

Committee Report

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission: November 3, 2022

Committee Meeting Date: November 7, 2022

For the Metropolitan Council: November 30, 2022

Business Item: 2022-284

French Regional Park Master Plan, Three Rivers Park District

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council approve Three Rivers Park District's French Regional Park Master Plan.

Summary of Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission Discussion/Questions

Chee Yang, Planner, presented the staff report at the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission on November 3, 2022. Ann Rexine and Jonathan Vlaming, Three Rivers Park District, were in attendance and responded to questions.

Commissioner Peichel asked about where on the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) spectrum of public participation did the engagement process fall? He was particularly interested in the collaborative and empower elements. Ann Rexine responded that the Park District's engagement efforts mostly fell into the collaborate category during phase one and three of the engagement process. Additionally, the Park District conducted additional engagement to obtain community feedback on preliminary concept plans and revised it based on feedback heard.

Peichel asked what innovative techniques the Park District are using to manage the geese population. Rexine responded that the natural resources staff are using vegetative buffer strips to obstruct the bird's sight line between the lakefront and the lawn space to reduce geese flocking in the swimming area.

Peichel and acting chair Harris asked about the tribal relationship and land acknowledgement for French Regional Park. Rexine stated that the Park District is starting to investigate the land acknowledgement for the regional park and plans to go through the process thoughtfully to provide the time and space to do the work correctly. As stated in the Park plan, the land acknowledgement is a recommendation. The Park District is committed to building an authentic relationship with the Dakota community and understanding their interests and needs. Rexine also asked for advice and available resources from MPOSC and the Council.

Harris requested Emmett Mullin to provide the Council's perspective on tribal land acknowledgment. Mullin responded that the workplan in the 2020 Regional Parks Policy Plan includes an action to establish a land acknowledgment for the regional park and trail system. Previously, Mullin and team were advised by Council leaders to take the process slow to understand what land acknowledgement is, and provide time to build a relationship with the indigenous community, to do the work right and respectfully.

Peichel asked if there will be any co-management of natural and cultural resources with tribal groups in French Regional Park. Jonathan Vlaming said the Park District does not know at this time. The Park District's first seeks to establish a relationship with the Mdewakanton Sioux

community before pursuing partnership work. The Park District remains open to future collaboration and co-management of natural and cultural resources.

Commissioner Moeller expressed his appreciation for the proposed updates planned for French Regional Park and the new “Try it, Learn it” model. Moeller is curious if the Park District has plans to offer swimming programs at the regional park. Vlaming responded that there are no plans for swimming program, however, Hennepin County offers swim lessons in community pools within the first-tier suburbs. Rexine added that the Park District had a swimming program at Lake Minnetonka Regional Park last summer and the Park District is exploring options to potentially offer outdoor swimming programs. Moeller encourages the Park District to expand the “Try it, Learn it” model to incorporate swimming program in regional parks.

Commissioner Dillenburg expressed her appreciation for French Regional Park and the improvements over the years. Dillenburg asked how French Regional Park could be an example for other regional parks? Rexine responded that French Regional Park is uniquely positioned near first-tier communities in Hennepin County, serving many underrepresented communities. The Park District is using the “Try it, Learn it” model, along with many proposed programs at French Regional Park, as a starting point to implement new ideas in the Park District’s new “Parks to People” Plan. This multi-unit bridging facility plan seeks to connect directly to the first-tier communities within the Park District’s jurisdiction.

Harris asked about French Regional Park’s “suburban park” classification and what other classification does the Park District use? Rexine responded that the Park District’s 2040 System Plan adopted a classification system for their regional parks based on how developed the park is. It ranges from bridging facilities, which is considered urban, to wilderness. French Regional Park falls right in the middle of the spectrum as a suburban park.

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

Motion by Commissioner Monica Dillenburg, seconded by Commissioner Robert Moeller. Motion carried.



Business Item

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



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French Regional Park Master Plan, Three Rivers Park District

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| District(s), Member(s): | District A, Monica Dillenburg District 1, Judy Johnson |
| Policy/Legal Reference: | Minnesota Statutes § 473.313; <i>2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan</i> : Chapter 5, Planning Strategy 1 |
| Staff Prepared/Presented: | Chee Yang, Planner, 651-602-1449 |
| Division/Department: | Community Development, Regional Parks Unit |

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council approve Three Rivers Park District's French Regional Park Master Plan.

Background

Three Rivers Park District (Park District) submitted the Clifton E. French Regional Park (French Regional Park) Master Plan. French Regional Park is located in the northwest part of the Regional Parks System (Figure 1) and central Hennepin County (Figure 2). It is a 310-acre regional park located in the City of Plymouth along the north shore of Medicine Lake (Figure 3).

The regional park officially opened to the public in 1984 and is a popular destination because of its location, lake access, and recreational offerings. French Regional Park is the third most visited park within the Park District. It is open year-round offering a variety of recreation activities for each season.

During warm months, park visitors enjoy hiking on paved and unpaved trails, swimming, boating, picnicking, and visiting the creative play and nature exploration areas. During cold months when conditions allow, park visitors enjoy cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and sledding. Adjacent to the regional park are several existing and planned regional trails including the Medicine Lake, Bassett Creek, Luce Line, and Eagle Lake regional trails.

French Regional Park is categorized by the Park District as a suburban regional park, which is defined as a park that connects people to nature comfortably and conveniently through nature-based recreation offerings. This allows visitors to transition into nature as their comfort level increases.

To protect natural resource features, development is primarily centralized in the eastern portion of the park. The Park plan aims to work within the existing development areas and leverage the existing circulation infrastructure while improving basic recreational infrastructure.

Rationale

The French Regional Park Master Plan is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, particularly Planning Strategy 1 (Master plan requirements) and other Council policies.

Thrive Lens Analysis

The French Regional Park Master Plan advances the Thrive outcome of Livability by increasing access to nature and outdoor recreation, which enhances quality of life in the region.

Funding

There is no anticipated acquisition cost associated with the French Regional Park Plan.

