

Committee Report

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Community Development Committee Meeting: Nov. 6, 2023

For the Metropolitan Council: Nov. 8, 2023

Business Item: 2023-261 SW

Battle Creek Regional Park Long Range Plan, Ramsey County

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve Ramsey County's Battle Creek Regional Park Long-Range Plan.
2. Require Ramsey County, prior to initiating any development of the regional park, to send preliminary plans to the Environmental Services Assistant Manager at the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Division.

Summary of Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission Discussion

Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst, presented the staff report to the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission on November 3, 2023. Scott Yonke and Ben Karp, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation, were in attendance and responded to questions.

Chair Yarusso sought clarification on which areas were proposed for acquisition, acknowledging Fish Creek Open Space was one of three larger areas. Kelly responded that Suburban Pond Open Space and Mississippi River Bluffs Open Space were the other two larger acquisition areas.

Commissioner Dillenburg sought clarification on where the majority of the estimated acquisition costs would be applied. Kelly responded that approximately \$57M of the total \$58M estimated acquisition costs would be used to protect 224 acres in the Mississippi River Bluffs Open Space.

Commissioner Moeller sought clarification on how the equity analysis impacted the development concept. Kelly responded that the County's plans to prioritize beginner to intermediate outdoor programs, increase fishing opportunities, and develop learning trail corridors are all intended to benefit racially diverse community members and/or youth.

Chair Yarusso asked where additional fishing opportunities would be offered, noting pollution concerns in the Pigs Eye Lake area. Karp responded that the proposed fishing opportunities would be located in the storm ponds located in the northeast portion of the Battle Creek segment.

Commissioner Taylor asked whether agencies could request funding for programming. Kelly noted programming is not one of the long-range plan requirements, but agencies often include it anyway. Karp noted that some programming is built into the operations and maintenance cost estimate.

Commissioner Bouska raised concerns about fish consumption, noting pollution and water quality issues in the area. Chair Yarusso responded that the Minnesota Department of Health has jurisdiction over fish consumption and that this was not a county-level issue, primarily. Council Parks Manager Emmett Mullin noted that there is a task force actively working to address issues in the Pigs Eye Lake area.

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

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

Business Item

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission: November 2, 2023

Committee Meeting Date: November 6, 2023

For the Metropolitan Council: November 8, 2023

Business Item: 2023-261 SW

Battle Creek Regional Park Long-Range Plan, Ramsey County

District(s), Member(s):	Commission District G, Anthony Taylor Commission District F, Cecily Harris Council District 12, Susan Vento Council District 13, Chai Lee
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minnesota Statutes § 473.313; <i>2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan</i> : Chapter 5, Planning Strategy 1
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst, 651-602-1361
Division/Department:	Community Development / Regional Parks

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve Ramsey County's Battle Creek Regional Park Long-Range Plan.
2. Require Ramsey County, prior to initiating any development of the regional park, to send preliminary plans to the Environmental Services Assistant Manager at the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Division.

Background

Ramsey County has submitted the Battle Creek Regional Park Long-Range Plan for Council consideration. This plan replaces and updates the 1981 Battle Creek Regional Park Joint Master Plan for Development.

The nearly 1900-acre regional park is located in the east-central part of the Regional Parks System and southeast Ramsey County, including portions of St. Paul and Maplewood (Figures 1-3).

Ramsey County's portion of Battle Creek Regional Park can generally be divided into two main segments: the Battle Creek and Pigs Eye segments. The Battle Creek segment offers multiple recreational amenities such as picnicking areas, a swimming area, an off-leash dog park, winter sports, and a visitor center, as well as maintained trail systems.

This long-range plan has been developed to act as a separate guiding document from the Battle Creek Regional Park – Pigs Eye Lake Long-Range Plan Amendment approved by the Council in April 2021 ([Business Item No. 2021-68](#)). That plan amendment addressed natural resource and public safety improvements.

Battle Creek Regional Park connects to Indian Mounds Regional Park, managed by the City of Saint Paul, as well as planned and proposed regional trails. Those trails include the planned Point Douglas Regional Trail and a regional search corridor for the Afton Bluffs Regional Trail.

The land use context of the regional park is complex. It is situated within a network of residential, industrial, and municipal, state, and railroad-owned properties. Additionally, there is a range of river-related commerce, industry, and transportation networks that travel through or adjacent to the regional park.

Though the river corridor has been extensively developed, many intact and remnant natural areas remain within the regional park, including bluffs, islands, floodplains, wetlands, riparian zones, and native aquatic and terrestrial flora and fauna.

Rationale

The Battle Creek Regional Park Long-Range 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 Battle Creek Regional Park Long-Range Plan advances the *Thrive* outcome of Livability by increasing access to nature and outdoor recreation, which enhances quality of life in the region.

Funding

The total estimated cost to acquire needed inholdings at Battle Creek Regional Park is \$58,754,945. The total estimated improvement cost is \$30,150,000. The total estimated annual operations and maintenance costs are \$878,000.

Taken together, the total estimated cost associated with the Battle Creek Regional Park Long-range Plan is \$89,602,945.



Figure 1. Battle Creek Regional Park location within the Regional Parks and Trails System

