

## **Community Development Committee Report**

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of August 12, 2020

**Subject:** Crow-Hassan Park Reserve Master Plan Amendment, Three Rivers Park District, Review File No. 50221-1

### *Proposed Action*

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Crow-Hassan Park Reserve Master Plan, with approval of the proposed boundary adjustment of 179.85 acres being contingent on its inclusion in the 2020 Policy Plan Amendment currently under development.
2. Require that the Agency update the Master Plan to remove the characterization of the parcel north of 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue North as “surplus”.
3. Require Three Rivers Park District, prior to initiating any new development of the park reserve or the Crow River Regional Trail adjacent to or in the vicinity of the park reserve, to send preliminary plans to the Engineering Services Assistant Manager at the Metropolitan Council’s Environmental Services Division for review in order to assess the potential impacts to the existing and planned regional interceptor system and other critical wastewater infrastructure.

### **Summary of Committee Discussion/Questions**

Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst, presented the staff report to the Community Development Committee at its meeting on July 20, 2020.

Council Member Chamblis asked when the business item would be going to the full Council. Kelly responded that it is scheduled for August 12, 2020.

Council Member Johnson sought clarification that approval of the boundary expansion included in the master plan would be determined by the ongoing Regional Parks System additions process. Kelly responded affirmatively.

The Community Development Committee voted unanimously to approve the proposed actions.

## Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission Report

For the Community Development Committee meeting of July 20, 2020

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of August 12, 2020

**Subject:** Crow-Hassan Park Reserve Master Plan Amendment, Three Rivers Park District, Review File No. 50221-1

### Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Crow-Hassan Park Reserve Master Plan, with approval of the proposed boundary adjustment of 179.85 acres being contingent on its inclusion in the 2020 Policy Plan Amendment currently under development.
2. Require that the Agency update the Master Plan to remove the characterization of the parcel north of 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue North as “surplus”.
3. Require Three Rivers Park District, prior to initiating any new development of the park reserve or the Crow River Regional Trail adjacent to or in the vicinity of the park reserve, to send preliminary plans to the Engineering Services Assistant Manager at the Metropolitan Council’s Environmental Services Division for review in order to assess the potential impacts to the existing and planned regional interceptor system and other critical wastewater infrastructure.

### Summary of Committee Discussion/Questions

Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst, presented the staff report to the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission at its meeting on July 9, 2020. Ann Rexine, Principal Planner; Kelly Grissman, Director of Planning; and Jonathan Vlaming, Associate Superintendent, from Three Rivers Park District were in attendance and responded to questions.

Commissioner Todd Kemery asked if there is a list of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) projects planned for the park reserve. Rexine referenced the master plan’s Recreation Development Plan and highlighted several recommended ADA projects, including a new ADA Nature Play Trail Loop, a new ADA Non-Motorized Boat Launch, and accessibility improvements to campsites.

Commissioner Rick Theisen asked for clarification of the language in the proposed actions. Kelly responded that the first two proposed actions were modeled after the Pine Point Regional Park Master Plan business item, which was similar in nature (e.g., included significant boundary adjustment to be handled through Regional Park System Additions project), and the last two proposed actions were developed or modified based on review by other Council divisions. Vlaming suggested combining the first two proposed actions for additional clarity. Staff did not object. The proposed action above now includes three items rather than four.

Commissioner Jeremy Peichel had two questions about the Review by Other Council Divisions and Units. The first was whether the first set of Community Development – Local Planning Assistance comments impacted the master plan’s community engagement work. Kelly responded that master plans are fully developed by implementing agencies and then submitted to the Council, who then review them based on the requirements in the Regional Parks Policy Plan. That is, comments by other Council Divisions and Units do not impact the master plan’s community engagement work. Commissioner Peichel’s second question related to the comments about transit access. He asked if there should be more responsibility on behalf of the implementing agency to get

people to the park reserve? Vlaming responded that Three Rivers Park District has a transportation plan and a bus program.

Commissioner Cecily Harris asked about the 80/20 development ratio in park reserves and how much development is typical in park reserves and regional parks. Regional Park Unit Manager Emmett Mullin responded that park reserves tend not to be fully developed up to 20% of the park acreage and suggested that many regional parks don't intend to maximize the development footprint, citing Lebanon Hills Regional Park as an example. Grissman talked about the Park District's development of a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum for their system and how some Park District parks will remain predominately undeveloped and "natural" while others will be more developed.

Council Member Atlas-Ingebretson encouraged all regional park implementing agencies to include disaggregated population data in relation to the master plan's community engagement activities. Council Member Atlas-Ingebretson noted this type of information is expected by the Community Development Committee and should be presented there, if possible. Building off of Commissioner Peichel's comments, Council Member Atlas-Ingebretson also noted that the type and timing of programming offered at the park reserve could further entice people to visit.

With seven ayes and one abstention, the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission voted to approve the amended proposed actions.

## Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: July 9, 2020

For the Community Development Committee meeting of July 20, 2020

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of August 12, 2020

**Subject:** Crow-Hassan Park Reserve Master Plan Amendment, Three Rivers Park District, Review File No. 50221-1

**MPOSC District, Member:** District A, Rick Theisen

**Council District, Member:** District 1, Judy Johnson

**Policy/Legal Reference:** Minn. Stat. § 473.313; *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* Planning Policy – Strategy 1

**Staff Prepared/Presented:** Colin Kelly, AICP, Planning Analyst (651-602-1361)

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

### *Proposed Action*

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Crow-Hassan Park Reserve Master Plan Amendment without the proposed boundary adjustment.
2. Advise Three Rivers Park District that the proposed boundary adjustment of 179.85 acres is contingent on its inclusion in the 2020 Policy Plan Amendment and will be reviewed and considered through the System Additions process.
3. Require that the Agency update the Master Plan to remove the characterization of the parcel north of 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue North as “surplus”.
4. Require Three Rivers Park District, prior to initiating any new development of the park reserve or the Crow River Regional Trail adjacent to or in the vicinity of the park reserve, to send preliminary plans to the Engineering Services Assistant Manager at the Metropolitan Council’s Environmental Services Division for review in order to assess the potential impacts to the existing and planned regional interceptor system and other critical wastewater infrastructure.

### **Background**

Crow-Hassan Park Reserve – made up of 2,600 acres of tallgrass prairie, hardwood forest, and mature wetlands – is located on the east bank of the Crow River and on the border of Hennepin and Wright counties in the northwest portion of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (see Figure 1). The park reserve is owned and operated by the Three Rivers Park District (see Figure 2).