The total estimated improvement cost associated with the French Regional Park Plan is \$2,834,000.

Once all proposed improvements are completed, the total estimated annual operations and maintenance costs for French Regional Park is \$2,038,000.

Taken together, the total estimated cost associated with the French Regional Park Plan is \$4,872,000.



Figure 1. French Regional Park location within the Regional Parks System

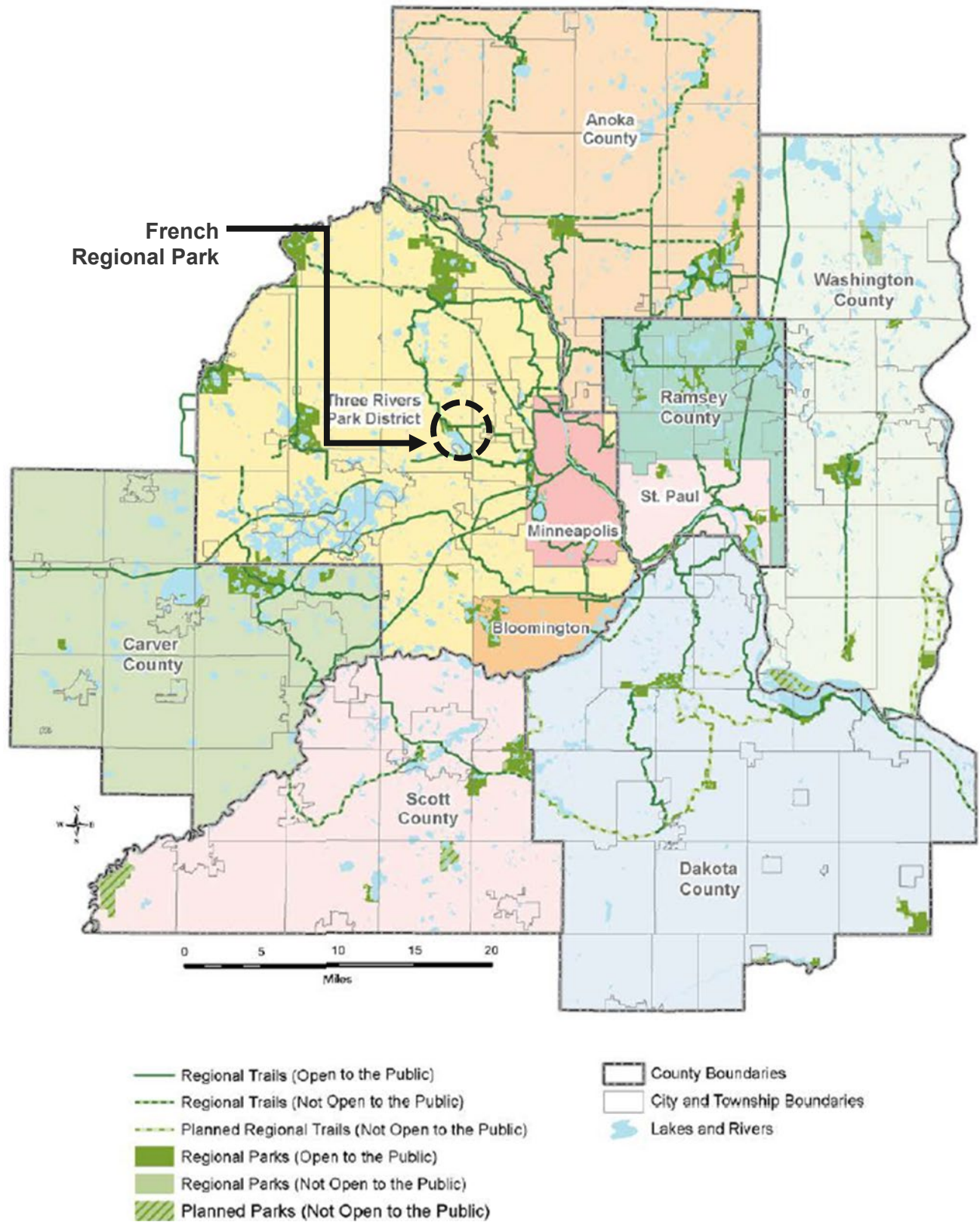
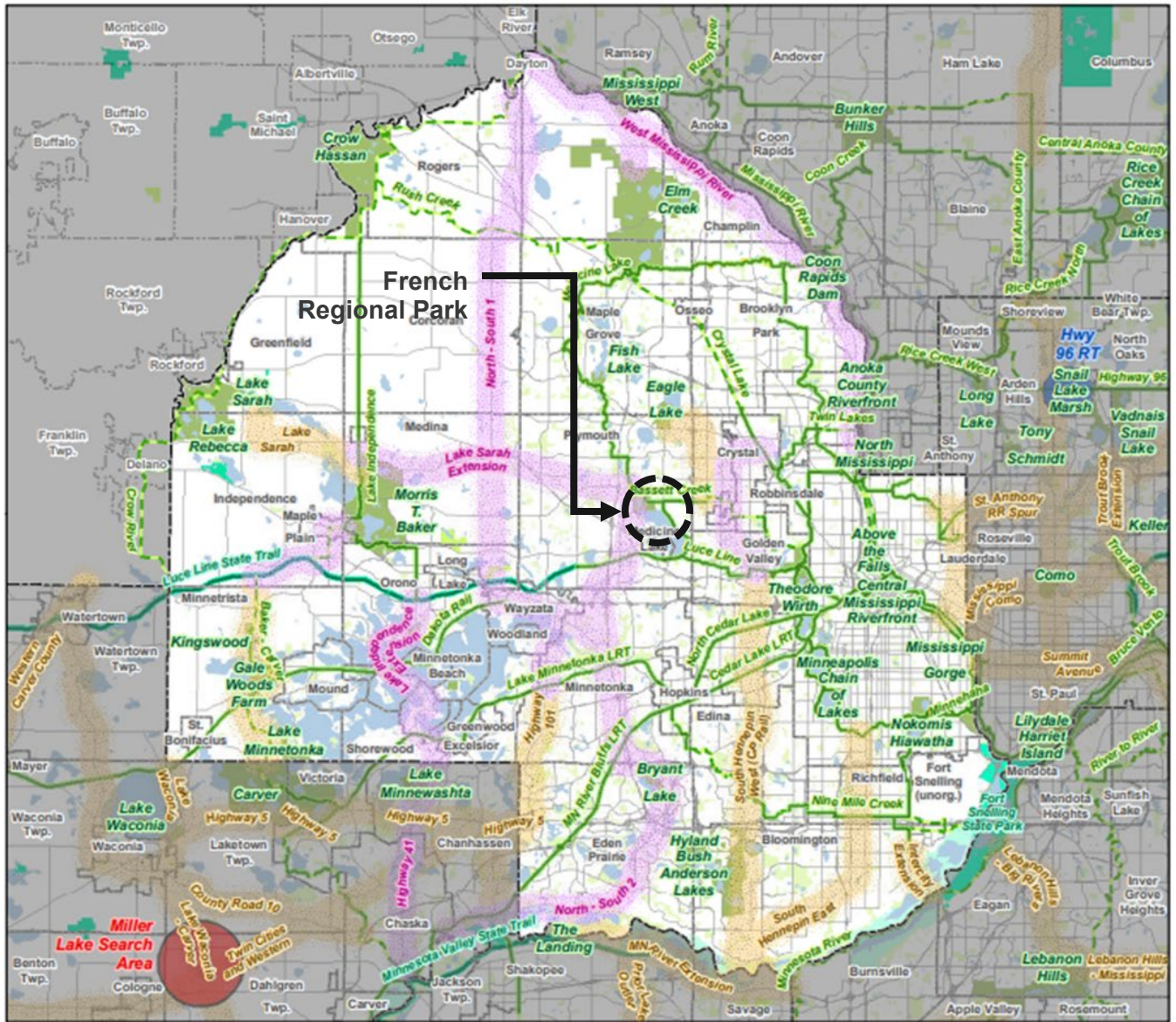
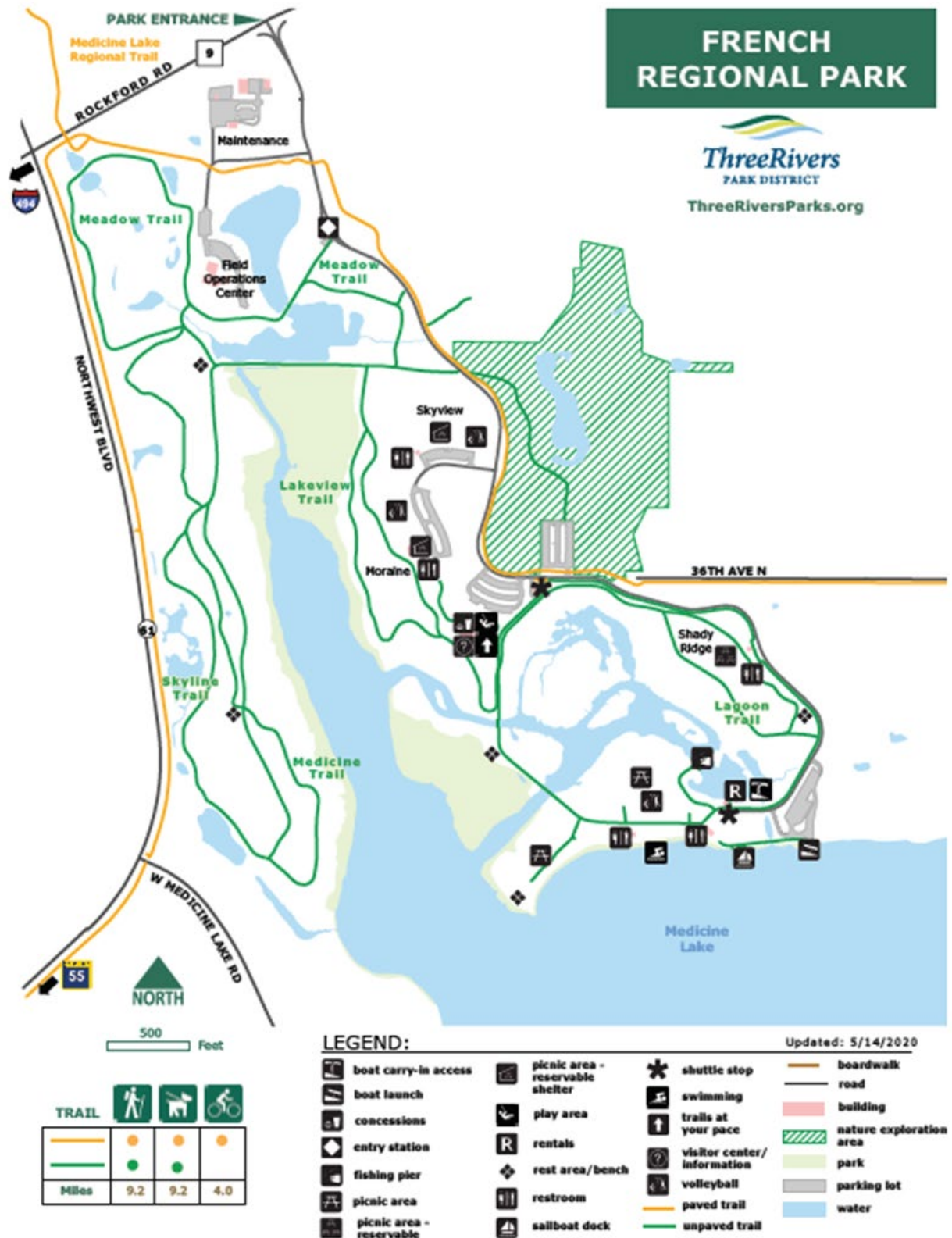


Figure 2. French Regional Park location within Hennepin County



- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Regional Parks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing In Master Plan Planned Parks and Reserves <p>Regional Trails</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Regional Trails Planned Regional Trails Regional Trail Corridor Land | <p>Regional Park Search Areas and Regional Trail Search Corridors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boundary Adjustments Search Areas Regional Trail Search Corridors Regional Trails - 2040 System Additions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge State Parks State Wildlife Management Areas (Publicly Accessible) Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA) Other Parks and Preserves Existing State Trails Street Centerlines (NCompass) Lakes and Major Rivers |
|---|---|---|

Figure 3. French Regional Park Map (Figure 3, MP)



Analysis

Planning Strategy 1 of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires master plans for regional parks to address 14 items: boundaries, acquisition costs, stewardship plan, demand forecast, development concept, conflicts, public services, operations, partner engagement, public engagement and participation, equity analysis, public awareness, accessibility, and natural resources. The following analyzes the master plan against those requirements.