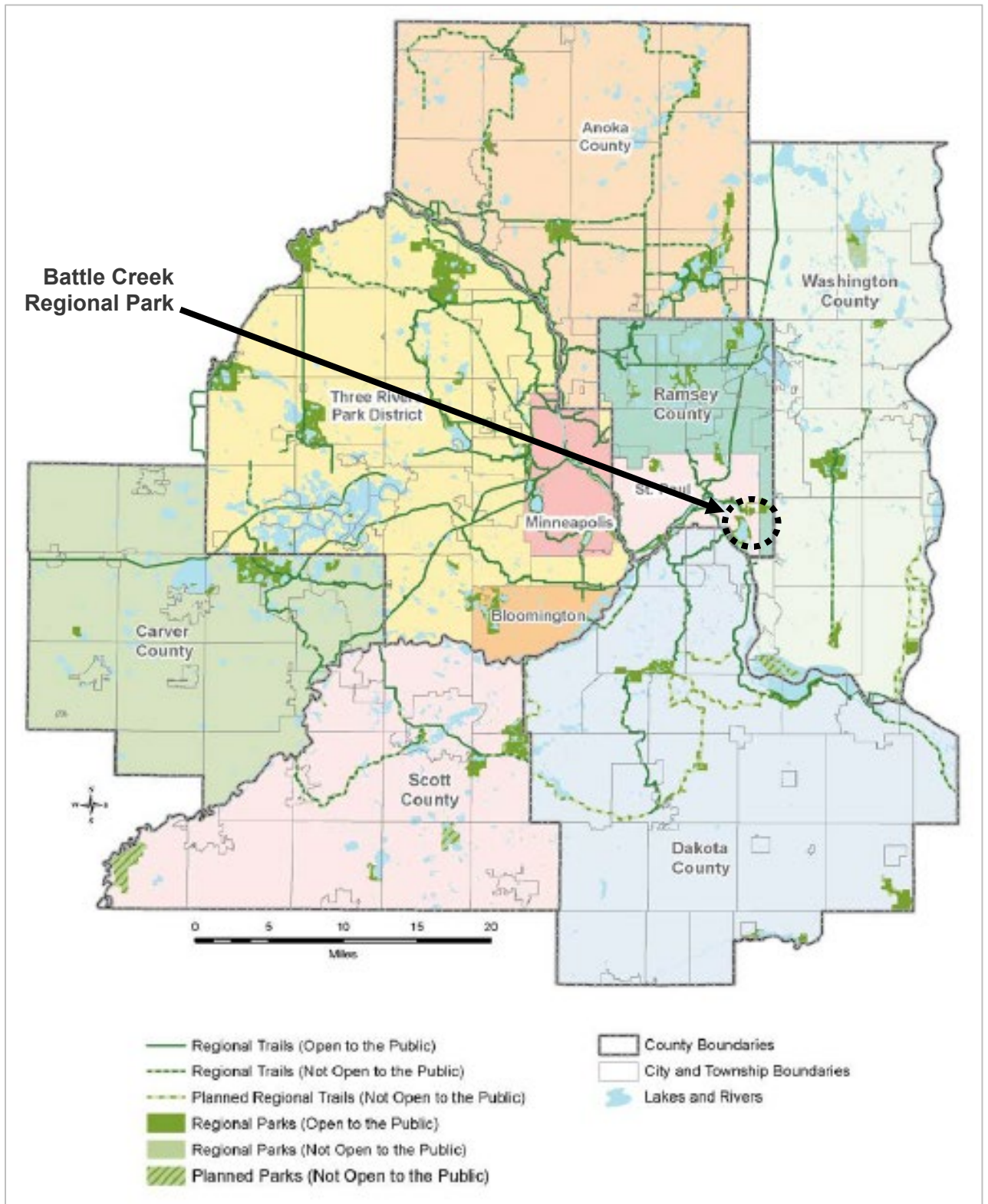


Figure 2. Battle Creek Regional Park location within Ramsey County

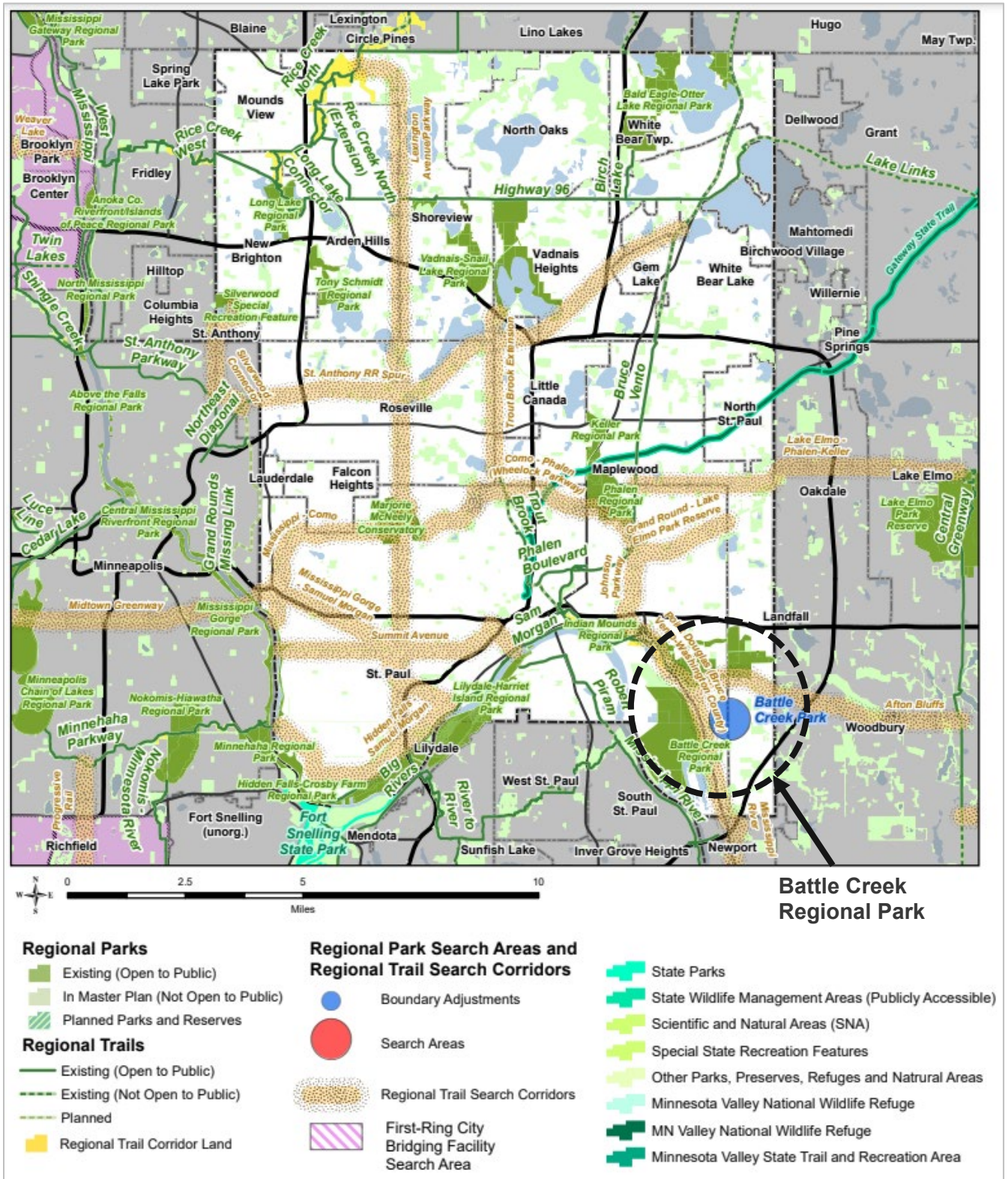
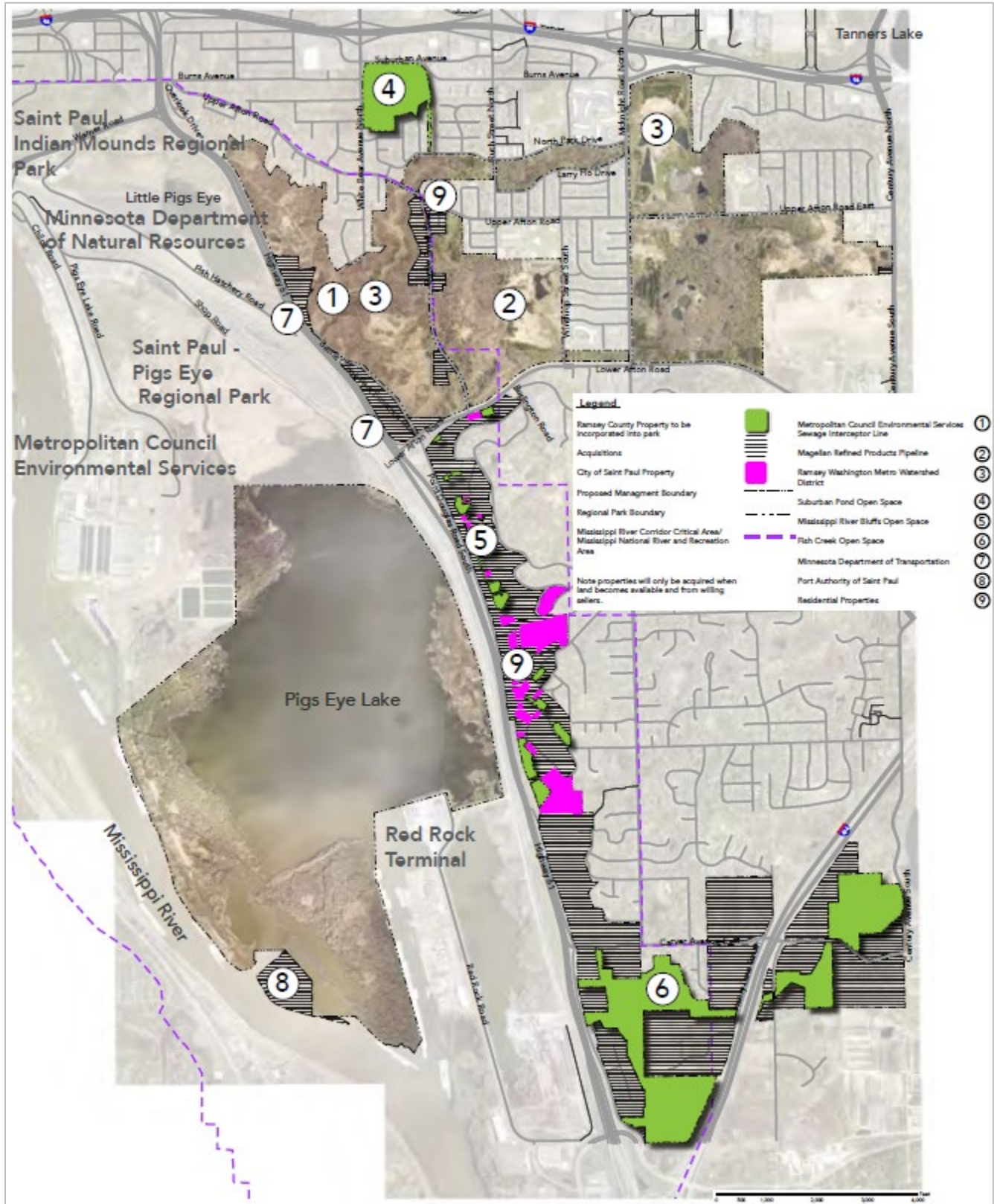