Crow-Hassan Park Reserve is one of 12 park reserves open to the public in the Metro Area, nine of which are operated by Three Rivers Park District. Park reserves are distinguished by their limited development, distinct natural features, and ecological significance.

The intent of the Master Plan amendment is to carry forward the original vision from over 40 years ago, which called for growing and supporting Crow-Hassan Park Reserve’s prairie landscape and habitat while integrating the current needs and interests of individuals, community groups, and agency partners. To ensure that the master planning work was grounded in this intent and clearly communicated in outreach and engagement, three guiding principles were

developed at the start of this master planning process and carried through all engagement activities and subsequent master planning efforts:

- Preserve the unique natural resources
- Celebrate the Crow River
- Introduce people to nature and outdoor recreation

### **Rationale**

The Crow-Hassan Park Reserve Master Plan Amendment is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, including Planning Strategy 1, Master Planning, and other Council policies.

### **Thrive Lens Analysis**

The Crow-Hassan Park Reserve Master Plan Amendment advances the Thrive outcomes of Livability – through increasing access to nature and outdoor recreation, which enhances quality of life in the region – and Stewardship – by protecting and enhancing our region’s natural resources.

### **Funding**

In 2019 dollars, the estimated implementation costs include \$2,750,000 for development and \$2,570,000 for additional boundary acquisition. Together, acquisition and development would cost \$5,320,000. According to the Master Plan, the existing annual operating cost is \$360,000 which covers basic facility maintenance and natural resource management. Maintenance costs based on full implementation of the capital improvement plan would add \$160,000 annually, to a total of \$520,000.

Three Rivers Park District acknowledges that, “while there is interest by the Park District to move forward with implementing the Master Plan, there are not dedicated funds to do so immediately. All Crow-Hassan capital improvement projects not funded through outside grants, fundraising and partnerships compete internally with other District-wide projects through the annual capital improvement plan (CIP).”

Approval of the Master Plan does not commit the Council to any funding at this time. The development costs based on this Master Plan may be awarded through the Regional Parks Bonding Program and the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund Program. Further Council action is required to program and authorize state and Council funds available for Regional Parks Implementing Agencies.

### **Known Support / Opposition**

Three Rivers Park District has submitted two resolutions of support for the Crow-Hassan Park Reserve Master Plan, from the cities of Hanover (Resolution No 01-07-20-08) and Rogers (Resolution No. 2020-43). The Three Rivers Park District Board will consider final approval of the Master Plan following adoption by the Metropolitan Council. There is no known opposition to the Master Plan.



Figure 1: 2040 Regional Parks System Plan Map (2018), Crow-Hassan Park Reserve location

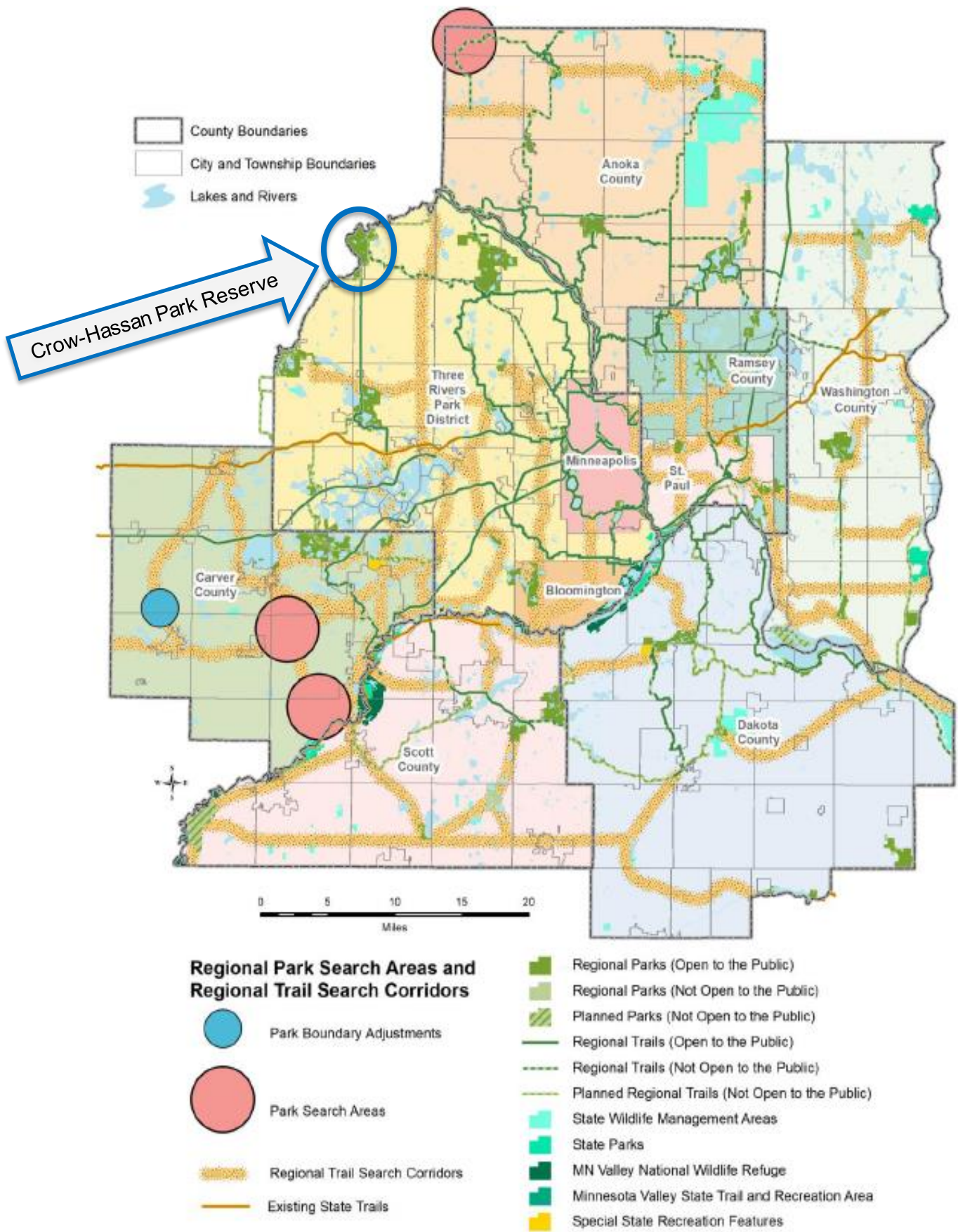
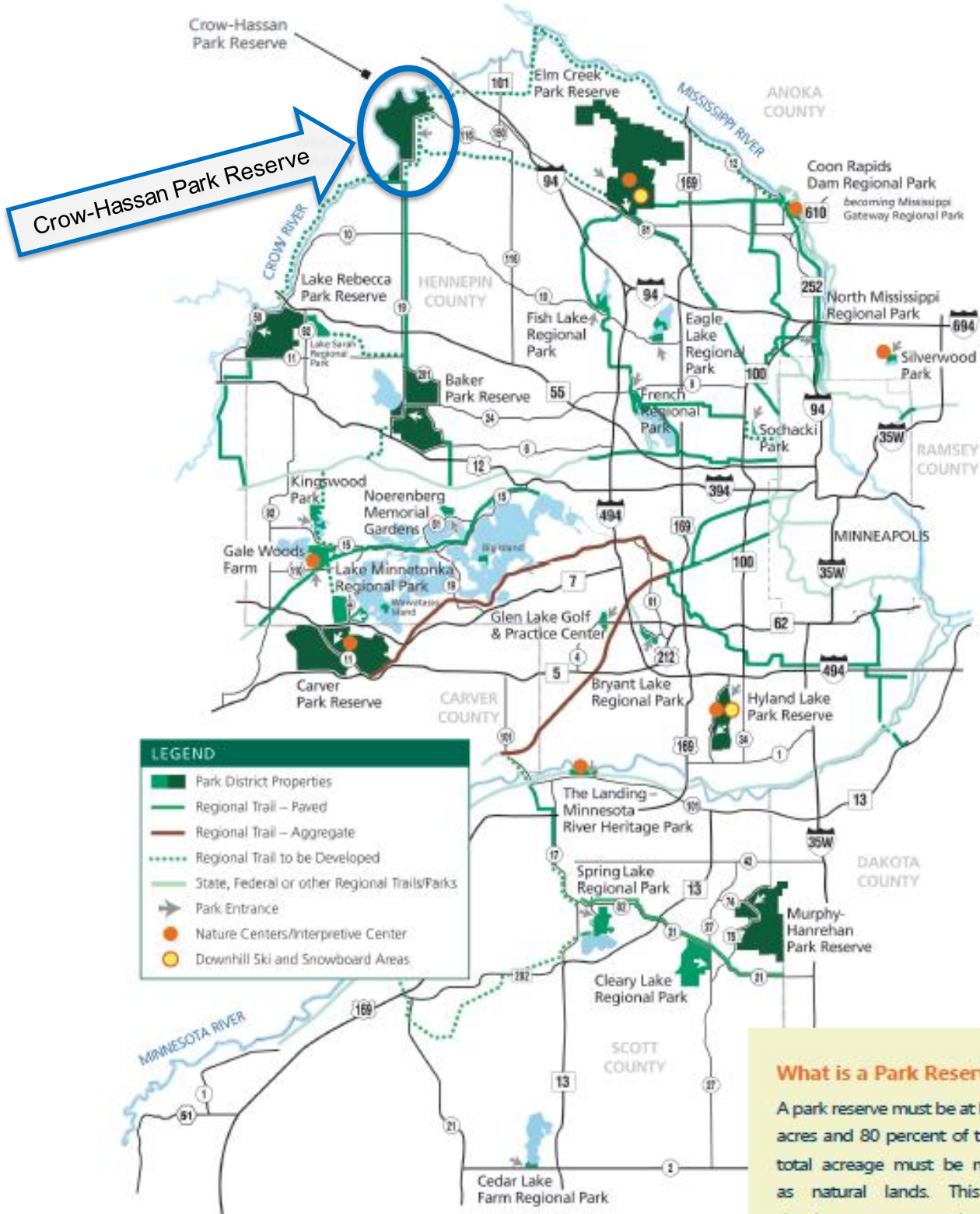


