

Committee Report

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Committee meeting date: April 21, 2025

For the Metropolitan Council: May 14, 2025

Business Item: 2025-87

Three Rivers Park District, Baker Park Reserve Long-Range Plan

Proposed action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Baker Park Reserve Long-Range Plan.
2. Advise Three Rivers Park District to consider implementing the recommendations for solar resources and population forecasts in the Advisory Comments section of the business item.
3. Require the Park District, prior to any new development of the park reserve, to send preliminary plans to the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager.

Summary of Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission discussion/questions

Colin Kelly, Met Council Planning Analyst and Kevin Phan, Met Council Planner, presented the staff analysis for the Baker Park Reserve Long Range Plan to the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission on April 3, 2025. Stephen Shurson and Jonathan Vlaming from Three Rivers Park District and Lisa Barajas, Met Council Community Development Director, were present to answer questions.

Commissioner Harris asked if the Federal Government's efforts to eliminate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion terminology from federal grant making will impact our work at the Met Council or if it will affect long-range planning efforts. Barajas responded that the Council's plans are locally funded and so will not be impacted.

Commissioner Yakes asked for a definition of an "inholding." Chair Yarusso responded that it is a privately held parcel that has been identified for future acquisition by the regional park implementing agency.

Commissioner Taylor expressed appreciation for the planned upgrades to the campground and asked if there are plans to create a regional trail connection from Lake Independence Regional Trail to Gale Woods Farm. Shurson responded that the Baker-Carver Regional Trail will eventually fill this gap, connecting Baker Park Reserve to Carver Park Reserve. He emphasized that this will require land acquisition. Shurson added that the future Lake Sarah Regional Trail (currently a Regional Trail Search Corridor) will connect Lake Rebecca Park Reserve to Hennepin County's first-tier communities.

Commissioner Dillenburg referenced the advisory comment about solar energy and asked if "solar energy" should be broadened to "clean energy." Emmett Mullin, Met Council Parks Manager, responded that the Council has a staff position that advocates specifically for solar energy. Council Member Wulff added that there is a provision in state law that requires access to sunlight.

Commissioner Harris questioned why some amenities within the golf course were included in the plan if the course isn't eligible for visitor counts or regional funding as an enterprise facility. Chair Yarusso responded that some amenities associated with golf courses are eligible since they support regionally significant recreational activities in the winter such as cross-country skiing.

Yarusso noted this is fairly common in the Regional Parks and Trails System.

Chair Yarusso noted that this is one of the first long-range plans for a far-flung regional park since Three Rivers began to explore the concept of bridging facilities and its Parks to People planning effort. Yarusso asked if the engagement process created different results and how Three Rivers plans to connect new groups to parks like Baker. Vlaming responded that the Parks to People effort taught Three Rivers that it needs to emphasize relationships with historically underrepresented groups through programming. Vlaming continued, saying Three Rivers initially considered building physical facilities and “micro-parks” in the first-tier communities, but found that programming was more effective. Yarusso followed up, asking if this engagement influenced the development concept. Vlaming responded yes, that engagement resulted in added amenities such as showers and flushable toilets, as well as providing intergenerational amenities like large and unreservable picnic shelters. Shurson added that other amenities being proposed are closely linked to engagement with underrepresented groups, including shoreline fishing throughout the park.

Chair Yarusso referenced the long-range plan’s intention to restore more Big Woods plant communities and asked how agencies determine the appropriate balance of pre-settlement vegetation versus more climate resilient species. Vlaming expressed appreciation for the good question and acknowledged Three Rivers’ natural resources staff was better equipped to address the question. Vlaming proposed a future opportunity to bring implementing agency natural resources staff to a Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting to talk about how natural resource plans are developed in a changing climate.

Commissioner Moeller noted that touring the park reserve last fall as part of the October 2024 Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting was helpful in visualizing the proposed improvements being made in the long-range plan, and encouraged staff to coordinate future MPOSC visits to regional parks and trails so that Commission members can more fully understand the context of long-range planning efforts.

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



Business Item

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Community Development Committee: April 21, 2025

Metropolitan Council: May 14, 2025

Business Item: 2025-87

Three Rivers Park District, Baker Park Reserve Long-Range Plan

District(s), Member(s):	District A, Monica Dillenburg District B, Robert Moeller District 1, Judy Johnson District 3, Dr. Tyronne Carter
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minn. Stat. § 473.313; <i>2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan</i> : Chapter 5, Planning Policy Strategy 1, Master Plans
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Crystal Diaz, Parks Intern (651-602-4420) Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst (651-602-1361) Kevin Phan, Parks Planner (651-602-1333)
Division/Department:	Community Development / Regional Planning

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Baker Park Reserve Long-Range Plan.
2. Advise Three Rivers Park District to consider implementing the recommendations for solar resources and population forecasts in the Advisory Comments section of the business item.
3. Require the Park District, prior to any new development of the park reserve, to send preliminary plans to the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager.

Background

Baker Park Reserve is located in the western corner of the Regional Park and Trails System and Hennepin County (Figures 1). The Park Reserve is on the eastern shore of Lake Independence.

The focus of this plan is to update the long-range vision for the park reserve, including general park-wide improvements, improving the Baker Park Recreation Area, the Baker Campground, and the Baker Outdoor Learning Center. Since the original plan in 1960, the updated long-range plan remains focused on environmental stewardship, camping, a diverse trail system, prairie restoration, oak forest preservation, and wildlife habitat enhancement.

Rationale

As described in the Analysis section of this report, the Baker Park Reserve Long-Range Plan is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* (RPPP) including Chapter 5, Planning Policy Strategy 1, Master Plans.