Boundaries

French Regional Park, as it exists today, is the result of many dedicated park visionaries and professionals, dating back to the 1960s and 1970s. In 1975, the regional park began to take shape with a property acquisition plan. Today's completed park boundary is the result of the visionary work completed decades ago and significant land acquisition. The Park District phased construction of the infrastructure and opened the regional park to the public in 1984. Final property acquisition and construction was completed in the late 1980s.

Acquisition Costs

The French Regional Park has acquired all parcels within the boundaries of the regional park. There is no anticipated acquisition for the regional park.

Stewardship Plan

The Park District Sustainability Plan (2016) guides efforts toward achieving established sustainability goals and targets by outlining broad strategies for organizational implementation. The following goals provide guidance and intent to Park District's sustainability efforts in respect to regional parks and reserves:

- Manage and operate parklands and facilities in a manner that ensures the ecologic, financial, and social integrity of the park system in perpetuity.
- Reduce dependence on fossil fuels to minimize greenhouse gas emissions and reduce public expenditures.
- Reduce the amount of waste sent to the incinerator and landfill to minimize costs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Preserve groundwater and surface water resources to ensure current and future water needs can be met.
- Reduce Park District environmental impacts to demonstrate or model Park District's commitment to sustainable environmental stewardship.
- Provide opportunities for public education and involvement in Park District sustainability initiatives.
- Design and plan park facilities, amenities, and trails to maximize the public ability to use non-motorized transportation and to meet the Park District's goal of sustainable environmental stewardship.

For regional parks, best management practices may include utilizing porous pavement, rain gardens, recycled construction materials, using native plant materials, smart and responsible water consumption, connectivity to the regional trail system as well as mass transit and using sustainable building techniques.

Demand Forecast

The Regional Parks System serves an estimated 3.1 million residents in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. The parks and trails hosted an estimated 64.9 million visits in 2021. The Regional Park System plans to add an additional two regional parks, one park reserve, and 80 miles of regional trails in coming years to meet the growing demand and increased population forecasts.

Thrive MSP 2040 identifies a vision for the region's future with a focus on expanding and diversifying the regional park system to meet the needs of the metropolitan area.



The objectives include:

- Expanding the parks system to conserve, maintain, and connect natural resources identified in the parks plan as high quality or having regional importance.
- Providing a comprehensive regional park and trail system that preserves high quality resources, increases climate resiliency, fosters healthy outcomes, connects communities, and enhances quality of life.
- Promoting expanded multimodal access to regional parks, trails, and the transit network.
- Strengthening equitable usage of regional parks and trails by all our region’s residents, across age, race, ethnicity, income, national origin, and ability.

French Regional Park is well-positioned to support *Thrive MSP 2040* objectives and anticipated changes in development and demographic patterns with its unique natural resources, regional trail network, and first-tier communities.

French Regional Park currently receives approximately 631,600 visits per year. Within 20 years, French Regional Park could expect approximately 850,000 visits per year if current visitation trends continue. Of these total visits, 92 percent are repeat visits.

Development Concept

French Regional Park’s water-based recreation, trail network and location adjacent to the first-tier suburban Minneapolis communities make it a unique environmental and recreational destination. The Park plan identifies ways to improve park user experience highlighting unique park features while minimizing overall park development. The guiding principle for the park’s development is to preserve treasured areas such as the creative play area, beach, and trail network while expanding opportunities for visitors to try new activities.

Recommended improvements are based on the park’s long-term vision and will be implemented based on available funding and Park District priorities. At the time of implementation, additional park features will be designed to minimize user conflicts, ensure safety, limit overall impact, and be minimal in scale. The Park District is committed to continuing engagement with park users during design development.

The Park District provided three overarching goals in the development of the concept based on the Park District’s 2040 System Plan.

Goal 1: Better serve people in the park’s service area

The Park District aims to achieve the first goal by focusing on delivering introductory programming, education, and recreational offerings to grow and enhance those that may be unaware, curious, and/or new to activities offered. The Visitor Experience Model framework offers guidance and emphasizes that to attract new visitors who may be unaware, curious or a beginner, the Park District should focus on introductory programs. Community engagement and feedback received from those that were unfamiliar with the park and/or had never participated in a program strongly support nature-based program participation. To be successful, the Park District plans to pursue the following:

- Better communication, awareness, and promotion for French Regional Park.
- Piloting new, innovative, and relevant programming and offerings for park visitors.
- Continue to improve program participation rates for underrepresented community members/groups.
- Hiring staff that is reflective of the surrounding community.
- Better coordination with external recreation programming providers within the park service area.

Goal 2: French Regional Park matters

The Park District will accomplish this goal by prioritizing the protection, restoration, and



management of natural and cultural resources. French Regional Park was developed as a natural resources-based park with a water-based (Medicine Lake) focus. Forestry and woodland reestablishment efforts coupled with adjacency to the lake contributed to the regional park's rich resources. The Park plan defines resource strategies that promote French Regional Park as a diverse and healthy ecosystem.

Community outreach indicated strong support for resource protection, restoration, and management as exemplified through a strong appreciation for the park's existing trail woodland network and Medicine Lake access which allows users to experience nature year-round through land and water-based recreation.