Figure 2: Three Rivers Park District System (Master Plan Figure 2)



**LEGEND**

- Park District Properties
- Regional Trail – Paved
- Regional Trail – Aggregate
- Regional Trail to be Developed
- State, Federal or other Regional Trails/Parks
- Park Entrance
- Nature Centers/Interpretive Center
- Downhill Ski and Snowboard Areas



**What is a Park Reserve?**

A park reserve must be at least 1,000 acres and 80 percent of the upland total acreage must be maintained as natural lands. This minimal development protects the ecological functions of the native landscape.



## Analysis

Planning Strategy 1 of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires that master plans for regional parks address the eleven items detailed below.

### *Public Engagement and Participation*

Community engagement was integral to the initial phase of the project visioning and early recreation concept development. The park's rural location and diffused targeted user groups presented unique challenges for comprehensive community engagement. To reduce potential barriers of engagement participation and reach a wide range of potential participants within the project timeline, various engagement strategies were utilized to garner balanced feedback. These included online tools, planned listening sessions and intercept interviews at park events. Personalized direct contact outreach and digital tools played particularly valuable roles in reaching individuals and stakeholder groups. The engagement process involved the general public, current park users, local communities, underrepresented populations, local clubs, advocacy groups and Park District volunteers.

Underrepresented populations include individuals District-wide that are female, people of color, are ages 18-34 and 60+, and/or have a household income less than \$50,000. Diverse engagement methods and targeted communications were used to reach underrepresented groups and ensure their voices were heard in the planning process. Their insight is critical to developing a park that is welcoming and relevant to new users and all sectors of the population.

Themes emerged and were incorporated into the design recommendations for concept development:

- Protect unique natural resources
- Maintain the rustic quality
- Reduce user conflicts
- Improve accessibility
- Improve signage and wayfinding
- Increase natural resource-based programming,
- Provide educational and experience opportunities
- Diversify camping options

The draft Master Plan public comment period ran 45 days from July 22 - September 5, 2019. Feedback received resulted in follow up stakeholder listening sessions to better guide design recommendations regarding the Crow River Regional Trail and equestrian infrastructure.

### *Partner Engagement*

Municipal and agency coordination ensures that the Master Plan is consistent with ancillary government organizations with a vested stake in Crow-Hassan. The cities of Rogers and Hanover provided feedback through phone conversations and with in-person meetings with staff, advisory boards, and elected officials. As part of the jurisdictional review process, both cities reviewed the Master Plan and provided support as outlined in the Known Support / Opposition component of this business item.