Thrive Lens Analysis

The Baker Park Reserve 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 cost to develop and improve the recommendations of the Baker Park Reserve long-range plan is approximately \$16,226,200 with \$7,801,200 in acquisition costs and \$8,425,000 for development and facility improvements.

The total cost for operations and maintenance of the park reserve's long-range plan is \$2,579,730 annually.

Funding sources for the plan activities will come from a variety of sources, including the Metropolitan Council which will be subject to future Council actions.



Analysis

Planning Strategy 1 of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires that long range plans for park reserves address 13 items: boundaries, acquisition costs, demand forecast, development concept, conflicts, public services, operations, partner engagement, public engagement and participation, equity analysis, public awareness, accessibility, and natural resources. The following summary analyzes the long-range plan against these requirements.

Boundaries

Baker Park Reserve is located in the western portion of Hennepin County and is located in or adjacent to the communities of Medina, Independence, Maple Plain, and Orono along Lake Independence. This park reserve connects to three existing or planned regional trails, including Lake Independence, Baker-Carver, and Diamond Lake. The Lake Sarah Regional Trail Search Corridor also runs adjacent to the park reserve's northern border.

The park reserve's southern side boundary is formed by US Highway 12 and County Road (CR) 6, while the northern border is defined by CR 115. To the east, CR 201 forms the boundary and Lake Independence creates the western border. CR 24 and CR 19 both pass through the park reserve, effectively splitting it into three parts, which have influenced the development and management of the park reserve.

The park reserve's total acreage outlined in the long-range plan is 3,183 acres, including 35 acres of existing inholdings (Figure 3).

Acquisition Costs

The Plan identifies 13 inholding parcels, which total 35 acres and are estimated to cost \$7,801,200 today. These inholdings were evaluated to determine the value of each inholding based on its natural or recreational benefit to the park reserve. These parcels were identified as having a significant benefit.

Stewardship Plan

Three Rivers' stewardship efforts are guided by their Natural Resources Operations Plan, which calls for promoting and protecting biodiversity, improving water quality, reducing invasive species, and mitigating development impacts.

Stormwater quality is managed through a series of ponds, wetlands, infiltration features, and conveyance features. Formal landscape and shade tree management is conducted by Park District forestry and horticulture staff and includes maintenance of planted areas, formal gardens, rain gardens, and shade trees. Management for open areas includes restoring emergent wetland plant communities and controlling invasive species that threaten the value of wildlife value. The open area and wetland units are also burned on a three-to-five-year rotation. Forested areas are maintained by completing old field restoration in the remaining open/grassland areas to establish mixed age structure forest ecosystems, with priority given to key environmental areas.

Demand Forecast

According to the Metropolitan Council's 2022 Annual Use Estimate, Baker Park Reserve received about 480,000 visits. This is a 40 percent increase over the past 15 years when the park's annual visitation was 338,000. If visitation trends remain similar, it is expected that visitation to Baker Park Reserve would grow to 613,000 by 2031.

The population of Baker Park Reserve's service area is anticipated to grow in the next 20 years, especially in the communities of Rogers, Rockford, southwestern Maple Grove, eastern Corcoran and northern Plymouth. Overall, the entire service area's population is anticipated to grow by 16 percent. In addition to an increasing population, the plan recognizes that future visitors will become more racially and ethnically diverse, as the region's population will have a greater share of BIPOC residents, going from 28 percent in 2020 to 44 percent in 2040. To anticipate changing demographics and recreational trends, Three Rivers worked to engage with existing and future visitors, as well as underserved communities during the planning process to better serve these groups in the future.



Development Concept

Baker Park Reserve has been offering multiple forms of outdoor recreation, protecting natural systems, and serving the residents of the region since 1980. “Baker Park” was Three Rivers Park District’s first property. The existing recreation offerings are popular and include a swimming beach on Lake Independence, shore fishing opportunities, picnic areas, a destination play area, and a campground and group campsites, among other opportunities. As a result, plan recommendations do not propose major changes to existing developed areas. Instead, planned improvements for the next 20 years will continue to support, enhance, and expand existing offerings.

The long-range plan organizes proposed improvements into four areas, which will be summarized below. The letters associated with each recommendation (e.g., A, B, AA, BB, etc.) correspond to Figure 3 (Development Concept Plan) and Figure 4 (Baker Park Recreation Area and Campground Concept Plan).

General Park Reserve-Wide

The park reserve includes several recreation areas with separate park entrances and amenities. Included in the park reserve-wide improvements are group camps, trails, trailheads, the public safety building, operations and maintenance facilities, and natural resource areas. The long-range plan includes 11 recommendations for general park reserve-wide development:

- Vista overlook enhancements (A)
- Interpretive signage additions (B)
- Wayfinding signage additions (C)
- Spurzem Lake fishing pier addition/enhancements (D)
- Marshview group camp enhancements (E)
- Public Safety and parking expansion (F)
- Public Safety storage (G)
- West Trailhead improvements (H)
- Lake Independence Regional Trail alignments (I)
- Equestrian improvements (J)
- Lake Katrina paved loop trail enhancements (K)

The Lake Independence Regional Trail alignment recommendations – to construct a new trail segment between Welcome Drive and Starkey Road, and to realign the trail where it meets County Road 6 – are consistent with the 2022 Council adopted Lake Independence Regional Trail Long-Range Plan.