To be successful, the Park District plans to pursue:

- Establishing a French Regional Park land acknowledgment through authentic relationships with Indigenous people to better share their history and stories.
- Continue to monitor and implement best management practices to improve Medicine Lake water quality.
- Continue to manage invasive species.
- Actively manage natural resources within the Nature Exploration Area.
- Continue to monitor and research wildlife species.

Goal 3: French Regional Park leads by example

The Park District will accomplish this goal by analyzing existing park infrastructure and making recommendations for renovation, modification and/or rehabilitation (Figure 4). The goal is not to reinvent French Regional Park, but to make modifications to ensure the park remains relevant for future generations. This includes minor rehabilitation and renovation to existing infrastructure.

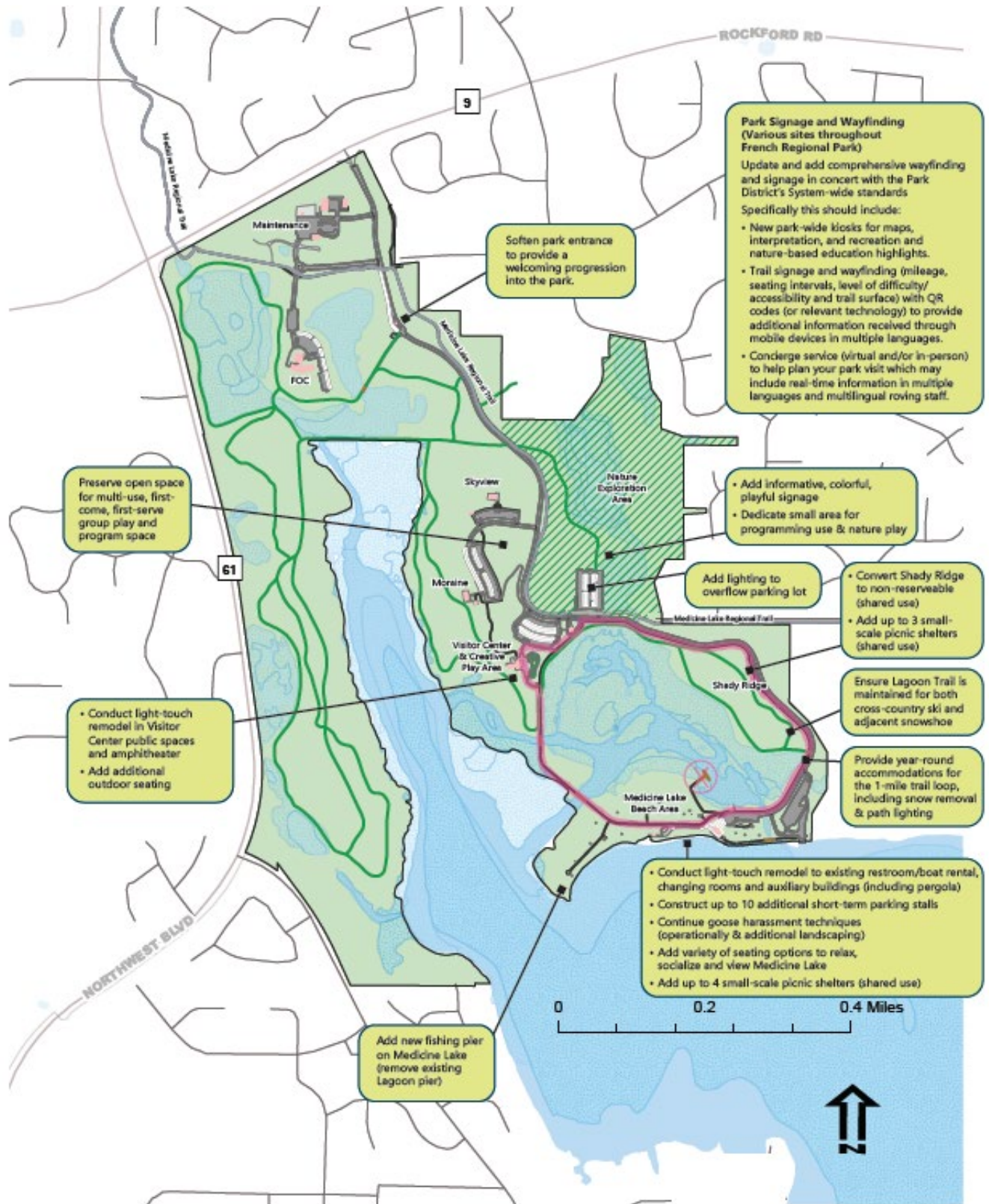
Community outreach within the park's service area indicated resounding support for park infrastructure updates. Existing and prospective park visitors were most interested in ensuring the park was refreshed for people of all ages and abilities in mind.

To ensure the park is relevant to future generations, the Park District is planning to improve the following elements in French Regional Park:

- Update and add park signage and wayfinding, and soften park entrance.
- Maintain paved and unpaved trail network.
- Update picnic areas.
- Rejuvenate the Medicine Lake beach area by providing additional shade, opportunities for year-round use, comfortable seating to socialize, relax and view the lake, improved swimming experience, additional parking, and improved fishing areas.
- Remodel and modify the Visitor Center to create a welcoming experience.
- Bring awareness and increase nature exploration.
- Winter enhancements such as continuing to groom cross-country ski trails and providing winter recreation activities.



Figure 4. French Regional Park Proposed Improvements Map (Figure 14, MP)



Conflicts

The community supports the proposed improvements for the French Regional Park. The plan does not identify any concerns or conflicts.

Public Services

The French Regional Park plan does not anticipate installing any new or significant transportation infrastructure changes that will impact the park. Bus transit currently does not service the park, however, there is direct vehicular transportation access to the regional park.

Operations

The Park District operates French Regional Park using a wide variety of professional staff and in accordance with the Park District's policies, guidelines, and ordinances. The ordinances provide for the safe and peaceful use of the parks and corresponding facilities; for the educational and recreational benefits and enjoyment of the public; for the protection and preservation of the property, facilities, and natural resources; and for the safety and general welfare of the public.