To ensure that the Master Plan's development was consistent with the planning goals as well as rules and regulations of state and local agencies, Hennepin and Dakota Counties, the Minnesota Department of Health, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources provided feedback through phone conversations and email throughout the planning process. Specific features proposed in the Master Plan, including proposed changes to the camping areas and changes to Crow River access, were



reviewed with the appropriate agencies. Municipal and agency coordination will continue to be important as proposed capital projects become realized such as additional property acquisition and connection of the planned Crow River Regional Trail to local and regional community assets and facilities.

### *Demand Forecast*

Located on the western edge of Hennepin County, Crow-Hassan Park Reserve serves visitors primarily from the greater Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. According to a 2014 park user survey, 86 percent of the estimated 68,000 park visitors were residents of suburban Hennepin or Wright counties. While the population of the statewide population growth has slowed, the population in the greater metropolitan area, including the park's planned core service area (25-minute drive), has seen population growth which is expected to continue in coming years.

According to the Metropolitan Council's population forecasts, the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area will be home to almost 3.7 million people by 2040, a gain of 824,000 residents from 2010. Growth in suburban edge communities, including those adjacent to Crow-Hassan Park Reserve, are projected to experience particularly high growth.

Representative of these larger population patterns, the communities directly adjacent to the park, including the cities of Rogers and Hanover are transitioning from rural, agricultural lands into residential and suburban development. Comprehensive Plans for these cities indicate a significant change in the planned land use in properties directly adjacent to the park. These growing communities may increase overall use of the park and thus place increased stress on the park's services. Growth adjacent to the park offers the opportunity to improve connections to these communities' growing network of public open and green space and offers a unique park experience to complement the existing area parkland infrastructure, much of which is heavily developed.

The Twin Cities Metropolitan Area's senior population will double in the coming years, and, for the first time ever, there will be more seniors than children. Seniors have twice as much leisure time than other adults which equates to a large recreational market demand. The Twin Cities are also growing more racially and ethnically diverse. There was a 1.6 percent growth in white/non-Hispanic populations in Minnesota between 2000-2010, compared to 54.3 percent growth of non-white/or Hispanic populations during the same period. Demographic changes were similar in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, where there was a 1 percent decrease in white/non-Hispanic populations between 200-2010 and a 52 percent increase of non-white/or Hispanic populations during the same period. Further, one-third of the Metropolitan Area's population growth is attributed to immigration into the Metropolitan Area (Metropolitan Council, 2018). To remain relevant into the future, Crow-Hassan must define its programming and outreach within this population context. It is vitally important to incorporate the wants and needs of these new and/or growing communities into any planning effort to ensure the highest level of inclusion in the park system and a high level of public service in coming years.

Crow-Hassan's rustic character has long made it a destination park in the region and particularly popular for adult users. Visitation to Crow-Hassan is unique in that there are fewer children and more adults ages 45-59 and greater than 75 than what is expected compared to the proportionate population of the core service area demographics. This is opposite of many regional parks and park reserves and supports the approach of providing a variety of settings and levels of development within the broader park system. Crow-Hassan is essentially serving a niche visitor-ship who may not have their desired recreation offerings served elsewhere. There are opportunities to grow visitation of people that are Black, Asian, and Hispanic, as these community groups are not yet reflected in the Crow-Hassan visitor

data, as is expected. However, at a District-wide level, visitation is reflective of the broader regional population for each of these community groups or is on-target to be within the next five years.

### *Boundaries and Acquisition*

Because Crow-Hassan is classified as a park reserve, development for recreation must be limited to under 20 percent of total upland acreage while at least 80 percent of the park reserve be retained in a natural state. According to the Master Plan, Crow-Hassan's goal is to further restrict development to allow for an immersive nature experience in recognition of its "natural" designation within Three Rivers Park District's recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS). As of summer 2019, the park reserve had 11.5 percent development, which slightly exceeds the ROS development goal. Any additional development requires thoughtful consideration of existing and planned facilities and their long-term relevancy.

In an effort to respond to adjacent planned suburban expansion and increased regional recreational demand, a park boundary expansion is proposed. This boundary expansion positions the park to meet the ten percent development goal, while providing new active recreation opportunities east of Territorial Road.

The northeast corner of Crow-Hassan has been identified as an area where park expansion is proposed (inholdings #3-10). Following the direction of the City of Rogers 2040 Comprehensive Plan, the Park District included several new inholding properties east of the dog off-leash area, thus expanding the current Crow-Hassan park boundary by approximately 180 acres. At time of acquisition and recreation development, the Park District, in coordination with the City of Rogers and the Metropolitan Council, may consider whether it is appropriate to dedicate all parkland east of Territorial Road as a new regional park, separate from Crow-Hassan to best accommodate future suburban expansion and regional recreation trends. Due to the anticipated timing of these acquisitions, this consideration is likely 20 plus years away.

Within this northeast expansion area is property owned by Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES). A future regional Crow River wastewater treatment plant adjacent to Crow-Hassan Park Reserve is anticipated by 2030 which will serve Rogers and portions of Corcoran and Dayton. In preparation for this facility expansion, MCES purchased approximately 97 acres north and south of 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue North adjacent to Crow-Hassan Park Reserve. MCES envisions that the wastewater treatment facility footprint will require use of acreage south of 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue North and potentially an additional 12 acres of Park District surplus property directly west. The remaining acreage north of 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue North, currently owned by MCES, may be part of a future partnership arrangement between MCES and the Park District. The future of this area is under discussion between these two entities. To date, the Park District and the City of Rogers are supportive of a land exchange which would result in additional parkland for Crow-Hassan Park Reserve.

### *Natural Resources*

The unique natural resources and qualities of the park reserve are central to Crow-Hassan's identity within the Regional Park System. Comprised of agricultural land at the time of Park District acquisition, the park reserve has been transformed into a dynamic landscape of floodplain and upland forests, wetlands, open meadows, river shoreline, and regionally recognized restored prairie. This design and development have supported the reintroduction and resurgence of regionally significant plant, insect, and animal species including trumpeter swans, plains hog-nosed snakes, and the regal fritillary butterfly. It is the intent of the Master Plan to support the ongoing natural resource management efforts to allow these ecological systems to continue and thrive.

Within the past ten years, over 280 acres of prairie have been re-created, effectively completing the original vision for the Crow-Hassan prairie landscape at over 1,200 acres. Typical prairie plant blooming compositions found in the landscapes change throughout the year and include both grasses and wildflowers. Dominant grasses include big bluestem, little bluestem, Indian grass, side oats gramma and Canada wild rye.