Baker Park Recreation Area

The recreation area is the primary site in the park reserve for outdoor recreation and includes two beaches on Lake Independence, a boat launch, fishing areas, picnic areas, a play area, and the campground. The long-range plan includes seven recommendations for the Baker Park Recreation Area:

- Lake Independence water quality improvements (L)
- Small non-reservable picnic shelter addition (M)
- Accessible fishing pier addition (N)
- Shoreline fishing pier addition (O)
- Boat launch queueing exploration (P)
- Lake reservable picnic shelter (Q)
- County Road 19 crossing enhancement (R)

Campground

The campground, including over 200 electric and tent sites and five camper cabins, is popular and offers an array of camping experiences. The long-range plan includes 11 recommendations for the campground:

- Campground entrance circulation improvements (S)
- Camper cabin additions (T)

- Campsite improvements (U)
- Campground technology improvements (V)
- Nature-based programming expansion/enhancements (W)
- Nature play area addition (X)
- Campground parking expansion (Y)
- Winter recreation and camping expansion (Z)
- Internal path addition (AA)
- C-Loop grading improvements (BB)
- E-Loop vegetative buffer improvements (CC)

Baker Outdoor Learning Center

The Baker Outdoor Learning Center (BOLC) is an outdoor education and overnight camping facility that offers nature-based programming, outdoor recreation, wilderness skills, and team building, either by BOLC staff or outside groups via rental. The long-range plan includes five recommendations for the BOLC:

- Nature-based programming space enhancements (DD)
- Trail improvements (EE)
- Archery range improvements (FF)
- Administrative function enhancements (GG)
- Maintenance function enhancements (HH)

Total park reserve improvements are estimated to cost \$8,425,000 and will be implemented based on available funding and Park District priorities.

Met Council policy states that 80% of park reserves are required to be managed as natural land. According to the long-range plan, when all of the park land within the park boundary is included in the calculation, Baker Park Reserve has 82.4% natural lands.

Conflicts

Baker Park Reserve is surrounded primarily by large lot residential and agricultural land uses. According to the long-range plan, there are no significant conflicts to report.

Public Services

Prior to Baker Park's rededication as a park reserve in 1980, it was known as the Morris T. Baker County Park. Between 1974 and 1977, the active use area redevelopment was completed including a new entrance, paved roads and parking lots, a boat launch, restrooms, beach improvements, picnic shelters, dressing rooms, showers, restrooms, four toilet buildings, entry control, electrical, water and sewer service, and a creative play area.

No significant transportation infrastructure changes are expected to impact the park reserve as a result of long-range plan implementation. Bus transit currently does not service the park; however, it is connected to the larger regional trail network with the Lake Independence Regional Trail and planned connections to the Baker-Carver and Diamond Lake Regional Trails.

Three Rivers seeks to improve the campground entrance including regrading the entrance road, adding storm sewer, and/or adding landscaping to address stormwater issues in this area. As noted above, grading improvements are specifically recommended in C-Loop.

Three Rivers' Public Safety officers are committed to meeting park visitor needs. Three Rivers' police officers, seasonal staff, statewide mutual aid program staff, and the trail patrol volunteers work together to ensure public safety at Baker Park.

Operations

Operations and maintenance at Baker Park Reserve have a strong focus on maintaining and restoring the natural resources' foundation of the park, as well as providing nature-based recreation and education. Current operating costs include facility services and maintenance staffing, maintenance supplies and resources, the Baker Outdoor Learning Center, the Outdoor Recreation School programs, and the Baker National Golf Programs (golf is not part of the regional system). Additional costs are

used for facility services such as park amenities (bathrooms, parking, water, concessions, information, rentals, etc.) and recreation offerings (beaches, camping, trails, play area, and similar). Because Baker Park Reserve provides different recreation opportunities as the seasons change, staffing hours and programming are adjusted accordingly.

Amenities such as bathrooms, garbage receptacles, wayfinding, and parking are located throughout the park, but are largely concentrated in main recreation areas. Staff periodically visit the remote areas of the park to ensure the facilities are in good working order, assist park visitors, and provide a continued high level of public safety services at Baker Park Reserve.

The maintenance plan for Baker Park Reserve includes a combination of routine and specialized maintenance and seasonal condition assessments and inspections. This includes mowing, sweeping, snow removal, custodian services, and trash clean-up. Specialized maintenance includes small building construction, non-paved trail repair, grooming, and some resource management.

Typical operating costs for natural and cultural resource management are used for reforestation and forest management, wetland and prairie management, wildlife, lake, and terrestrial monitoring, aquatic invasive species monitoring and management, and raingarden and horticulture planting and maintenance.

The estimated annual cost for Three Rivers Park District to operate and maintain the Baker Park Reserve is \$2,579,730.

Partner Engagement

Three Rivers engaged cities around the park reserve, including Medina, Orono, Independence, and Maple Plain. Three Rivers also engaged Hennepin County, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, and Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management. These partners were engaged to provide perspective on the park reserve based on their expertise and the agency's needs, goals and priorities, including planning and projects that may impact the park reserve.

Phase 3 of the engagement process focused on partner review. (Other phases of engagement are described in additional detail in the Public Engagement and Participation and Equity Analysis components of the Analysis, below.) Cities, government/regulatory agencies and staff provided feedback and final suggestions. Affected cities and agencies were encouraged to review and comment on plan content during meetings and via email. Each partner was given several weeks to review the applicable material.

Cities provided helpful feedback including the approval of development concepts that pertained to their individual city and specific improvements including:

- Trail construction for the Lake Independence Regional Trail at Welcome Drive and Starkey Road.
- Adding a restroom at the West Trailhead area.
- Adding drinking water to the six-mile loop trail.
- County Road 19 crossing improvements at Main Street (Baker-Carver Regional Trail connection).

