, \$664,000 was available and awarded for capital projects.

At this time, Parks Interest Earnings available from 2020 and 2021 are significantly less than in previous years, with a total of around \$550,000. While the original intent was to have an Equity Grant Program grant cycle every other year, Council staff are recommending that the Council postpone the next cycle for one year, with the goal of having more interest earnings available for non-capital projects. The Council would post a Notice of Funding Availability in the fall of 2023, soliciting applications for the next grant cycle with grant awards announced in spring of 2024. Regional Park Implementing Agencies, Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission members, and Committee Development Committee members will be engaged throughout this process.

At this Committee meeting, Council staff will review the considerations and plans for the next round of solicitation for this program. This item was also presented at the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting on June 2, 2022.