Main wildflowers found blooming from May through October include wild lupine, butterfly weed, prairie phlox, purple prairie clover, white prairie clover, rough blazing star, gray goldenrod, showy goldenrod, gray headed coneflower and azure aster. There are another 15 species of grasses and sedges and over 90 additional species of wildflowers that bloom from early May through October.

The Crow River, comprising the park reserve's western boundary, remains an important natural resource asset to the western Twin Cities. The Crow River is a tributary of the Mississippi River and drains a watershed of approximately 2,700 square miles through eight Minnesota counties. Comprised of the North, Middle and South forks, the North and South forks converge at Lake Rebecca Park Reserve – with the North Fork flowing northeast to the Mississippi River, past Crow-Hassan Park Reserve for eight miles.

In addition to being a regional recreation destination for river paddlers, the Crow River forms a wildlife corridor for fish and waterfowl. Bald eagles, walleye, otters and beavers are just a few of the myriad of wildlife that call this river corridor home.

The Crow River, from the South Fork of the Crow River to the Mississippi River, has been added to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) Impaired Waters List multiple times in the last 20 years; in 2002 for turbidity and fish bioassessments; in 2004 for fecal coliform; in 2012 for benthic macroinvertebrates bioassessments; and in 2016 for nutrients. A body of water is considered "impaired" if it fails to meet one or more water quality standards. As a result of this listing, the federal Clean Water Act requires the MPCA to set pollutant-reduction goals needed to restore impaired waters in the form of total maximum daily load (TMDL) studies.

### *Stewardship Plan*

A primary objective of the Master Plan is to ensure continued growth and support of Crow-Hassan's natural features and habitat. Stewardship activities include protecting and restoring native plant and wildlife communities, identifying and protecting cultural resources and developing recreation facilities appropriate to a rustic park reserve. To reduce natural resources impacts during a facility's life span, stewardship activities also incorporate sustainable design principles into planning, design, construction, and maintenance of all Park District facilities and infrastructure.

To this end, specific ecologies within the park have been identified for protection designations. In addition, Park District natural resource staff utilize MLCCS mapping data to create a park-wide vision for plant communities. Natural resource land-based designations are classified for park reserves Park District-wide. Significant natural resources occur within these areas and are managed as three sub-zones. Their locations within Crow-Hassan provide natural resource management, and recreational development and operational guidance and include:

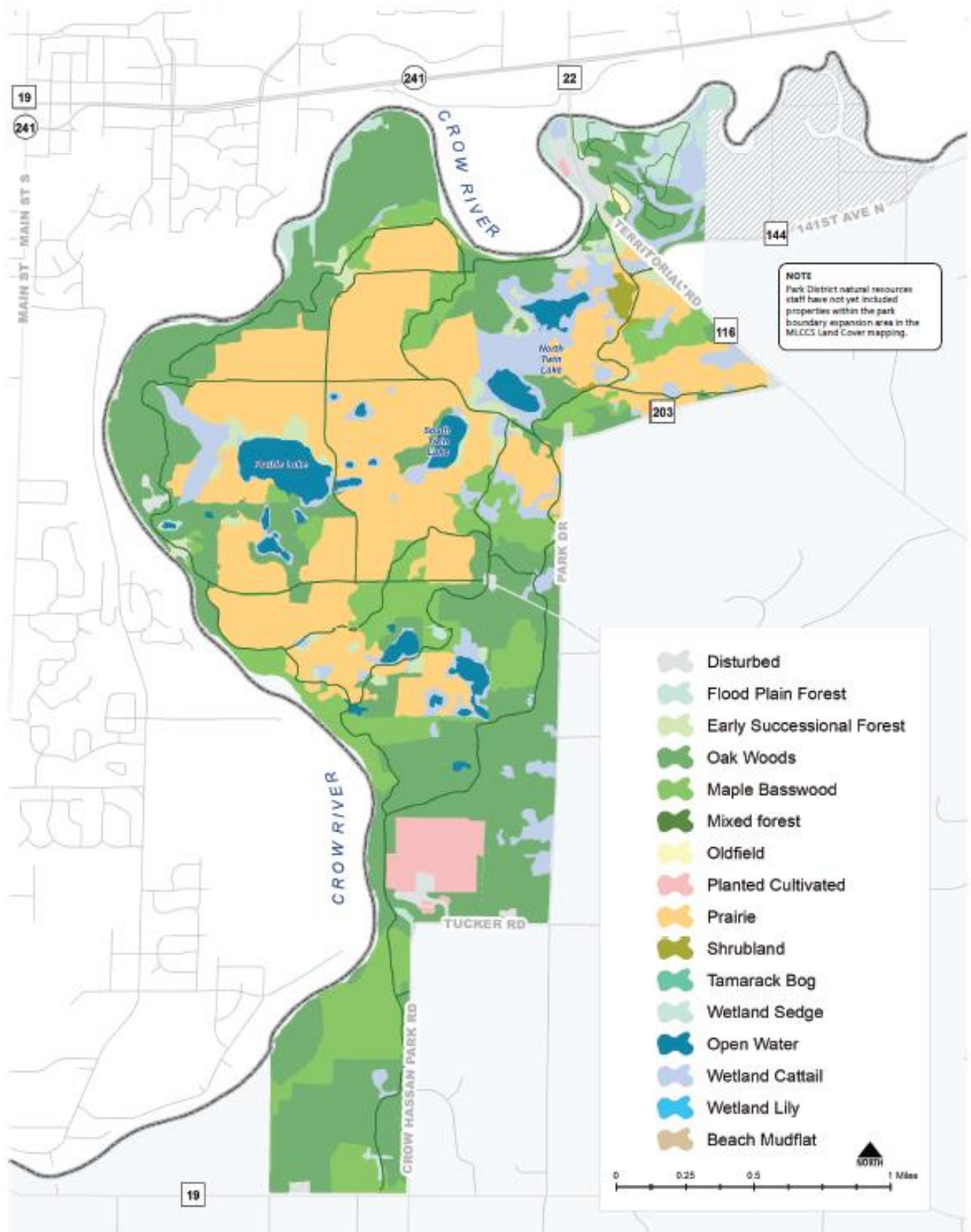
- Key Environmental Components
  - Natural features include prime examples of historic regional landscapes, aquatic systems, plant communities, other unique features, or combinations of these features. The designation of key environmental components is intended to protect significant natural resources from degradation.

- Wildlife Preservation Areas
  - These are sensitive ecological areas that are closed to the public during certain times of the year (primarily spring and summer) to ensure that habitats for sensitive wildlife species are protected from disturbance during critical times in their life cycles (mating, nesting, rearing of young). While trails may be allowed in wildlife preservation areas, they may be closed seasonally.
- Sanctuaries
  - Areas designated to protect significant plant communities and associated wildlife from the impacts of human activity. Development is not permitted, and natural resources management is specialized to address specific plant community and/or wildlife needs.