Partners also had the opportunity to review and provide feedback during Phase 4 of the engagement process; the 30-day comment period.

Appendix B of the long-range plan outlines Jurisdictional Support and includes resolutions from the cities of Maple Plain, Orono, and Medina (Attachments 1-3).

Public Engagement and Participation

One of the goals of the park reserve's long-range plan was to develop a community-driven and supported plan to better serve both existing and new park users. To do so, Three Rivers staff intentionally engaged and built relationships with individuals, community groups and agency partners throughout the engagement process. Input from these groups was used to guide the development concept, resource management, and operational recommendations for the park reserve.



The majority of engagement occurred in 2018, which guided the Development Concept, but were paused from 2020-2021 due to the COVID pandemic. After the pause, additional public engagement was conducted in 2022 and focused on confirming and updating the ideas from the Development Concept as well as re-engaging underrepresented populations.

The engagement scope and approaches were wide-reaching and included a variety of techniques including new engagement strategies due to the COVID pandemic. A main goal was to make engagement easily accessible, authentic and valuable.

The engagement plan followed a four-phase process which directly correlated to the public participation spectrum, offering opportunities to inform, consult, involve and collaborate throughout the planning process:

- Phase 1 - Information Gathering
- Phase 2 - Proposed Concepts/Ideas Review
- Phase 3 - Preliminary Partner Review
- Phase 4 - 30-Day Public Comment Period

Phase 1 of the engagement process focused on building awareness of the park, gathering ideas around improvement, and learning what barriers exist for users. Strategies such as online surveys, Social Pinpoint, an online mapping tool, and an in-person event (Independence Beach Neighborhood Party) were conducted. Over 150 were engaged through these events.

Phase 2 of the process focused on presenting draft concept plans and ideas to the public to ensure it adequately represented information from phase 1. This was achieved by press releases, online website updates, a public open house, pop-ups in the park, and conversations with underrepresented groups and community events. Over 250 people participated in open house meetings, user group meetings, park pop ups, and other events. More than 200 people responded to an online survey.

As noted in the Partner Engagement section of the Analysis, the focus of Phase 3 was to reengage cities, governmental and regulatory agencies, and other partners.

The focus of Phase 4 was the public comment period. The long-range plan draft was available for review and comments from the public between June 30 to July 30, 2024. This plan was available online, at local public venues (e.g., city halls and nearby Park District facilities), and shared via email upon request and to identified partners. Appendix A of the long-range plan details the comments received and Three Rivers' responses to the comments.

Park Reserve-wide engagement themes included adding interpretive signage, adding a fishing pier, and parking improvements at Spurzem Lake, public safety/We Can Ride(WCR) parking lot and storage improvements, improving equestrian trails, and considering the local trail connection at the East Trailhead.

Regarding the Baker Park Recreation Area, key recommendations include improving Lake Independence water quality, adding small picnic shelter, adding an accessible fishing pier, adding shoreline fishing, exploring boat launch queuing, adding a large picnic shelter, and improving the County Road 19 crossing.

Feedback on the campground includes improving campground entrance circulation, adding camper cabins, upgrading campsite electrical, enhancing nature-based programming, expanding campground parking, adding Wi-Fi and charging stations, and making landscape improvements at C and E-loops.

Regarding the Baker Outdoor Learning Center, feedback includes enhancing nature-based programming space, improving trails for accessibility, improving the archery range, enhancing administrative functions, and enhancing maintenance functions.

Equity Analysis

Three Rivers Park District conducted an equity analysis as part of the long-range plan. The advice heard during the planning process shaped the long-range plan.

Project Data

Public engagement for the long-range plan focused on engaging and gathering input from those who live within the service area. This primary service area is within a 30-minute drive of the Park. Baker Park Reserve receives around 555,000 annual visitors, where 19% originate from greater Minnesota or outside Minnesota. During the summer, the park receives approximately 2,500 visitors daily, of which 88% are repeat visitors.

The demographic composition of Baker Park Reserve visitors generally reflects the core service area, but is less diverse than the wider population surrounding the park in terms of certain age groups and races not being well represented. These groups include people 24-34 years of age and those 75 years or older, females. Black adults, Asian adults, multiple and other race adults, and households with an average annual income below \$50,000.

Public Engagement:

Three Rivers provided an overview of the barriers faced by specific underrepresented groups in the region, as well as recommendations for overcoming these barriers. The long-range plan focuses on:

- First-tier community members
- Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and Hispanics
- New Immigrants and refugees
- Households with annual income less than \$50,000
- People 75 years of age and older
- People with a range of abilities

First-tier community members lack direct access to Three Rivers Park District facilities. Three Rivers will continue to explore opportunities for bridging and/or partnership parks and trails as part of its Parks to People Long Range Plan (under development). These areas have the greatest concentration of BIPOC community members and lower-income households in Western Hennepin County.

Barriers faced by Black people include safety concerns, lack of cultural accommodations, and cost/access. Three Rivers acknowledges the need to better understand these barriers and the community's preferences, as well as to build trust.

New immigrants and refugees particularly face language barriers learning English. They also struggle with a lack of awareness, understanding what a regional park is, and what events are occurring there. Three Rivers says the work to better understand the needs and barriers for immigrants and refugees is ongoing and will remain a focus.

Barriers faced by households with an annual income less than \$50,000 include cost and access for purchasing and/or renting recreation gear, lack of accessibility via transit and bike connectivity, lack of awareness, and lack of time. According to the long-range plan, removing or minimizing the impact of the barriers is a priority for Three Rivers.