Figure 3. Battle Creek Regional Park Boundary Map (LRP pg.66)



Metropolitan Council

Analysis

Planning Strategy 1 of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires long-range 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 long-range plan against those requirements.

Boundaries

Battle Creek Regional Park is the largest regional park in Ramsey County. The park can generally be divided into two main segments, the moderately-developed Battle Creek segment, and the undeveloped Pigs Eye segment. The Battle Creek segment of the park is bound by Interstate 94 to the north, Century Avenue to the east, Lower Afton Road to the south, Highway 61 to the west, and consists of 759.5 acres.

The Pigs Eye Lake segment of the park is bound by Highway 61 to the east, the Mississippi River to the south and west, properties owned by the city of Saint Paul and Metropolitan Council Environmental Services to the north, consisting of 1131.7 acres. In total, the regional park is 1,891.2 acres in size.

There are existing easements within Battle Creek Regional Park, including:

- Metropolitan Council Environmental Services Sewage Interceptor Line 1-SP-200/201. This interceptor roughly parallels Battle Creek and is an important component of Council Environmental Services infrastructure.
- Magellan Refined Products Pipeline. A small portion of the approximately 9,800-mile pipeline covering a 15-state area across the central United States, runs through the regional park.
- An access agreement for the storm water line that runs underneath engineered portions of Battle Creek, between Ramsey County Parks and Recreation and Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District.

Acquisition Costs

Future long-term acquisition is proposed for Battle Creek Regional Park when properties become available. The plan proposes expanding both the administrative and management boundaries of the regional park to include areas of county open space, as well as long-term acquisitions to link the existing park land with Fish Creek Open Space. The long-term plan is to add an additional 661.8 acres to Battle Creek Regional Park, for a future total of 2,553 acres.

The County is proposing to add several parcels to the regional park boundary (Figure 3). The proposed acquisitions may be characterized in the following manner:

- Properties owned by Ramsey County and within the County Parks System
- Publicly Held Properties
- Residential Properties

Properties owned by Ramsey County and within the County Parks System

Properties owned by Ramsey County and within the County Parks System include Suburban Pond Open Space, Mississippi River Bluffs Open Space, and Fish Creek Open Space.

Suburban Pond Open Space consists of 32 acres of primarily a wetland complex surrounded by an old field on the south and mixed woods on the east side of the site. This property is located directly north of the existing regional park and provides an opportunity to expand the trails system along with another potential trailhead. No acquisition cost is required since it is owned by Ramsey County.

The Mississippi River Bluffs Open Space is a narrow two-mile strip of steep-sloped bluff line paralleling the east side of Highway 61 between Battle Creek Regional Park to the north and Fish Creek Open Space to the south. The County currently owns parcels totaling 19.55 acres in the



area and is proposing to acquire approximately 224 acres with an anticipated timeline of 20+ years. The total anticipated cost for full long-term acquisition in this space is approximately \$57,512,000.

Ramsey County and the City of Maplewood own parcels within the Fish Creek Open Space. Maplewood has requested that Ramsey County take over ownership and management of the section of land currently owned by the City. Ramsey County owns the remaining properties of Fish Creek Open Space. The County has an interest in incorporating Fish Creek Open Space into the Regional Park System due to its size, natural areas, diverse range of land habitat, future park access, and proximity to Battle Creek Regional Park. It is anticipated that the Maplewood-owned parcels of Fish Creek would be acquired through a land transfer, the cost of which is unknown at this time. Future acquisition is proposed for adjacent residential properties and long-term expansion of Battle Creek Regional Park when properties become available from willing sellers.

Publicly Held Properties

The County is interested in several publicly owned properties by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), Port Authority of Saint Paul, and City of Saint Paul. The County is interested in several properties owned by MnDOT along the east side of Highway 61. Including these parcels would create contiguous parkland. The Port Authority of Saint Paul owns a parcel which abuts the Pigs Eye Island Heron Rookery Scientific and Natural Area. This would add to the total footprint of the scientific and natural area, further protecting the heron rookery. Lastly, the City of St. Paul owns properties along the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River. The County plans to coordinate with these public agencies on these long-term acquisition opportunities.

Residential Properties

There are many residential properties within the Battle Creek Segment of the park that the County is interested in acquiring. These properties would provide numerous benefits to the regional park including trail connectivity, an additional trailhead space, and connecting major park segments. Residential properties would only be acquired when land becomes available and from willing sellers.

527 Battle Creek Road is a residential property that would provide a critical access point and a potential trailhead in the regional park. The acquisition cost, including stewardship costs, is approximately \$1,062,945.

The total estimated acquisition cost for the Battle Creek Regional Park is \$58,574,945.

Stewardship Plan

Battle Creek Regional Park contains some of the highest quality natural resources in Ramsey County. The goal for managing the resources of the park is to protect and improve the health and native diversity of these resources. Working toward this goal will enhance the unique resources that the park was established to preserve for the community, provide attractive and interesting recreation settings, and allow natural communities to adapt to change and disturbance in the future.

Managing for ecosystem health in the park will include identifying and conserving viable populations of native species, using natural disturbances such as controlled fires to maintain and restore communities, and increasing native species diversity in the park and surrounding areas when possible. Recreation uses should be balanced with the ability of resources to sustain use without damage. Areas most sensitive to human use should be considered for the least intensive uses; areas that can sustain more use without negative impacts to plant and animal communities or natural systems should be considered for more intensive use.