The Park District has considered various objectives for plant community restoration and management since its formation. These objectives have changed over time as staff follow adaptive management practices and base future decisions on current projections. An updated Natural Resources Operations Plan further identifies specific goals for park reserves throughout the Park District system. This long-term visioning provides natural resources management consistency across the park system. Managed areas will include prairies, wetlands and forests, with prairie communities being a primary focus of Crow-Hassan. Prairies may include a variety of prairie communities depending on soil and hydrology of a specific area. Forested areas may also include a multitude of forest communities including maple-basswood and oak-aspen, as well as different forest age structures. Contemporary forest objectives emphasize promoting native forest communities that can replace themselves with minimal outside direction or inputs. The locations and types of forests and open areas were subsequently determined by the Park District's Natural Resources Department and are reevaluated on a prioritized short-, mid- and long-term schedule (see Figure 3).



Figure 3: Plant Communities Concept Plan (Master Plan Figure 16)



## *Development Concept*

Crow-Hassan Park Reserve is one of twelve park reserves open to the public and distinguished by their limited development, distinct natural features, and ecological significance. By definition, a park reserve must comply with the 80/20 development ratio: 80 percent of the total upland acreage must be restored or retained in a natural state. The remaining 20 percent can be developed for recreational access.

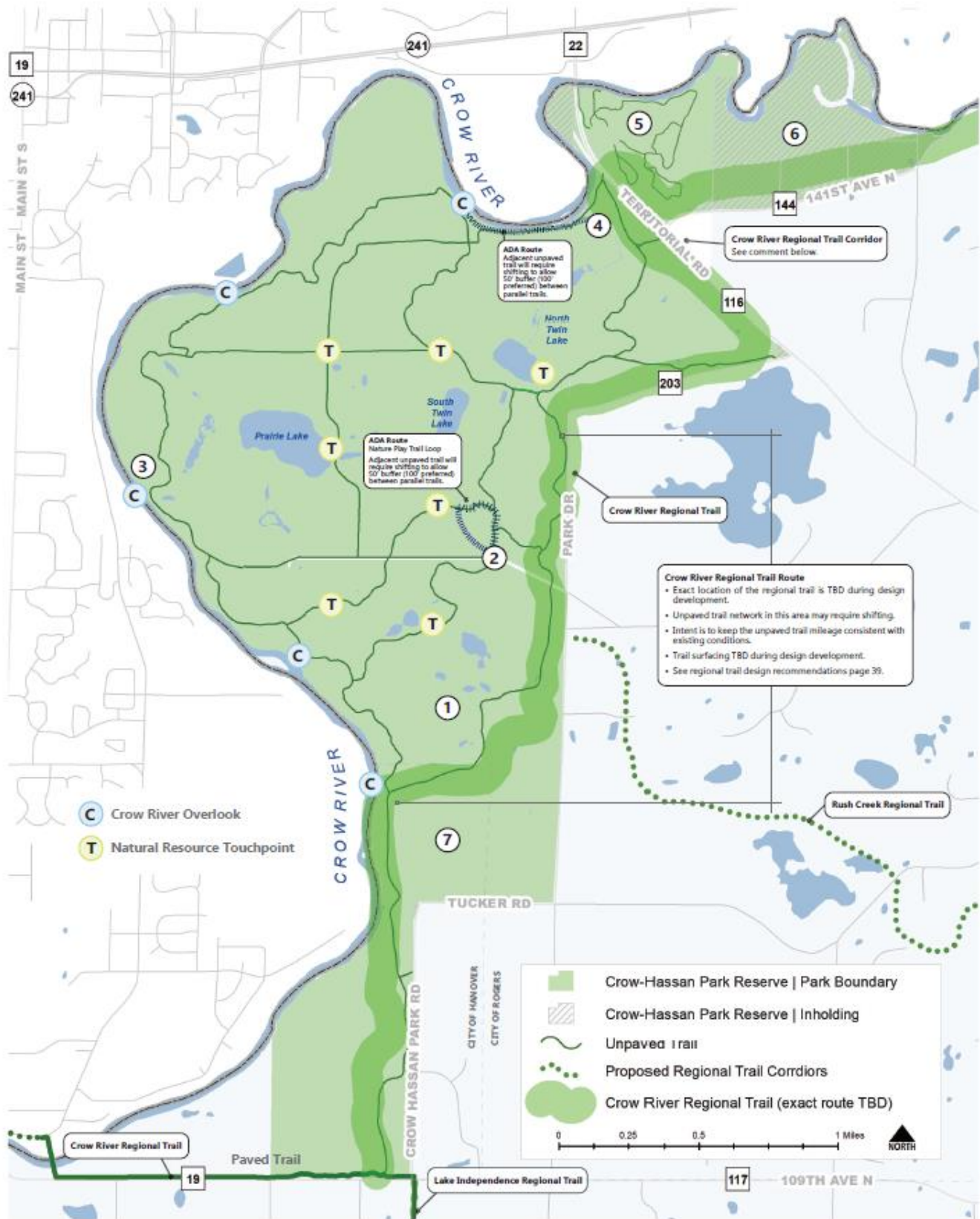
Crow-Hassan Park Reserve's ecological systems, planned regional trail integration and rustic quality make it a unique environmental and recreational destination within the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area and the Park District. The Master Plan identifies ways to improve park user supports that highlight unique park features while minimizing overall park development. Community engagement and stakeholder visioning supported the park's guiding principles and continued ecological focus while integrating light-touch educational opportunities, expanded accessibility and improved wayfinding.

Recommended park improvements are based on Crow-Hassan's long-term vision and will be implemented based on available funding and Park District priorities. To minimize overall development area and the associated potential negative natural resource impact, the proposed features have been centralized around the existing development areas and, where possible, fit within existing development footprints. At the time of implementation, all additional park features are intended to be designed to minimize user conflicts, ensure safety, limit overall impact and be minimal in scale. The Park District is committed to continuing engagement with park users during design development.