People 75 years of age and older lack support amenities such as benches and seating along paths in active use areas, as well as information about accessibility. Limited winter maintenance on paved trails creates additional challenges. There is also a lack of programs targeted toward seniors. Three Rivers acknowledges the need to provide convenient high-quality and safe recreational opportunities in parks as this age cohort continues to age.

Barriers faced by people with a range of abilities include a lack of ADA amenities as well as a lack of facilities that embrace the wide range of disabilities and abilities. Three Rivers recommends ensuring

ADA compliance for park and trail facilities that do not currently meet standards, and to consider the wide range of disabilities and abilities when considering new and renovated park and trail facilities.

Evaluation Summary

During the 30-day public comment period, the goal was to obtain feedback from community members and keep them informed on decisions and how their feedback would be considered during the process. Through a press release and social media posts, Three Rivers shared the opportunity to review and provide comments on the draft long-range plan. The plan was available online at local public venues and shared via email to identified partners.

Several ideas were considered but ultimately not included in the final development concepts. Some of those improvements included:

- Campground office building replacement and expansion.
- Changes to equestrian trails and parking lots.
- A new picnic shelter in the south recreation area.
- Additional land acquisition / boundary adjustments.

Significant improvements may be further considered as part of a long-range plan amendment.

Three Rivers is committed to advancing the long-range plan recommendations based on feedback from the general public, park users, underrepresented communities, and partners and will continue to work with these groups to implement the recommendations included in the long-range plan.

Three Rivers is also committed to reevaluating and prioritizing recommendations to ensure inclusivity and responsiveness to changing community needs.

Public Awareness

Three Rivers' Marketing and Engagement Staff utilize effective marketing and outreach tools, such as event calendars, maps, digital and social media, snail mail, press releases, brochures, a centralized reservation system, and on-site promotion to communicate its facilities. Three Rivers also communicates with community, business, and government organizations to promote and educate the public about its sources. Partner organizations include the Metropolitan Council Regional Parks and Trails and the State Office of Tourism. Promotional pieces include how to access the park by foot, bike, and car. Bus transportation does not service the park. However, the park is connected to the larger regional trail network with the Lake Independence Regional Trail and planned connections to the Baker-Carver and Diamond Lake Regional Trails.

Accessibility

Three Rivers Park District is committed to providing access and recreational opportunities to all by ensuring that all facilities described in this plan will be developed in to be consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In addition to providing accessibility to people with mobility limitations, Three Rivers also has several programs that are designed to reduce cost barriers for low-income families, such as the Recreation Pass Plus program, which offers free equipment rentals and discounts on programs.



Natural resources

Baker Park Reserve's land cover predominantly comprises of deciduous forest, emergent vegetation, and grasslands. The park reserve also includes the Big Woods, Willow Swamp, Tamarack Swamp, Oak Forest, and Prairie native plant communities within its boundaries. The park reserve has a Natural Areas and Plant Communities plan that prioritizes restoration, enhancement, and protection of natural areas throughout the park. Some priorities include reforestation to restore forest understories and managing prairies communities.

Three Rivers' stewardship plans aim to protect and enhance high quality natural areas within the park through protecting biodiversity, reducing invasive species, and mitigating development impacts.

Major water bodies within or adjacent to Baker Park Reserve include Lake Independence, Lake Katrina, Spurzem Lake, and Half Moon Lake. Some issues that these lakes are facing include invasive species, such as curly-leaf pondweed, and increased concentrations of phosphorus due to stormwater runoff from surrounding areas. The plan identifies existing partnerships and stormwater management best practices that are being implemented within and adjacent to the park reserve to reduce pollutant runoff into Lake Independence and other surface water bodies. In addition to reducing the amount of runoff into its lakes, Three Rivers is also continuing to monitor water quality and vegetation in its surface waters while also facilitating aquatic invasive species control efforts.

Other Council Policies and Systems – Advisory Comments

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

The long-range plan appears complete and consistent with policy.

Advisory comment: Three Rivers Park District provides a demand forecast analysis on pp. 11-16. On p. 12, the Park District describes a population forecast that was produced in 2021; this is an obsolete forecast. Met Council revised the regional forecast in 2023, and local forecasts in 2025. The most recent forecast reduced future growth rates; it is published at <https://metro council.org/forecasts/>

Community Development – Land Use – (Shawn James, 651-602-1233)

Staff finds the long-range plan for Baker Park Reserve is consistent with land use policy. For the park area within the City of Orono, the plan demonstrates conservation of natural resources and protection of vital natural areas and is consistent with planned land use.

Community Development – Solar Resources and Access Protection – (MacKenzie Young-Walters, 651-602-1373)

There are no explicit requirements for long range plans to address planning for the protection and development of access to direct sunlight for solar energy systems in Regional Parks & Trails. As such my comments are purely advisory.

Advisory comment: As part of the discussed campground electrification improvements, Three Rivers Park District should explore opportunities to utilize solar panels to reduce the campground's demand for off-site electricity, similar to how solar thermal panels are already being used to reduce the energy demands of the main shower building. It may also be worth exploring opportunities to include EV charging infrastructure as part of the campground parking expansion.

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

Updating or constructing new trails, paths, bridges, or any other project may have an impact on multiple Metropolitan Council Interceptors in multiple locations. To assess potential impacts to the system; prior to initiating any project, preliminary plans should be sent to Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager.