Demand Forecast

Visits to the Regional Parks System increased by 6.3% from 2018 to 2019 to an estimated 63.3 million visits. Ramsey County facilities were the fourth most visited with an estimated 5.7 million visits. Additionally, Ramsey County had the largest percentage increase in visitation at 19%. The County's regional facility visits have continually increased from 3.8 million in 2015 to 5.7 million in



2019.

Battle Creek Regional Park was the most visited Ramsey County facility in 2019 with an estimated 887,744 visits. Visitation to the regional park is anticipated to increase as a result of forecasted population growth within the park service area. The expansion of the regional park to include Suburban Pond Open Space, Fish Creek Open Space, and Mississippi River Bluffs Open Space will increase access and public awareness of the park while increasing recreational amenities and opportunities to meet recreational demands.

Based on the 2018 Ramsey County Community Health Assessment, Ramsey County is the most densely populated county in Minnesota and is expected to grow by over 77,000 individuals by 2030. Over time, County residents will become much more racially and ethnically diverse.

By 2040, the population is expected to grow to 655,144 with over half of the population being people of color. Due to population increase, as well as being the most visited park operated by Ramsey County Parks and Recreation, usage of Battle Creek Regional Park is expected to see a continual increase.

Development Concept

Battle Creek Regional Park is in a growing and diverse area of Saint Paul and Maplewood and is linked to the Regional Parks and Trails System via an expanding network of regional trails. The park is home to restored and remnant prairies, varied wildlife, and unique vegetation types that should be maintained, preserved, and restored. The park's natural setting and variety of outdoor recreation opportunities attract people to the park.

Through thoughtful planning and development of recreational infrastructure and amenities, park users will continue to find joy in the park's natural beauty and unique features. Community members strongly advocated that new development be clustered at existing nodes of development.

Long-term development includes connecting the Battle Creek and Fish Creek segments of the park. Some acquisition of land would be required to connect these segments. Proposed amenities include:

- Additional park access points, picnicking opportunities, and scenic overlooks
- Natural surface trails along with a multi-use trail connecting the Battle Creek and Fish Creek segments of the park.
- A multi-use trail paved trail along the Interstate 494 and Century Avenue corridor which would create a loop connecting the surrounding neighborhood.

Recreational development for Battle Creek Regional Park includes a mix of active and passive recreational opportunities including walking, hiking, bicycling, off-road cycling, cross-country skiing, birdwatching, canoeing, kayaking, and interpretive and educational programming and amenities. Existing trailheads and pedestrian access points have planned enhancements to improve site amenities as well as safe access into the park.

There is a desire to find a location for a community nature center and recreation center with improved amenities. The Park's unique and attractive setting along the Mississippi River bluffs and floodplain have provided a strong desire to expand the park and the many recreation opportunities and amenities that it provides. Some of the major amenities proposed (Figure 4 and 5) include:

- Multi-season trailhead and nature center
- New trailhead locations along Battle Creek Road, within the Fish Creek Segment of the park, and Suburban Pond.
- Waterworks redevelopment or reconstruction.
- Proposed extension of existing trails:
 - 2.03 miles of paved multi-use trails.

- 2.9 miles of natural surface hiking and walking trails.
- 4.22 miles of combined hiking and off-road cycling trails.
- Safe pedestrian access points.
- Interpretive signage along three identified learning trail corridors.
- Improvements to the off-leash dog area.
- Additional picnicking opportunities.
- Benches, trash and recycling bins, wayfinding signs, water fountains, etc.
- Additional access to the Pigs Eye Lake segment of the park, long-term.

The redevelopment of the Battle Creek Recreation Center or the development of a new building within the regional park will require further community engagement, along with an additional amendment to the plan. A refined concept will need to be created to understand building expansion, parking, conflicts, and the potential impacts to other recreation facilities such as the play area and recreation fields. Other locations within the park are also being considered for such a facility, including at 527 Battle Creek Road and Fish Creek Open Space, dependent upon future acquisitions.

Improvements to the off-road cycling and cross-country skiing systems are a priority as well. Off-road cycling and trail riding have continued to gain popularity throughout the region. In addition to adult riders, schools are creating more off-road cycling clubs and leagues to introduce riders of all abilities at a younger age. Battle Creek Regional Park is currently the only park in Ramsey County to offer off-road cycling trails. A skills area, bike repair stations, and wayfinding signage, both at trailheads and throughout the trail system, are proposed.

Turning the Winter Recreation Area into a destination for cross country skiing in the county has been a long-term goal and this activity was strongly supported during public engagement activities. Recent improvements have included adding snowmaking and lighting to a portion of the trail system. Improved facilities and a staging area for races and events are proposed.

Popular activities like walking, hiking, trail running, winter hiking, and snowshoeing remain a priority as well. With the addition of proposed trail opportunities, there will be nearly 14 miles of combined hiking and off-road cycling trails, over ten miles of mowed grass trails, nine miles of multi-use paved trails and four-and-a-half miles of dedicated natural surface hiking trails, totaling over 38 miles.

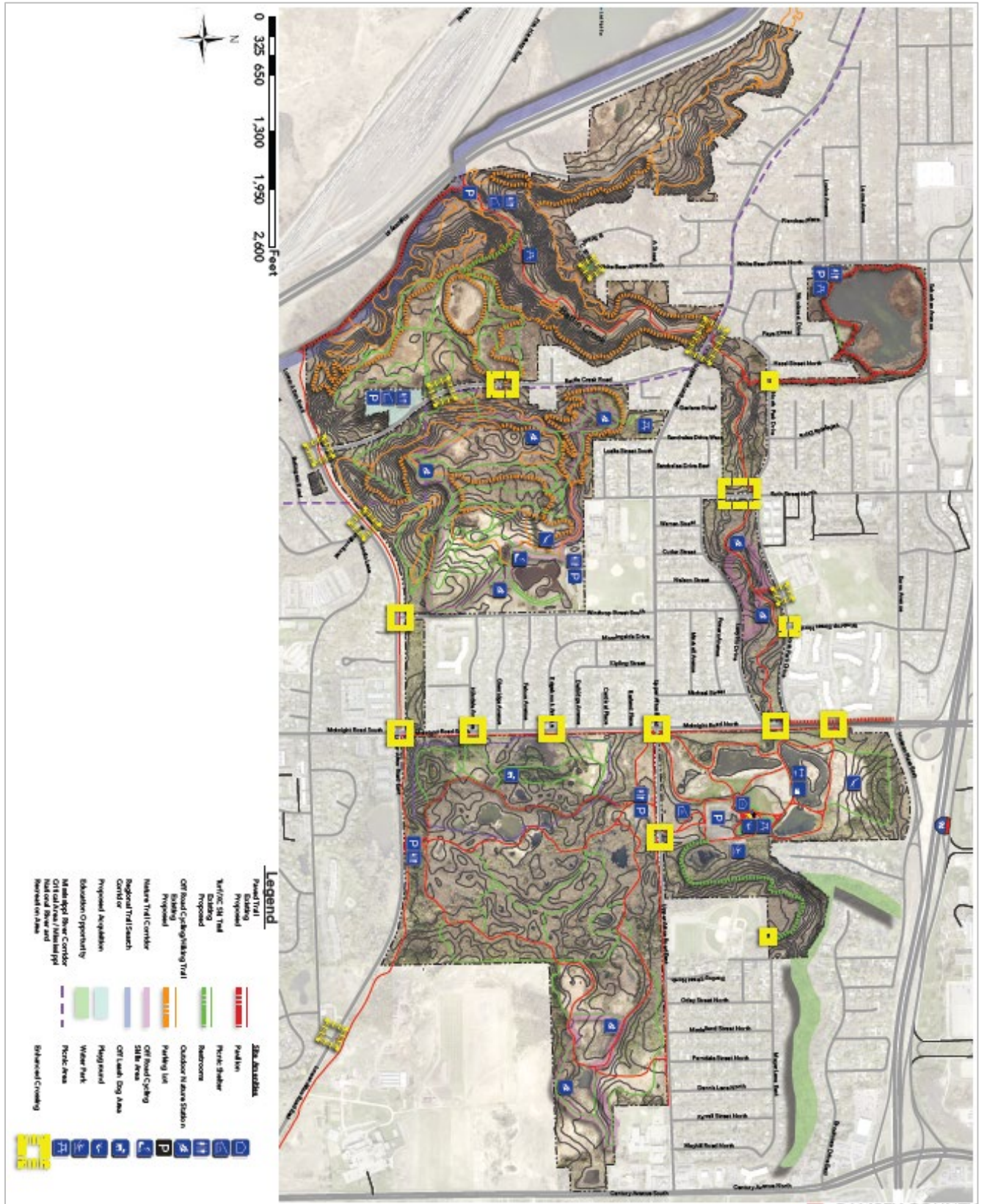
Ramsey County will continue to study trails for winter use. Park trails are dominated by cross-country skiing in the winter. Other areas should be considered for expanded uses outside of the snow-making operations. The trails west of Battle Creek Road would be a good area to consider additional winter uses while maintaining some cross-country ski opportunities.