Being an ecologically focused park with sensitive, rare habitats, it is imperative that access to these spaces is minimized to reduce overall system stress or user impact. This plan seeks to highlight a variety of park elements that create an intentional visitor experience, while being respectful to the natural resources. Flexibility is intended for all proposed elements within the recreation development plan to allow for current demands, trends and/or updated design considerations. Highlights of the Recreational Development Plan (see Figure 4) include:

1. [Further Refined] Crow River Regional Trail
2. [Further Refined] Trailhead Area
  - [Renovated and New] Parking Lots
  - [New] ADA Nature Play Trail Loop
  - [New] Picnic Shelter
3. [Enhanced] Bluestem Unit
4. [Enhanced] Riverbend Unit
  - [New] Northern Access Parking Lot
  - [Enhanced] Riverbend Group Camp
  - [New] Individual, Reservable Camp Sites
  - [New] ADA Non-Motorized Boat Launch
  - [New] ADA Northern River Trail Segment
5. [Enhanced] Dog Off-Leash Area
6. [New] Park Boundary Expansion Area
7. [Enhanced] District Nursery

Figure 4: Recreational Development Plan (Master Plan Figure 17)



There are several additional recreational components that are found throughout Crow-Hassan. These elements provide an additional layer of intent to connect visitors to the Crow River, provide further explanation of the unique natural resource landscape and help narrate Crow-Hassan's story. They include:

- Crow River Overlooks
- Natural Resource Touchpoints
- Gathering and Rest Spaces
- Curated Trail Experiences
- Wayfinding

### *Accessibility*

According to the 2010 census, 54 million people (approximately 1 in 5 people in the United States) identified as having a disability that, "significantly limited one or more major life activities, such as walking, seeing, hearing, breathing, and thinking," (USDA, Accessibility Guidebook). This includes individuals using wheelchairs, crutches, canes, walkers, and other mobility devices. Furthermore, by 2030, 80 million people in the United States will be older than 65 and be more likely to develop limitations to their mobility (USDA, Accessibility Guidebook). The Crow-Hassan Master Plan seeks to ensure that the park can be experienced by everyone.

Crow-Hassan is committed to providing a spectrum of recreational opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse public and protect the natural resources of the park. Accessible camping facilities, trails, and play features are planned along carefully curated routes in the park that allow all users to sample a wide range of the park's spectacular offerings.

### *Conflicts*

Within the park's core service area, there are 32 community, neighborhood, athletic field and county parks spread across four municipalities. These local parks provide active recreation opportunities and flexible open spaces for their surrounding communities. Features of these parks include playgrounds, picnic areas, flexible fields, walking trails, and athletic facilities. Crow-Hassan's ecological and nature-based recreation focus provides a complement to these local park facilities. Maintaining Crow-Hassan as a natural area with minimal development ensures diversity within the greater park system and allows it to remain a unique regional resource for ecological education and immersive nature experiences.

To further protect and preserve the park reserve's cherished natural resources from recreational development, the park boundary is proposed to expand in the northeast corner. This area will allow for future additional recreation development. This proposed boundary expansion is described in the Boundaries and Acquisition section of this business item.

To ensure consistency with adjacent community planning efforts, the following planning documents were reviewed:

- City of Rogers, 2040 Comprehensive Plan
- City of Hanover, 2040 Comprehensive Plan

These planning documents identified Crow-Hassan Park Reserve as a regional destination and a complement to the existing park systems. Both communities also identified consistent population growth and residential development in the coming decades. The Crow-Hassan Park Reserve Master



Plan seeks to maintain this park reserve as a regional and local resource for these changing communities as well as identify potential connections to the growing regional trail network.

### *Public Services*

To protect the central natural resource features of the park, development has been centralized around the dog off-leash area, unpaved trails, camping areas, trailhead and park roads. These areas receive heavy use by hikers, equestrian riders, campers and dog owners. In addition, the Park District utilizes 55-acres for nursery operations south of the trailhead. To maintain a minimal development imprint while improving basic recreational infrastructure, the Master Plan aims to work within these existing development areas and leverage the existing circulation infrastructure.

Most of the recommendations within the Master Plan can be developed without significant investment in non-recreational public infrastructure, services, and utilities. Within the park reserve's context, there is sufficient electricity, water, and sewer services to implement most of the park's improvements. Implementation of new park facilities proposed, however, may require updating of public utilities (such as power and sanitary sewer service) serving the park due to proposed uses.

### *Operations*

The Park District operates Crow-Hassan Park Reserve using a wide variety of professional staff and in accordance with the Park District's policies, guidelines and ordinances. The ordinances provide for the safe and peaceful use of the parks and corresponding facilities; for the educational and recreational benefits and enjoyment of the public; for the protection and preservation of the property, facilities and natural resources; and for the safety and general welfare of the public. The park is operated year-round and provides a variety of self-directed and the occasional staff-led outdoor recreation and natural resource education opportunities. The main recreation areas identified in the park concept's development areas serve as a hub of activity and programming and see the greatest investment in programming and maintenance. Investment in the majority of the park land will be related to natural resource restoration and management. Park staffing levels will fluctuate to account for the desired level of activity and programming in the various park areas as well as seasonal use patterns, maintenance requirements, resource goals and available funding.

The Master Plan maintains the current operation level of the park as proposed improvements are generally self-guided recreation opportunities and as such there are no staffing changes anticipated at this time. The expansion of the camping options and estimated increase in annual user counts are anticipated to minimally increase to the operations oversight of the park. Eventually, these changes will increase overall maintenance needs as well.

### *Public Awareness*

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

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

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

Additionally, a focus is placed on developing partnerships and programming opportunities that allow the Park District to better serve all residents of Suburban Hennepin County, especially those with less access to its facilities and programs.

## Review by Other Council Divisions and Units

### **Community Development – Local Planning Assistance** (Cameran Bailey 651-602-1212) –

- I commend staff for having and implementing an intentional engagement strategy to inform the master planning processes.
- I commend staff for being intentionally inclusive by prioritizing the New ADA Nature Play Trail Loop. (page 41)
- I recommend that staff consider additional “Curated Trail Experiences (page 47)” to include naturally occurring foods, medicines, and herbs, to be in alignment with the Plan’s vision.
- I recommend staff assess parking lots, existing and planned ([New] Picnic Shelter, page 41) for potential solar panel canopy, green roof canopy, and combined solar and green roof canopy design and construction.
- I fully commend and applaud staff for their sustainability efforts, design guidelines, and “District Nursery Resiliency Assessment (Appendix D)” I recommend reaching out to “Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center” (Finland, MN) and “AgroEcology Center” (Finland, MN). These research centers have successfully constructed deep-winter greenhouses and other facilities with passive solar heating, passive geo-thermal heating storage, geothermal systems, and solar PV systems. Additionally, the Council’s Community Development Division specifically has staff for providing renewable energy, resilience, adaptation, and climate change mitigation technical assistance to the region’s Local Government Units and partners.
- I recommend a fuller historical ecosystem and societal representation of the Crow-Hassan Park Preserve that identifies Euro-American culture and government as the source of the ecosystem mismanagement of the last 150+ years that drove the very need for this Master Plan and organization.
- I recommend the Plan add the following additional implementation strategy: intentionally seek partnership with the bio-region’s indigenous professionals and organizations working in ecology, restoration, and natural resource management. Recommendations include: Dream of Wild Health, Native Governance Center, Linda Black Elk, and Lyla June.