Figure 1. Baker Park Reserve location in the Regional Parks and Trails System

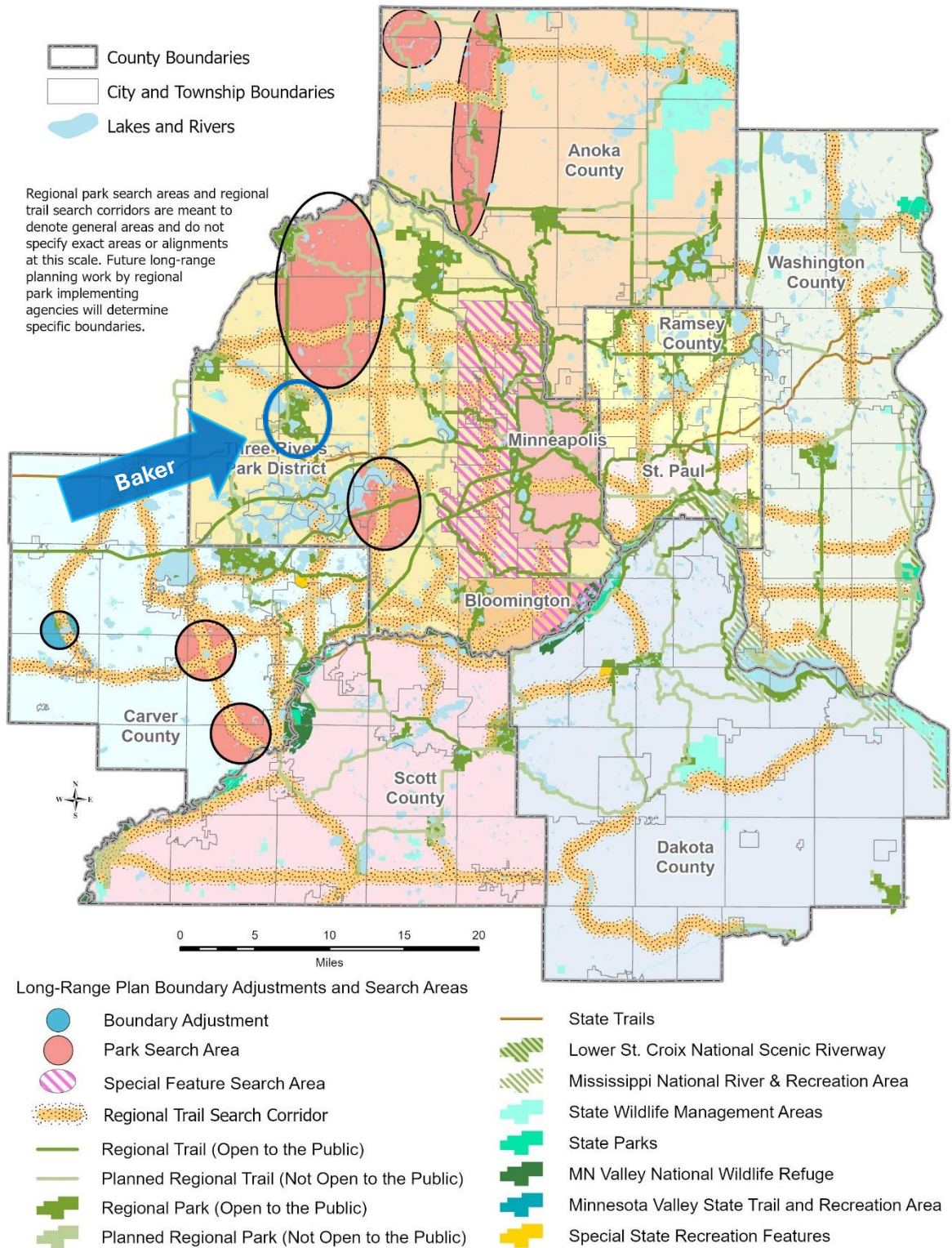