As noted, the Pigs Eye Lake Long-Range Plan Amendment acts as a separate natural resource guiding document for this undeveloped part of the regional park. The Battle Creek Regional Park Long-Range Plan acknowledges community feedback that encourages future connections to, and recreational opportunities in, the Pigs Eye segment.

Ramsey County recognizes that access to the Pigs Eye Lake Segment cannot be implemented until all appropriate investigations into environmental contamination are complete and mitigation strategies have concluded and verified. In partnership with a variety of stakeholders, the County is committed to addressing the environmental issues surrounding Pigs Eye Lake and will continue to work with stakeholders and community members to develop concepts for future recreational activities that are safe and compatible with land uses in the area.

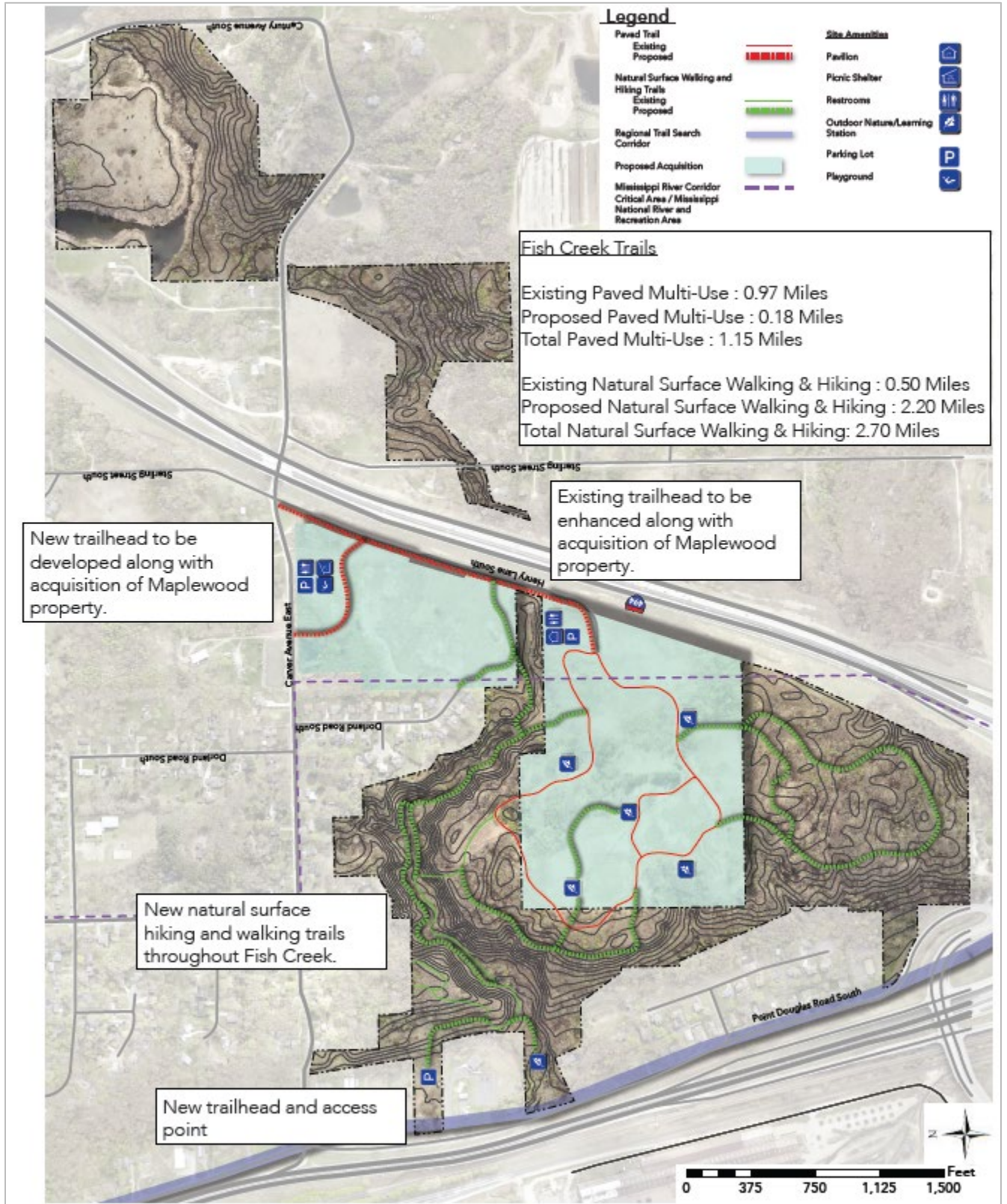


Figure 4. Battle Creek Regional Park Overall Development Concept (LRP, map p. 80)



Metropolitan Council

Figure 5. Battle Creek Regional Park, Fish Creek Segment Development Concept (LRP, map p.92)



Conflicts

Land uses adjacent to Battle Creek Regional Park are predominately residential and commercial near the Battle Creek, Fish Creek, and Mississippi River Bluffs segments. The Pigs Eye segment is surrounded by industrial uses and public services. Bisecting the two sites is Highway 61 and a major railroad corridor. Due to the surrounding uses, Pigs Eye Lake is largely cut off from the surrounding community.

The Battle Creek segment of the regional park has pedestrian-vehicular conflicts that arise from the segmented nature of the park, requiring visitors to cross busy roads and intersections to enter the park or access trails. The County is committed to alleviating and increasing safe crossings as recommended in the long-range plan.

Land uses surrounding Pigs Eye Lake will make accessing the land and establishing any future trailheads challenging. On the north end of the lake, the City of Saint Paul and the Metropolitan Wastewater Treatment Plant border property owned by the County. Potential access through the land owned by Saint Paul has the potential to disturb the Pigs Eye Dump while access near the treatment plant poses safety and security challenges. On the south end of the lake, the Saint Paul Port Authority operates the Red Rock Terminal. Accessing and using the public land surrounding the terminal will require further planning for any type of trailhead to be established at this site.