French Regional Park remains open year-round for public use and is envisioned to maintain the current hours of operation, 5 a.m. -10 p.m. Maintenance staff maintain the regional park in a safe, clean, and usable manner. The general maintenance plan for French Regional Park calls for maintaining it consistent with other regional parks. This generally includes a combination of routine maintenance, seasonal condition assessments and inspections, and specialized maintenance related to the park's features.

Partner Engagement

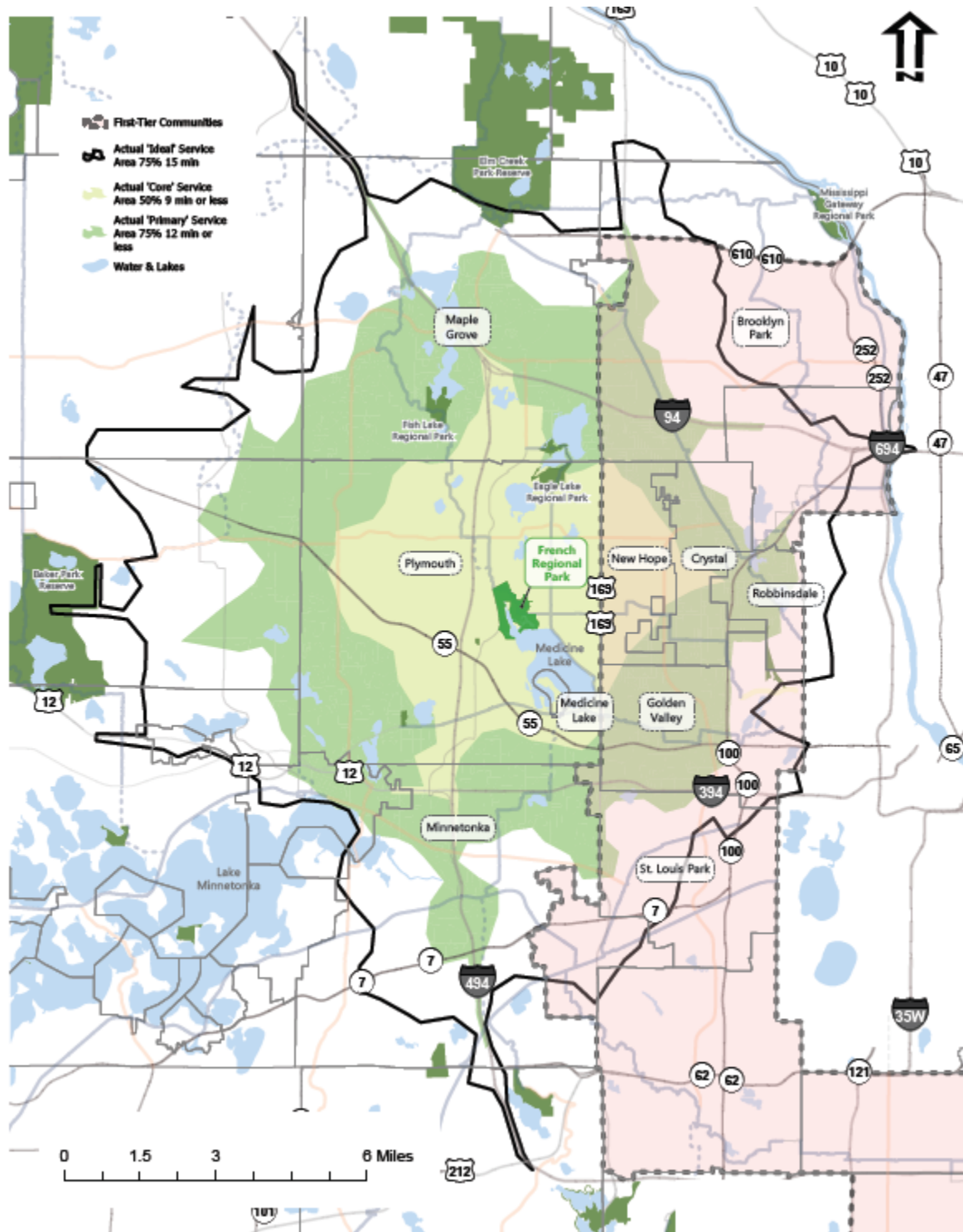
From 2020 to 2022, the Park District collected public feedback to develop a revised vision for French Regional Park. The Park District's newly adopted 2040 System Plan guided French Regional Park to serve visitors through a "try-it, learn-it" experience model. The Park plan's principal goal is to preserve the park's treasured areas while expanding opportunities for visitors to try new nature-based recreation and education programs to encourage park exploration in French Regional Park. The outcome of the engagement effort supports the regional park to provide positive outdoor experiences and serve as a gateway to the outdoors for existing and new park visitors.

The Park District classified the Park plan as a "refresh," meaning the Park plan includes recommendations to build off and improve the existing infrastructure and programs to ensure the regional park remains relevant to existing and new park visitors and community members. 2018 Park District visitor satisfaction data shows that French Regional Park is a well-loved and supported park by existing park users, which mirrored the demographic composition of the service area.

The partner and public engagement were geographically focused on the service area to gather input from those who most likely would benefit or use French Regional Park. Based on the Park District's Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, the ideal primary service area is within a 15-minute drive time. Therefore, the Park District's engagement efforts generally focused on reaching and engaging residents and partner agencies located within the park's service area (Figure 5). The Park District divided its engagement efforts into categories which includes general public, existing park users, underrepresented community members/groups, and cities and organizations.



Figure 5. French Regional Park Service Area Map (Figure 5, MP)



The Park District's engagement scope was further informed by the Public Participation Spectrum, an engagement tool developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). The spectrum describes five general modes of public participation: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. The engagement plan followed a 4-phase process which directly correlated to the IAP2.