### **Community Development – Local Planning Assistance** (Freya Thamman 651-602-1750) –

The City of Rogers 2040 Comprehensive Plan was acted by the Council on March 25, 2020. The City’s Final 2040 Plan is anticipated to be locally adopted by December 25, 2020.

Rogers 2040 Comprehensive Plan’s Future Land Use map shows the Crow Hassan Regional Park Reserve boundaries and inholdings shown on Figure 14 (Page 34) of the Master Plan.

The property currently identified as surplus (#14, Page 34) has been shown a few different ways. The City of Rogers 2040 Comprehensive Plan and 2040 System Statement have it as Park.

Within the Master Plan:

- Figures 9,10,13 have it shown as Park; Figure 11 (Generalized Existing Land Use), shown as Park

- Figures 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 do not have it shown as Park; Figure 12 (Generalized Future Land Use), but rather have them shown as Institutional.

The Master Plan indicates that a land exchange between MCES and the Park District may be required as part of the wastewater treatment project, which would require a comprehensive plan amendment with land use change.

**Community Development – Research** (Todd Graham 651-602-1322) – The park reserve Master Plan is informed by the Council's socioeconomic forecast.

The Park District has identified a "core service area" that includes northern two-thirds of Hennepin County, and large sections of Anoka, Sherburne, and Wright counties. I have no opinion on whether this is a reasonable definition; the definition is not based on actual visitation but instead on being within driving distance.

The Park District discusses a 190-acre expansion of the park reserve. The Park District presents this as a response to proximate urbanization (Master Plan page 34). Council staff find that the surrounding area is in the rural part of Rogers (former Hassan Twp.). The City of Rogers has guided surrounding land to allow for low-density urbanization only after 2030, but the projected households growth in the area will remain minimal over the next 20 years. Council staff do not have an opinion on whether the park reserve expansion is reasonable. I would caution against conflating allowable 2040 land uses with the forecast of growth.

Council staff agree with the City of Rogers' sub-city forecast allocation, which shows projected households' growth in the area adjacent to the park will be minimal over the next 20 years. Council staff also note that Rogers Plan Update materials were revised no later than December 2019 to guide the 190-acre expansion area as regional park, and thus unavailable for urbanized development.

**Environmental Services – Engineering** (Kyle Colvin 651-602-1151) – The Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) owns property immediately adjacent to and east of the existing Crow Hassan Regional Park. The property is located on the Crow River and extends south of 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue, North. The Property was purchased in 2016 for the future construction of a 3 MGD wastewater treatment facility (ultimate 6 MGD). It is currently being farmed through a lease agreement with an area property owner. Anticipated construction and commissioning of the wastewater facility is scheduled to be completed by 2030. MCES is currently in the preliminary planning phase for the treatment facility and associated interceptor project. Facility size, process type, footprint, layout within the property and ultimate build out plan have not yet been identified.

After review of the above referenced document, we offer the following comments:

1. Given the early stage of wastewater treatment facility planning, it would be premature to comment on portions of property that are available for transfer to, or acquire from, Three Rivers Park District. We also cannot provide comment on proposed trail locations. MCES will, at a minimum, need to construct an outfall pipe across the northern portion of the property connecting the plant to the river. Any land use in this area will need to be compatible with the chosen MCES effluent pipe route.
2. Page 31, Figure 12, identifies the MCES property north of 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue, North as Park Land in the 2040 land use projection. This is consistent with the City of Rogers 2040 Comprehensive Plan land use designation. While MCES is open to continuing discussions with the Park about compatible land uses in the area, we cannot commit to specific land areas being identified as Park Land without additional interagency dialogue, as detailed below.

3. Pages 34 and 35 lists the property as “inholding,” and characterizes the MCES property north of 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue North as “surplus” and may be acquired by Three Rivers in the future if MCES offers to sell it. As stated previously, we are currently in the preliminary planning phase of the project and cannot characterize the parcel as “surplus”. The characterization of the parcel north of 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue, North as “surplus”, needs to be eliminated in the Plan.
4. Page 36 identifies a potential trail along, and north of, 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue, North. While it is currently envisioned that the main treatment facility will be located south of 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue, North, portions of the property north of 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue, North will be used to locate an outfall pipe between the treatment works and the Crow River, and potentially for operational and maintenance support activities for the facility. Also, MCES will need to construct an influent pipe to the plant to convey wastewater from the existing Rogers Wastewater Treatment Plant to the new Crow River Plant. Although planning for this pipeline is underway, the pipeline’s specific route has not been identified and may conflict with plans for a trail along 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue N. Depicting a trail along and north of 141<sup>st</sup> Ave. N. at this stage is premature and should be deleted from the Plan.
5. Page 38, Figure 16, is a map depicting our property in a cross-hatched area. There was some confusion as to what was being shown. Recommend that a legend be added to the map to clarify the meaning of the cross-hatched area.
6. The Park District has stated that it is developing a toolkit with goals and strategies to guide future adjacent land use development. As an adjacent property owner, and future operator of a regional wastewater treatment facility, MCES is very interested in commenting on or participating as a stakeholder in this effort.

**Environmental Services – Sewer** (Roger Janzig 651-602-1119) – Require Three Rivers Park District, prior to initiating any new development of the park reserve, to send preliminary plans to the Engineering Services Assistant Manager at the Metropolitan Council’s Environmental Services Division for review in order to assess the potential impacts to the regional interceptor system.

**Metro Transit – Service Development** (Victoria Dan 612-349-7648) - Regarding the statement “promotional pieces will highlight how to get to the park via foot, bike, **transit** and car” (Master Plan page 55): The preserve is located within the cities of Rogers and Hanover, which are both outside the Transit Capital Levy District. Being outside the district, there is no existing fixed route transit service within these communities. Should Rogers or Hanover desire to be eligible for fixed route service in the future, the City would first have to agree to pay the regional transit capital levy, as defined in MN Stat. 473.446 and 473.4461.