Public Services

New public services may be needed to accommodate the nature/recreation center dependent upon the final location of the development and projected use. It is anticipated that additional development within existing trailhead sites and for the nature/recreation center will require new services for gas, water, sanitary sewer, and for communications.

New restrooms, lighting, utilities, drinking fountains, and other amenities are proposed for trailheads. Additional planning would be needed to accommodate the development and implementation of new trailheads. The proposed utilities will be implemented at the time of trailhead installation. Improvements may vary based on trailhead location.

Public transit and safety services such as police, fire, and emergency medical response will also need to be evaluated during the planning and implementation stages for various amenities.

Operations

Operations and maintenance of the regional park is the responsibility of the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department. Operations and maintenance services will be provided at a level that is appropriate for the designated use and consistent with proposed development. The level of services will be directly influenced by demand, use, budget limitations, and the county's operation and maintenance policies. Funding for regional park maintenance and operation is appropriated from county tax revenue and is supplemented by state appropriation.

Battle Creek Regional Park is a valuable resource for the community and requires proper maintenance to keep it in good condition for park visitors. The County's operations and maintenance objectives include:

- Maintaining park facilities in a safe, clean, and functional condition.
- Preserving and caring for the natural resources of Battle Creek Regional Park.
- Promoting responsible use of park resources by park visitors.
- Maintaining a welcoming and attractive environment for park visitors.

Operations and maintenance costs are based on a combination of past practice, work done in other park systems, and expert opinion. Operation and maintenance cost may vary from year to year depending on economic, climatic, development, and demand of infrastructure. The estimated annual operations and maintenance cost is \$878,000.

Partner Engagement

Ramsey County started the long-range planning efforts for the Battle Creek Regional Park in

Spring 2019. Stakeholder agencies are the key decision makers throughout the planning process and were primarily involved through the Project Management Team (PMT). The PMT is defined as the decision-making body for the project, however, all decisions were informed by feedback from the community. The PMT guided the planning effort by providing recommendations for approaches and decisions at key project milestones. PMT members also participated in public meetings as needed. The County hosted five PMT meetings between June 2019 to December 2020. The PMT consisted of representatives from:

- Ramsey County
- City of Saint Paul
- City of Maplewood
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- SRF Consulting Inc.
- Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi (formally known as Lower Phalen Creek Project)

Additionally, the County coordinated with communications staff from each of the partner agencies to provide project updates and information leveraging their partner's communication outlets as another avenue for outreach.

The Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department has received letters of support and resolutions supporting the Battle Creek Regional Park Long-Range Plan from the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Commission (Attachment 1), the Cities of Saint Paul and Maplewood (Attachments 2 & 3), and the District 1 - Southeast Community Organization (Attachment 4).

Public Engagement and Participation

To aid the park planning effort, SRF Consulting was contracted to guide the public engagement phase. Based upon initial project discussions and an analysis of park stakeholders, it is recommended that this project engage at a "collaborate" level of engagement, as described in the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum of public engagement. At this level, the project team partners with the public on key aspects, including identifying issues and needs, determining alternative options, and providing guidance on preferred alternative plans. The overall goals for engagement were to:

- Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure there is transparency and consistent communication of project information.
- Use an equity lens in amplifying the voices of communities traditionally left out of planning processes, including immigrants, people of color, LGBTQ communities, Native American communities, youth, and the elderly.
- Connect with a broad cross section of community stakeholders to provide ideas, guidance, and feedback.
- Deploy a defined communications and messaging strategy.

The County's objective was to be transparent, efficient, and provide equitable public engagement and communications that will support two key strategies: consistent communication and tailored involvement. Using these strategies helped to ensure a public process that met the overall goals of the project.

Consistent communication meant regularly providing information and opportunities for feedback. Community websites, newsletters, and other print, online, and in-person communications provided information around the project's need, timeline, and impacts.

Tailored involvement uses methods and locations that work best for individual stakeholder groups. For example, different approaches are taken for connecting with stakeholder agencies or organizations and recreational interest groups or the general public.

During the engagement process, the County conducted stakeholder meetings, pop-up



engagement, at-large meetings, design charrette, virtual design charrette, project website, social media, Wiki map, and online surveys as platforms to engage the public. In conjunction to the meetings, the County used multiple communication tools to provide important project updates such as the project website, newsletter, mail, social media platforms, in-park posters, and in-person engagements.

The general public, park users, underrepresented community members, cities, and organizations were welcomed to review and provide comments on the park plan during a 30-day Park Concept Plan Review in November 2020. These groups were invited to review and provide comments on the Long-Range Plan over a 45-day period in the fall of 2021 as well.

Overall recommendations for the Battle Creek Regional Park include:

- Balance recreation with natural passive uses.
- Improve bike and pedestrian connectivity.
- Play area improvements.
- Realize the goal of connecting people and youth to the park.
- Improve wayfinding.
- Protect the bluffs and acquire more bluff land for the park.
- Identify areas for water fountains and restrooms.
- Better narrative of the site and its history.
- Preserve natural areas and strategically locate new development within developed park areas.

Equity Analysis

Project Data

Public engagement for the Long-Range Plan was intended to reach as wide of an audience as possible, while focusing on an equitable and thoughtful approach to reach a racially diverse audience. Ramsey County focused on gathering information both from community members who live near the regional park and county-wide.

In 2019, Ramsey County had a population of 544,442. The median household income of the county was \$64,660, with a poverty rate of 14%. The subset of the population living in a census tract within 1/2 mile of the regional park had a population of 84,604, with a median income of \$57,341 and a poverty rate of 12.6%

The area surrounding the regional park is largely representative of Ramsey County as a whole, with slightly higher racial diversity. Additional data for neighborhoods within the immediate area shows a higher percentage of home ownership and a lower percentage of renter-occupied housing than the County as a whole. Transportation is another area of difference. Residents in the area of the regional park have a higher percentage of households with multiple vehicles and use public transportation less than the County as a whole.

Relative to the rest of the County, the area surrounding the regional park is a more racially diverse area with a population that also skews slightly younger. The focus area looked at census tracts within 1/2 mile of the park. The focus area has larger populations of Asian or Pacific Islanders, black or African Americans, and Hispanic or Latino peoples.

The racial demographic around the regional park includes the following ranges:

- 0.30% American Indian/Alaskan Native,
- 3.80% Two or More Races,
- 8.90% Hispanic or Latino,
- 13.30% Black or African Americans,



- 15.30% Asian or Pacific Islanders, and
- 63.70% White.

The age demographic around the regional park includes the following ranges:

- 24.68% under 18,
- 37.93% ages 18-44,
- 24% ages 45-64, and
- 13.39% age 65 and older.

Public Engagement

Ramsey County, their consultant, and the PMT collaborated to develop a community engagement plan that would focus on the Asian or Pacific Islanders, black or African Americans, and Hispanic or Latino community. A key strategy with the underrepresented communities was to have translation services available and have translated materials posted throughout the park for upcoming community meetings and events. To ensure that the underrepresented communities were engaged and part of the process, the County held pop-up meetings at various community festivals, events, and the Battle Creek Regional Park pavilion. Specific engagement locations and events included:

- Hmongtown Marketplace.
- Battle Creek Pavilion Eritrean Muslim Council Event.
- Southeast Community Organization Community Event.
- Battle Creek Recreation Center Food Shelf Night.
- Southeast Community Organization Council Meeting.
- Carver Elementary Family Night.
- Battle Creek Middle School English as a Second Language Classroom.