Phase 1 focused on gathering data and information, establishing internal and external relationships, and introducing the project to various Park District work groups who provided background information and guidance.

Phase 2 focused on engaging and receiving feedback from partner agencies, organizations, the general public, existing park users, and underrepresented groups.

Phase 3 reengaged partner agencies, organizations, the general public, existing park users, and underrepresented groups for additional feedback on preliminary park plan concepts.

Phase 4 obtained feedback from partner agencies, organizations, the general public, existing park users, and underrepresented groups and kept them informed of decisions and how their feedback was considered during the process.

The Park District engaged the cities of Plymouth, New Hope, Crystal, Robbinsdale, Golden Valley, St. Louis Park, and Minnetonka. Engaged organizations include the Plymouth Historical Society and the Association of Medicine Lake Area Citizens.

It is anticipated that the cities of Plymouth, New Hope, and Crystal will provide a letter or resolution of support. These are forthcoming and the Park District will provide a final copy to the Council as soon as they are available.

General themes from partner engagement include improving Medicine Lake water quality, improving water access, promoting regional park awareness, improving signage and wayfinding, improving trail surfacing, providing manufactured snow, and incorporating a variety of outdoor experiences.

Public Engagement and Participation

As noted above, the Park District engaged with the general public, existing park users, and underrepresented groups in Phase 2 of their engagement plan. The engagement focused on gathering information around introductory programs from the public, how they are provided, and how they're envisioned and supported in French Regional Park. The underrepresented community members and groups will further be discussed in the Equity Analysis section.

The general public represents the full range of existing and potential park users such as people of all ages, abilities, races, ethnicities, and income levels who generally live or spend time within the defined service area of French Regional Park. The engagement efforts with the general public focused on increasing awareness, understanding barriers and obtaining more broad, general feedback on preferences, and recommendations.

Existing Park users have a higher level of comfort in the park than non-park users and greater park awareness. This was taken into consideration during the community engagement efforts with existing park users focusing on identifying specific locations for improvements such as:

- Specific park facilities, amenities, operations, and rules;
- To build awareness of the regional park with other happenings in the park for those who have not anticipated or are unaware; and
- Additional park programs and amenities.

Phase 2 of the engagement included robust in-person and virtual feedback through an additional survey, pop-ups, community events, listening sessions, and programming while being mindful of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Park District hosted or participated in several engagement opportunities including the Let's Talk online survey, Pop-up Popsicles in the Park, Golden Valley Farmers Market, Maps & Mazes Event, Pop-up Palooza Table, and virtual Family Campout. Through these engagement efforts, the Park District estimates it engaged 1,155 people.

Engagement respondents provided their preferences and recommendations regarding nature-based programming and education offerings, and physical park facilities. General themes from public engagement include:

- Interest and desire to participate in existing park programs such as nature exploration play, nature education, snowshoeing, summer fishing, and picnicking.
- Build awareness for programming and recreational activities.
- A need for different, new, and relevant programming.



- Provide more program information, special/planned events, walking trails, food/drink amenities, and nature play elements.
- Provide opportunities to enjoy nature and the outdoors.
- Continue to provide water recreation opportunities such as kayaking, canoeing, and stand-up paddle-boarding.
- Promote regional park programs and offerings that are age- and culturally-appropriate, offer flexible schedules, and are both instructor and self-led.
- Minor update and improvements to regional park facilities such as buildings, parking lots, trails, beach and lakefront, signage, and wayfinding, play areas, and picnic and reservation areas.
- Familiarity and appreciation of French Regional Park.

The general public, park users, underrepresented community members, cities, and organizations were welcomed to review and provide comments on the Park plan over a 30-day comment period from August 22 - September 21, 2022. The Park District shared this opportunity through several methods including a press release, social media posts which partners shared/reposted, Park District list serves, and news item on the Park District website. The plan was available online, at local public venues, and shared via email to identified partners and others upon request.

The Park District identified the main themes from the 30-day comment period. The themes include natural resources management, programming for seniors, and boat launch dredging.

Equity Analysis

Project Data

French Regional Park visitors are more racially and ethnically diverse than the park’s service area population and compared to other parks within the Park District system. According to the Park District’s 2018 Park Visitor Study, the existing park users generally reflect the broader community composition in areas of age and gender or are more diverse than the service area population in areas of race and ethnicity with a few exceptions.

The Park District recognizes there are some community groups that are currently underrepresented at parks and on trails. This means that underrepresented members are not visiting to the extent which is expected given their percent of the overall population within the service area and have not traditionally participated in park and trail planning processes.

The Park District identified the following groups as underrepresented in the French Regional Park service area: People 75 years or older; White, Non-Hispanic Adults; and households with an annual income of \$50,000 or less (Table 1).

Table 1. French Regional Park Service Area Map (Table 1, MP)

| AGE | Under Represented | On-Target | Over Represented |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------|------------------|
| <5 years | | ✓ | |
| 5-9 years | | | ✓ |
| 10-17 years | | ✓ | |
| 18-24 years | | ✓ | |
| 25-34 years | | ✓ | |
| 35-44 years | | ✓ | |
| 45-59 years | | ✓ | |
| 60-74 years | | ✓ | |
| 75+ years | ✓ ¹ | | |

| RACE | Under Represented | On-Target | Over Represented |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------|------------------|
| White | ✓ ² | | |
| Black | | ✓ | |
| American Indian | | ✓ | |
| Asian | | | ✓ |
| Other | | | ✓ |

| ETHNICITY | Under Represented | On-Target | Over Represented |
|--------------|-------------------|-----------|------------------|
| Not Hispanic | ✓ ³ | | |
| Hispanic | | | ✓ |

| ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME | Under Represented | On-Target | Over Represented |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------|------------------|
| <\$50,000 | ✓ ⁴ | | |
| \$50,000 - \$75,000 | | | ✓ |
| >\$75,000 | | ✓ | |

| GENDER | Under Represented | On-Target | Over Represented |
|--------|-------------------|-----------|------------------|
| Female | | ✓ | |
| Male | | ✓ | |



When compared to system-wide visitor data, French Regional Park depicts a slightly different narrative than other parks and trails within the Park District. Due to French Regional Park's geographic location near first-tier communities, it is often one of the first "touch-points" to the Park District system. As the visitor data suggests, French Regional Park currently serves people of color and those who identify as Hispanic at a percentage which is consistent or greater than what is expected given the service area demographics.