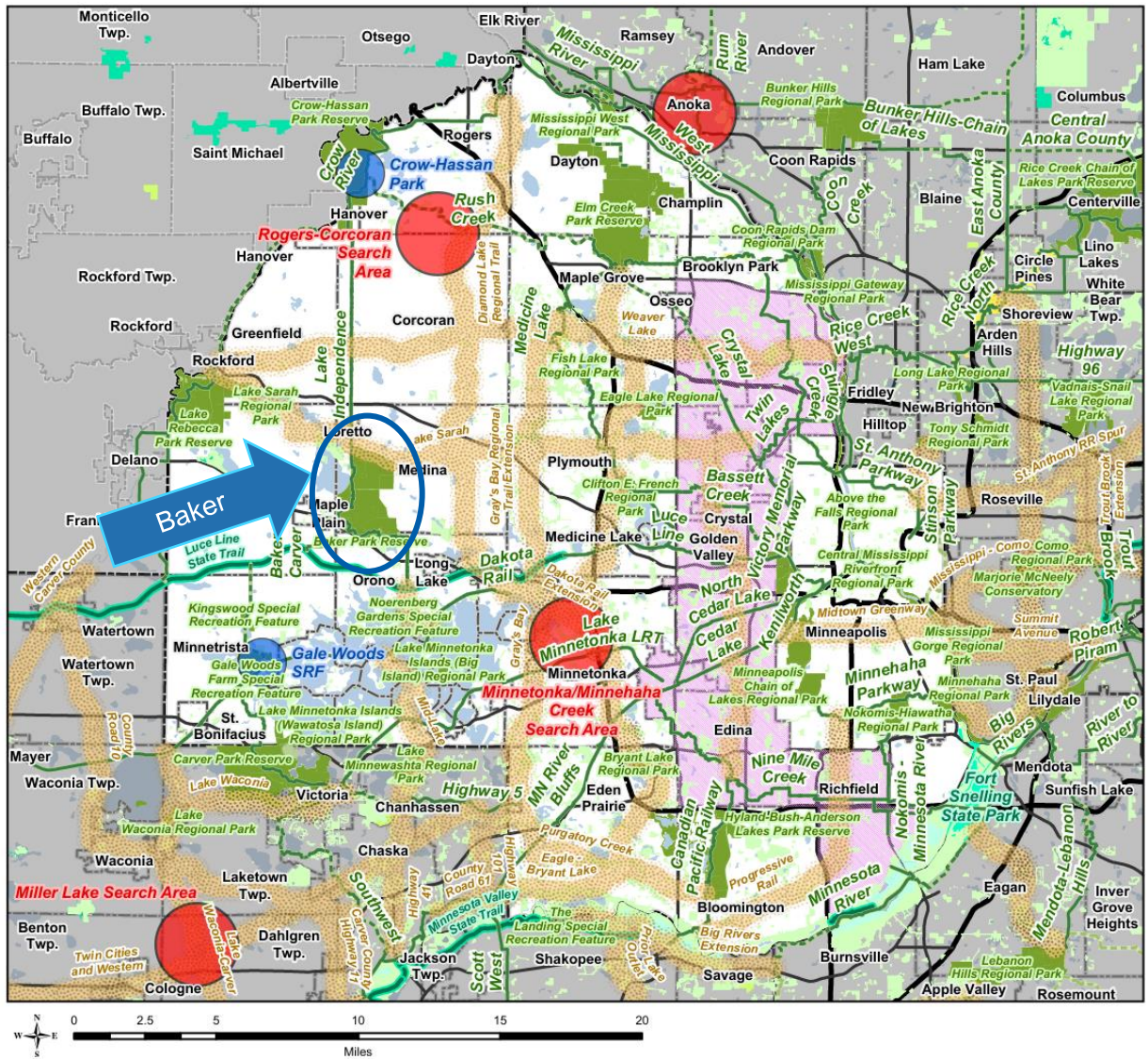
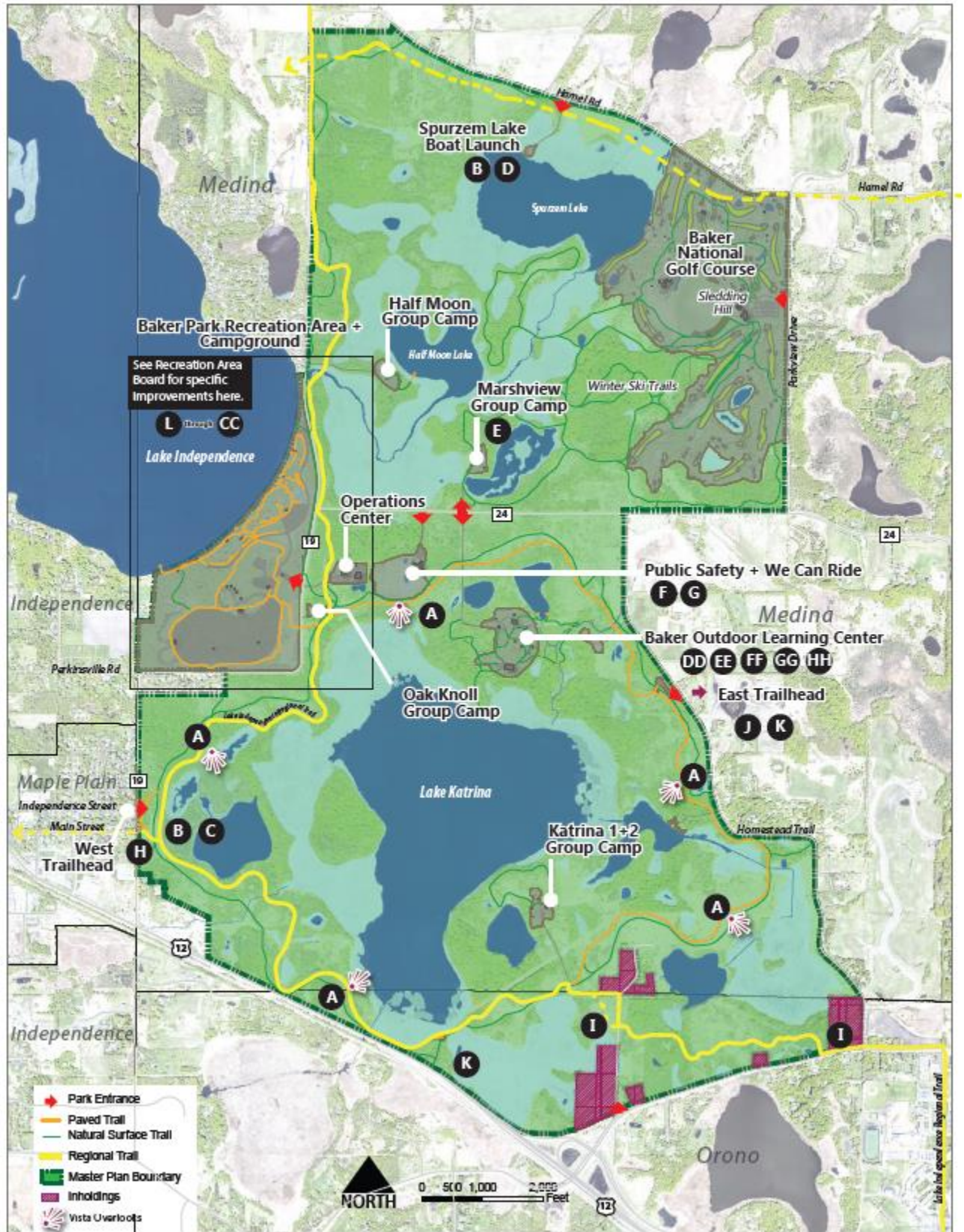