The level of engagement for all underrepresented community members, as well as the general public, was “collaborate” based on the IAP2 spectrum.

General themes from the underrepresented members and groups include:

- Prioritize beginner to intermediate level outdoor programs.
- Prioritize introductory outdoor recreational activity programs such as off-road cycling, hiking, and cross country-skiing with an intention to keep fees to a minimum or free.
- Prioritize the redevelopment of waterworks or the implementation of a free splash pad.
- Develop and improve park amenities such as picnic facilities and shelters, playgrounds, and trails.
- Trailhead amenities such as water fountains, restrooms, and security cameras are important for access and to feel safe.
- Support for the addition of a nature center.
- Increase fishing opportunities.
- Create safe access to the regional park.

Input from underrepresented community members helped shape and influence the plan’s development. The addition of a nature center, waterworks redevelopment, and more programming were all priority items identified by underrepresented community members. The feedback also helps the County to prioritize future projects and implementation strategies.



Evaluation Summary

Participation by underrepresented community members and younger audiences provided the County with valuable feedback and underscored the importance of trail development, trailhead improvements, and the addition of a nature center. The County has also heard programming needs to be an essential part of the regional park as the long-range plan is implemented.

Ramsey County is committed to building relationships with underrepresented community members. The County plans to develop programs and continue to explore ways to involve community members and keep costs low. There will be more engagement opportunities as plan implementation occurs. The County will continue to use best practices for future engagement.

Public Awareness

Ramsey County employs a variety of tools to promote awareness and use of the regional park system. This includes electronic and print communication methods such as websites, park maps, brochures, email notification, X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook, and press releases. Ramsey County will continue to provide up-to-date information on the County website.

The County will also collaborate with the cities of Saint Paul and Maplewood, and the Metropolitan Council to promote the park through their websites, newsletters, brochures, and social media.

Accessibility

Ramsey County's park system was originally designed for vehicular access. While access to the system is still predominately vehicle-oriented, public transportation options have expanded and bicycling has increased in popularity. The intent of the County's All Abilities Transportation Program is a more accessible transportation network for residents of all abilities.

Ramsey County Parks & Recreation is committed to providing universal accessibility at all park and trail facilities. Ramsey County is part of the Ramsey County Active Living Communities partnership which aims to bring sustainable changes in design, transportation, and public/private policies to cultivate and support a way of life that makes physical activity in our neighborhoods and communities safer and easier. Ramsey County uses the following to assess and implement these changes:

- ADA Transition & Implementation Plan
- Ramsey County Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan
- All Abilities Transportation Network

Parks and trails are generally free of charge, while other department recreation options, such as golf and arena use, are fee-based. This removes an important financial barrier and serves to encourage healthy outdoor activities.

Natural Resources

The long-range plan defines natural resource management units and recommends tasks and associated schedules for each of these units. These recommendations are made by prioritizing each of the habitat areas as high, medium, and low. While all resources of the park are important, this prioritization recognizes the limits of staff time and other resources available to the park, and prioritizes management activities based on several criteria:

- Remaining habitats of the highest quality and native diversity should receive attention first. If these resources are lost, it may not be possible to replace them; and restoration of such resources, if possible, is generally more costly than protecting and caring for it.
- Medium quality areas still have valuable resources but will require much higher inputs than high quality areas to reverse degradation and improve habitat quality, and outcomes of management activities may be uncertain.
- Low quality communities have regressed so that they exhibit little native diversity and would need intensive restoration and management to achieve the quality of high or medium quality areas. Some of these low-quality areas have been developed for recreation



activities that are not compatible with resources of higher quality habitat areas, but are important to park users, and can usefully remain dedicated to these activities.

In addition to prioritizing natural resources management based on the quality and native diversity of habitat areas in the park, and working to restore native diversity and habitats where possible, the plan includes the following goals:

- Additional inventories of plants, animals, and trails should be completed to help guide future management.
- Management should seek to control or eliminate invasive species that are damaging the health of park habitats.
- The white-tail deer population should be managed to protect existing plant communities and aid the success of restoration activities.
- Restoration of native animals should be considered where appropriate when their habitat has been improved.
- Water resources should be protected using vegetative buffers and other methods.
- New proposals for recreation should be evaluated considering their effects on natural resources.
- Efforts should be made to work with park users, surrounding landowners and other organizations to inform them about the natural resources in the park and management options and identify and meet common goals in managing the park and resources connected to it, such as the bluff lands along the Mississippi River.
- The effects of management activities should be monitored, to provide guidance for future efforts.



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 – Land Use (Patrick Boylan, 651-602-1438)

Upon approval of the Battle Creek Regional Park Long-Range Plan, the cities of Maplewood and Saint will need to submit amendments to their 2040 Plans to acknowledge Council-approved long-range plan boundaries of Battle Creek Regional Park by guiding the land within their communities with a land use of “Park” (or equivalent) on their Future Land Use Map.

Community Development – Forecast (Todd Graham, 651-602-1322)

The long-range plan is informed by the Met Council socioeconomic forecast. The County suggests that park usage will increase in tandem with population. This appears sufficiently complete.

Environmental Services – Wastewater Services (Roger Janzig, 651-602-1119)

The construction of any new or updating of existing paths, trails, bridges, or any other construction project may have any impact on multiple Metropolitan Council Interceptors in multiple locations. To assess potential impacts to our interceptor system, prior to initiating any project, preliminary plans should be sent to Tim Wedin, Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager (651-602-4571) at the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services.

Environmental Services – Water Resources (Maureen Hoffman, 651-602-1279)

The Plan appears to be accurate and complete, and potential water resource impacts appear to be addressed.

Metropolitan Transportation Services (Joe Widing, 651-602-1822)

Council staff have reviewed the Battle Creek Plan for transportation. It is clear that there has been substantial engagement and time put into the plan.

For future consideration: Any maps or discussion of regional trail or search corridors should include labeling or acknowledgement of any Regional Bicycle Transportation Network routes that connect to the park.

Metro Transit (Stephen Baisden, 612-349-7361)

This long-range plan is fine from a transit perspective. Council staff do not have any issues with it. Routes 70 and 323 provide the nearest transit service. Route 70 provides local transit service adjacent to the regional park along Upper Afton Road and Ruth Street every 60 minutes every day of the week between downtown Saint Paul and Sun Ray Transit Center in Saint Paul. Route 323 provides local transit service adjacent to the regional park along McKnight Road and Lower Afton Road every 30 minutes every day of week between Sun Ray Transit Center in Saint Paul and Woodbury Theatre in Woodbury. Bus stops are located within walking distance of the regional park.

There are several bus stops referenced on page 48 of the plan where transit service has been suspended since March 2020. These bus stops are located along Burns Avenue and Winthrop Street where Route 350 is currently suspended. Also, the former Route 70 (D branch) service along Upper Afton Road and Century Avenue was replaced by Route 323 in 2021, with Route 323 providing more frequent and a longer service span all days of the week.

This long-range plan should not expect additional expansion of the transit network given the current transit investments.



Board of Commissioners Resolution B2023-070

15 West Kellogg Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55102
651-266-9200

Sponsor: Parks & Recreation

Meeting Date: 5/9/2023

Title: Battle Creek Regional Park Master Plan Amendment

File Number: 2023-172

Background and Rationale:

Parks & Recreation department has prepared a master plan amendment for Battle Creek Regional Park to accurately reflect long-term infrastructure and recreational improvements, boundary adjustments, long-term acquisitions, natural resource improvements, programming, public participation, and equity analysis.