However, Park District programming at French Regional Park which focuses on the new "try-it, learn-it" visitor experience model does not appear to yet serve or draw from these targeted community groups to the extent expected given their percentage of the service population including youths.

Public Engagement

The engagement scope focused on identifying programmatic components that would increase the safety and inclusion of the underrepresented groups since their participation in programs does not mirror their visitation of the park.

The engagement efforts for the underrepresented groups focused primarily on building awareness, understanding barriers, and identifying programs that would encourage them to visit and further explore French Regional Park and beyond. Although the park is more diverse than most parks across the Park District system, the Park District still focused on engaging underrepresented community members and groups found across the district since French Regional Park is viewed as a gateway to other Park District and nature experiences.

The Park District engaged underrepresented community members and groups at various events and locations, including the Hispanic Heritage Celebration, Stone Creek Apartment, Virtual Family Campout, Teen Welcoming Winter Event, Senior 'Donut Talk' Conversation, Senior Nordic Walkers Conversation, and Let's Talk Online Survey. Through these engagement efforts, the Park District estimates it engaged 336 people.

General themes from the underrepresented members and groups include having open and natural spaces, opportunities to view nature, an escape from the city, outdoor and water-based recreation, nature-based education and activities for adults and youths, providing American with Disability Act (ADA) and smooth trail surfacing, user-friendly signage and wayfinding, shorter walking loops, and winter trail maintenance.

Evaluation Summary

There are many themes included in the Park plan that reflect the needs and values of underrepresented community members or groups who participated in the engagement process. Examples include ADA design standards, open spaces, picnic spaces, nature and outdoor recreation and programs, and signage and wayfinding.

The Park District will continue to work with the general public, park users, underrepresented communities, and partner agencies and organizations to implement the recommendations included in the Park plan as resources become available to ensure that they best address the identified challenges or opportunities at the time of implementation.

The Park plan is intended to be a starting point for improvements to the regional park and will continue to be inclusive and responsive to changing needs and priorities. This is the Park District's commitment to its partners and community.

Public Awareness

Marketing & Community Engagement staff manage a centralized marketing communications function that oversees the Park District's website, public relations, marketing, media relations, social media, brand management, event planning and promotion.

A number of effective marketing and outreach tools are used to promote the Park District, including but not limited to, events calendars, maps, digital and social media, direct mail, press releases, a centralized reservation system, brochures, advertising and on-site promotion. Promotional pieces will highlight how to get to the park by a variety of methods such as by foot, bicycle, and vehicle.



Additionally, the Park District collaborates with a variety of community, business, and government organizations to promote the regional park's facilities, programs, and services, and to educate the public about its resources. The Park District also works with the Metropolitan Council Regional Parks System, the State Office of Tourism, and other partners to leverage shared opportunities for creating awareness and visibility.

Accessibility

The Park District is continuing to develop and update programming, facilities, and services to facilitate more and better access to opportunities for people with disabilities. Since being enacted, the ADA and other similar laws and guidelines have been an important part of planning and development of publicly funded outdoor recreation programs and services in Minnesota. With a wide range of abilities, providing accessible facilities and opportunities will be an important consideration for nature-based recreation providers.

Natural Resources

French Regional Park is a combination of rugged hills and wet depressions classified as "kettle moraine" topography. There are six distinct land cover types at French Regional Park utilizing the Minnesota Land Cover Classification System including maple dominated forest, forest succession, disturbed/other deciduous forest, wetlands/water, oak dominated forest, and mowed turf. The Minnesota County Biological Survey native plant communities inventory documents a 7-acre forest stand of southern mesic maple basswood located in the southwest portion of the park.

Natural Resources staff ensure the protection of natural resources to best serve community members for future generations at French Regional Park. These natural resource management activities benefit the park's forestry, wildlife, and water resources. The Park plan maintains these current management activities and recommends additional terrestrial invasive species control at French Regional Park through the volunteer Adopt-A-Woodlot program which could assist Natural Resource staffing to reach this goal. Additionally, the Park District staff also actively manage the park's tree canopy through shade tree management techniques and assisted migration.

Natural resource management activities include, but are not limited to:

- Invasive species control – chemical and mechanical for aquatic and woodland applications
- Over seeding
- Tree planting/removal
- Vegetation surveys
- Animal surveys
- Water sampling
- Deer management
- Management of Canada goose harassment
- Wetland water level control

Consistency with Other Council Policies and Systems

Council staff have reviewed and found the proposed master plans to be consistent with the other plans and policies of the Council, including *Thrive MSP 2040*, the *Water Resources Policy Plan*, the *Transportation Policy Plan*, and the *Housing Policy Plan*. Additional review comments are included below.

Community Development – Forecasts (Todd Graham, 651-602-1322) – The Park District considers 2010-2040 forecasted population growth and recent park visitation estimates. Those are combined into a park visitation projection, stated on page 11: "French Regional Park is a popular destination within the Park District system, receiving 631,600 visits/year. Within twenty years, French Regional Park could expect approximately 850,000 visits/year if current visitation trends continue."



Environmental Services – Sewers (Roger Janzig, 651-602-1119) – There are no regional wastewater interceptors, lift stations, or other related facilities in the vicinity of the French Regional Park; therefore, Council staff do not identify any impact from the park.

Environmental Services – Water Resources (Maureen Hoffman, 651-602-1279) – Council staff have reviewed the Park plan and it appears to be accurate and complete. Potential water resource impacts appear to be addressed.

Metro Transit (Patrick Haney, 612-349-7451) – Council staff have reviewed the French Regional Park MP (50242-1) and it is complete. As the Park plan notes, there is no existing bus service. We do not anticipate any impacts to transit.