Figure 2. Baker Park Reserve location in Hennepin County



Metropolitan Council

Figure 3: Baker Park Reserve Development Concept Plan (LRP Figure 24)



Metropolitan Council



**CITY OF MAPLE PLAIN
HENNEPIN COUNTY, MINNESOTA**

RESOLUTION NO. 24-0826-1

**A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR THE
BAKER PARK RESERVE LONG-RANGE PLAN**

WHEREAS, The City of Maple Plain recognizes Baker Park Reserve as an important component of the regional parks system providing natural resource protection and nature-based recreation to the residents of the City and the region; and

WHEREAS, City staff have been working in partnership with Three Rivers Park District in development of the Long-range Plan to ensure long-range planning preserves Baker Park Reserve's treasured areas while enhancing the recreational and educational offerings; and

WHEREAS, The City of Maple Plain recognizes that Three Rivers Park District has gathered significant public input in the development of the Baker Park Reserve Long-range Plan; and

WHEREAS, The City of Maple Plain recognizes that Three Rivers Park District has drafted the Baker Park Reserve Long-range Plan and accepted and responded to public comments appropriately; and

WHEREAS, The Baker Park Reserve Long-range Plan is consistent with other approved local and regional plans; and

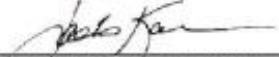
WHEREAS, the City of Maple Plain supports the design, implementation and operation of the Baker Park Reserve pursuant to the Long-range Plan; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City of Maple Plain supports the Baker Park Reserve Long-range Plan.

Adopted this 26th day of August 2024.

CITY OF MAPLE PLAIN

BY: 
MAYOR Julie Maas-Kusske

BY: 
CITY ADMINISTRATOR Jacob Kolander





CITY OF ORONO
RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL
NO. 7506

**A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR THE
BAKER PARK RESERVE LONG-RANGE PLAN**

WHEREAS, The City of Orono recognizes Baker Park Reserve as an important component of the regional parks system providing natural resource protection and nature-based recreation to the residents of the city and the region; and

WHEREAS, City staff have been working in partnership with Three Rivers Park District in development of the Long-range Plan to ensure long-range planning preserves Baker Park Reserve's treasured areas while enhancing the recreational and educational offerings; and

WHEREAS, The City of Orono recognizes that Three Rivers Park District has gathered significant public input in the development of the Baker Park Reserve Long-range Plan; and

WHEREAS, The City of Orono recognizes that Three Rivers Park District has drafted the Baker Park Reserve Long-range Plan and accepted and responded to public comments appropriately; and

WHEREAS, The Baker Park Reserve Long-range Plan is consistent with other approved local and regional plans; and

WHEREAS, the City of Orono supports the design, implementation and operation of the Baker Park Reserve pursuant to the Long-range Plan; and

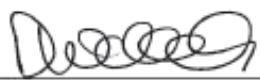
NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Orono supports the Baker Park Reserve Long-range Plan.

Adopted by the City Council of Orono, Minnesota at a regular meeting held on August 26, 2024.

ATTEST:


Christine Lusian, City Clerk

CITY OF ORONO


Dennis Walsh, Mayor

Member Albers introduced the following resolution and moved its adoption:

CITY OF MEDINA

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-69

**A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR THE
BAKER PARK RESERVE LONG-RANGE PLAN**

WHEREAS, the city of Medina (the “City”) is a municipal corporation, organized and existing under the laws of Minnesota; and

WHEREAS, Three Rivers Park District (the “District”) owns and operates Baker Park Reserve within the City; and

WHEREAS, Baker Park Reserve is an important component of the regional parks system providing natural resource protection and nature-based recreation to the residents of the City and the region; and

WHEREAS, the District has engaged with City staff and officials in development of the Long-Range Plan to ensure long-range planning preserves Baker Park Reserve’s treasured areas while enhancing the recreational and educational offerings; and

WHEREAS, the District has gathered significant public input, drafted the Baker Park Reserve Long-Range Plan, and accepted and responded to public comments appropriately; and

WHEREAS, the City finds the Long-Range Plan to be consistent with other approved local and regional plans; and

WHEREAS, the City would consider support for the District acquiring additional property to add to Baker Park Reserve, provided the District consults with City and the City finds such acquisition to be consistent with City plans and objectives; and


WHEREAS, the City supports the District’s design, implementation, and operation of Baker Park Reserve pursuant to the Long-Range Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of Medina, Minnesota supports the Baker Park Reserve Long-Range Plan.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that nothing herein shall be construed or interpreted to authorize the District’s purchase or condemnation of real property rights pursuant to Minn. Stat. 398.09(b)(1). Future land acquisition in the City by the District shall require separate consideration and action by the City pursuant to said statute.

Resolution No. 2024-69
October 1, 2024

Date: October 1, 2024.



Kathleen Martin, Mayor

ATTEST:



Caitlyn Walker, City Clerk

The motion for the adoption of the foregoing resolution was duly seconded by member Cavanaugh and upon vote being taken thereon, the following voted in favor thereof:

Albers, Cavanaugh, DesLauriers, Martin

And the following voted against same: **(Absent: Reid)**

None

Whereupon said resolution was declared duly passed and adopted.