Battle Creek Regional Park is 1,927 acres and is comprised of the Battle Creek and Pigs Eye Lake sections. The Battle Creek Regional Park Amendment has been developed to act as a separate guiding document from the Pigs Eye Lake Master Plan Amendment since the Pigs Eye Lake section is at a different level of development than the Battle Creek section. The main Battle Creek section is moderately developed with maintained trail systems, signage and other recreation facilities. Only the western portion of the Battle Creek section is within the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA). This section of park is subject to MRCCA regulations (state statute under Minnesota Rule 6106) which is in place to protect the unique natural and cultural resources and values within this corridor.

This master plan amendment replaces the 1981 Battle Creek Master Plan for the Battle Creek section of the regional park. The Battle Creek Master Plan amendment is written to fulfill the Metropolitan Council requirements for regional park as outlined in the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan and to meet the expectations set forth in the 2018 Ramsey County Parks and Recreation System Plan.

Parks & Recreation department worked in coordination with Metropolitan Council staff and the public throughout the master plan amendment development process. If approved by the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners, the master plan amendment will be forwarded to the Metropolitan Council for review and approval. Once the master plan amendment is approved by the Metropolitan Council, costs associated with all improvements identified in the master plan amendment will be eligible for reimbursement through grants administered by the Metropolitan Council for Regional Parks and Trails.

For more information on the Battle Creek Master Plan Amendment, please visit:

<https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/parks-recreation/planning-construction-restoration/battle-creek-regional-park-master-plan>

Recommendation:

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:



1. Approve the Battle Creek Regional Park Master Plan Amendment dated March 31, 2023.
2. Authorize submission of the Battle Creek Regional Park Master Plan Amendment to the Metropolitan Council.
3. Direct the County Manager to evaluate the following county-owned properties for potential alignment with the Battle Creek Regional Park Master Plan as a part of each property's land use and redevelopment planning process:
 - a. The former site of Boys Totem Town;
 - b. Maplewood Properties South (formerly The Ponds at Battle Creek); and
 - c. Maplewood Properties North (formerly part of the Ramsey County Correctional Facility).

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Frethem, seconded by Commissioner Reinhardt. Motion passed.

Aye: - 7: Frethem, MatasCastillo, McGuire, Moran, Ortega, Reinhardt, and Xiong

By: 
Mee Cheng, Chief Clerk - County Board





City of Saint Paul

City Hall and Court House
15 West Kellogg Boulevard
Phone: 651-266-8560

Legislation Text

File #: RES 22-1066, Version: 2

Supporting Ramsey County's Battle Creek Regional Park Master Plan Amendment. (Laid over from July 27, 2020)

WHEREAS, Ramsey County and the City of Saint Paul established a joint master plan for Battle Creek Regional Park in 1981; and

WHEREAS, the 1981 Battle Creek Regional Park Joint Master Plan was comprised of four sections, Indian Mounds, Fish Hatchery, Battle Creek and Pigs Eye Lake; and

WHEREAS, regional parks notably contain a diversity of nature-based resources, either naturally occurring or human-built, accommodate a variety of outdoor recreation activities; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Battle Creek Regional Park Master Plan amendment is to guide long-term development, recreation and programming amenities, boundary expansion and acquisition, engagement, preservation, and management for the Battle Creek ~~section long-term boundary expansion and acquisitions areas of Battle Creek Regional Park~~ within Battle Creek Regional Park ; and

WHEREAS, the 2022 master plan amendment incorporates long-term site, building and infrastructure improvements, recreation improvements, natural resource improvements, access and trail improvements, nature based recreational programming opportunities, park acquisition and boundary adjustments throughout the Battle Creek section of the regional park ~~and future boundary expansion and acquisition areas~~; and

WHEREAS, Ramsey County completed extensive engagement for the master plan from the spring of 2019 to fall of 2021, with the public, recreational groups, community stakeholders, and public agencies identified in the plan, encompassing 7 pop-up events, 2 online surveys, stakeholder meetings, 2 community design workshops, project management team meetings, elected official outreach, 1 virtual community meeting, a 30-day draft concept review, and a 45-day plan review, receiving over 2,000 comments pertaining to all aspects of the plan, which will be placed within the plan and uploaded to the Ramsey County Battle Creek Master Plan prior to its final adoption; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of Saint Paul, Minnesota, with the inclusion of the full record of public comment into the plan prior to its adoption, supports the Battle Creek Regional Park Master Plan Amendment





April 4, 2022

Scott Yonke
Ramsey County Parks & Recreation
2015 Van Dyke Street
Maplewood, MN 55109

Dear Mr. Yonke,

This letter is to share the City of Maplewood's support for the Battle Creek Regional Park Master Plan. The City believes this master plan will act as a long-term guiding document for implementing critical park and recreation elements that provide tremendous benefit to the regional parks and trail system as well as for the residents of Ramsey County.

The master plan incorporates long-term site and infrastructure improvements, recreation improvements, natural resource improvements, access improvements, park acquisition and boundary adjustments, and additional recreational opportunities throughout the regional park.

Improvements will include a new or reconstructed multi-season trailhead as well as a nature center which will provide a home for recreation, history and nature education, restrooms, warming areas for winter recreation, locker rooms, programming and classroom spaces, recreation staging areas, picnic or shelter opportunities, wayfinding signage, trail access and site amenities. There will also be improvements to the winter recreation area; an expanded recreational trails system; waterworks redevelopment; creation of learning trail corridors including additional educational signage and related trail components. There are plans for additional amenities at existing trailheads such as improved wayfinding signage, restrooms, increased parking, trail access, site amenities, and lighting. There are also plans for improved pedestrian access points including rapid flashing beacons, roadway signage, pedestrian refuges and crosswalks. There will be increased fishing opportunities within the park, improvements to the off-leash dog area; enhanced wayfinding, rules and trail signage throughout the park, and increased nature based and recreational park programming.

The long-term goals and objectives of the plan will have a positive impact on the community and are supported by the City of Maplewood.

Regards,

Marylee Abrams, Mayor

City of Maplewood
Office of the Mayor
1830 County Road B East
Maplewood, MN 55109

Office 651-249-2051
Fax 651-249-2059
www.maplewoodmn.gov





April 13, 2022

Benjamin Karp, Landscape Designer
Ramsey County Parks and Recreation
2015 North Van Dyke Street
Maplewood, MN 55109

Mr. Karp:

The Southeast Community Organization has appreciated the opportunity to engage with the staff working on the update of the Battle Creek Regional Park master plan. The Battle Creek and Pig's Eye units of the park are a significant natural asset in our community. The future of this park is one of our top priorities for greenspace and outdoor recreation. The expansion of the park's boundaries is also of interest to us as we feel it represents an opportunity to better develop these spaces in a way that meets the needs of neighbors.

I write this letter to express our organization's support for the draft master plan. We ask that we continue to be engaged as the improvements identified in the plan get designed and constructed. Our community is dynamic, and we pledge to help connect you with the different groups of residents that will call the district home in the future.

Sincerely,

Laurie A. Siever, President
Southeast Community Organization

Southeast Community Organization | 2105 ½ Old Hudson Rd | St. Paul, MN 55119
Southeastside.org | 651/578-7600

