

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: April 7, 2014

For the Community Development Commission meeting of April 21, 2014

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of May 14, 2014

Subject: Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park Master Plan Amendment, Anoka County

District(s), Member(s): MPOSC District A, Rick Theisen

Policy/Legal Reference: MN Statute 473.313

Staff Prepared/Presented: Jan Youngquist, AICP, Planning Analyst (651-602-1029)

Division/Department: Community Development, Regional Parks and Natural Resources

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park Master Plan Amendment.
2. Require that prior to initiating development at Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park, preliminary development plans should be sent to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager (651-602-4503) at Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review in order to assess the potential impacts to the regional interceptor system.
3. Require that once executed, Anoka County should submit to the Metropolitan Council a copy of the Joint Powers Agreement or any subsequent amendments between the County and the City of Fridley that incorporates City-owned land into the regional park boundary and allows the County to operate and maintain the property as regional parkland.

Background

Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park is an existing 140-acre park located along the Mississippi River in Fridley and consists of two park areas that are connected by the Mississippi River Regional Trail. The original master plan for the regional park was approved in 1980 and this master plan amendment updates and expands on that plan. The regional park boundary is proposed to be expanded by approximately 5 acres. A 3.5 acre parcel is owned by the City of Fridley and a 1.5 acre parcel is currently privately owned, but the City is proposing to obtain the land through park dedication when the general area is redeveloped. Both parcels would remain under City ownership; a Joint Power Agreement between Fridley and Anoka County would allow the County to operate and maintain the property as regional parkland. Proposed development described in the master plan includes new picnic pavilions, a disc golf course, a canoe launch, and a playground, as well as parking lot and trail reconstruction.

Rationale

The Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park Master Plan Amendment is consistent with the requirements of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and other Council policies.

Funding

The estimated cost to implement the master plan is \$5,300,000 for development. There are no acquisition costs associated with the master plan.

Approval of this master plan makes the acquisition and development costs eligible for regional parks funding, but does not commit the Council to any funding at this time. Future funding based on this master plan may be awarded through the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Council action is required to approve the CIP and to approve specific grants to Anoka County.

Known Support / Opposition

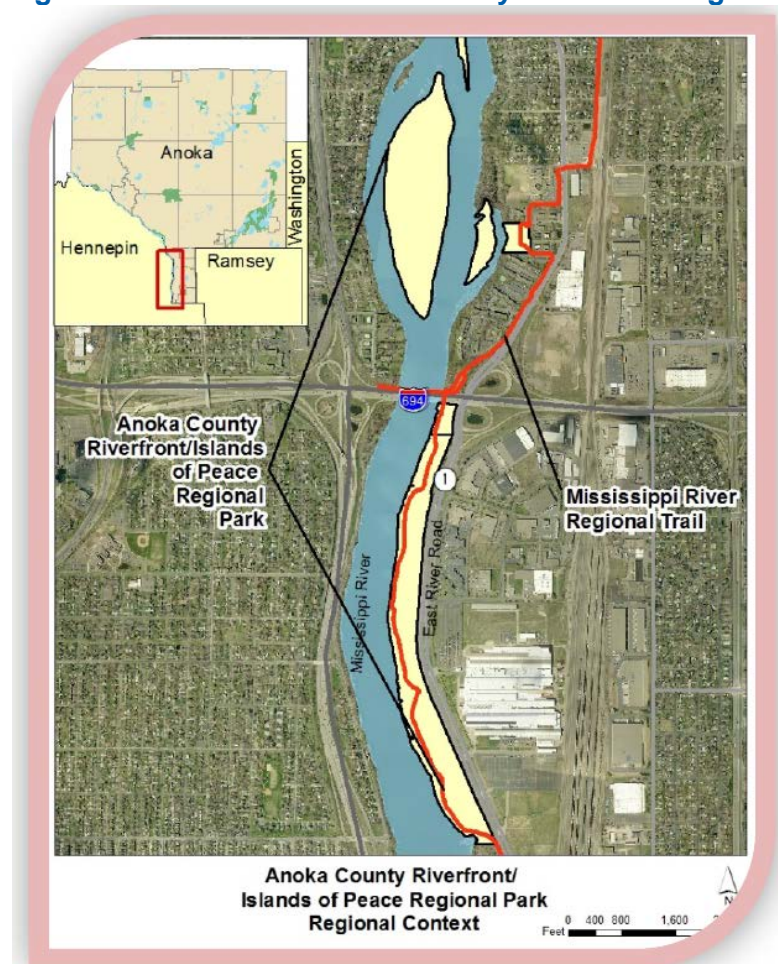
The Anoka County Board passed a resolution approving the Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park Master Plan Amendment on January 14, 2014. The master plan also includes a resolution of support from the City of Fridley. There is no known opposition to the master plan.

Analysis

The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires that regional park master plans address the eleven items listed below.

- 1. Boundaries and Acquisition Costs:** Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park is located along the Mississippi River in Fridley. The regional park has 140 acres of parkland in two areas that are connected by the Mississippi River Regional Trail. The location of the park is shown in *Figure 1*.

Figure 1: Location of Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park

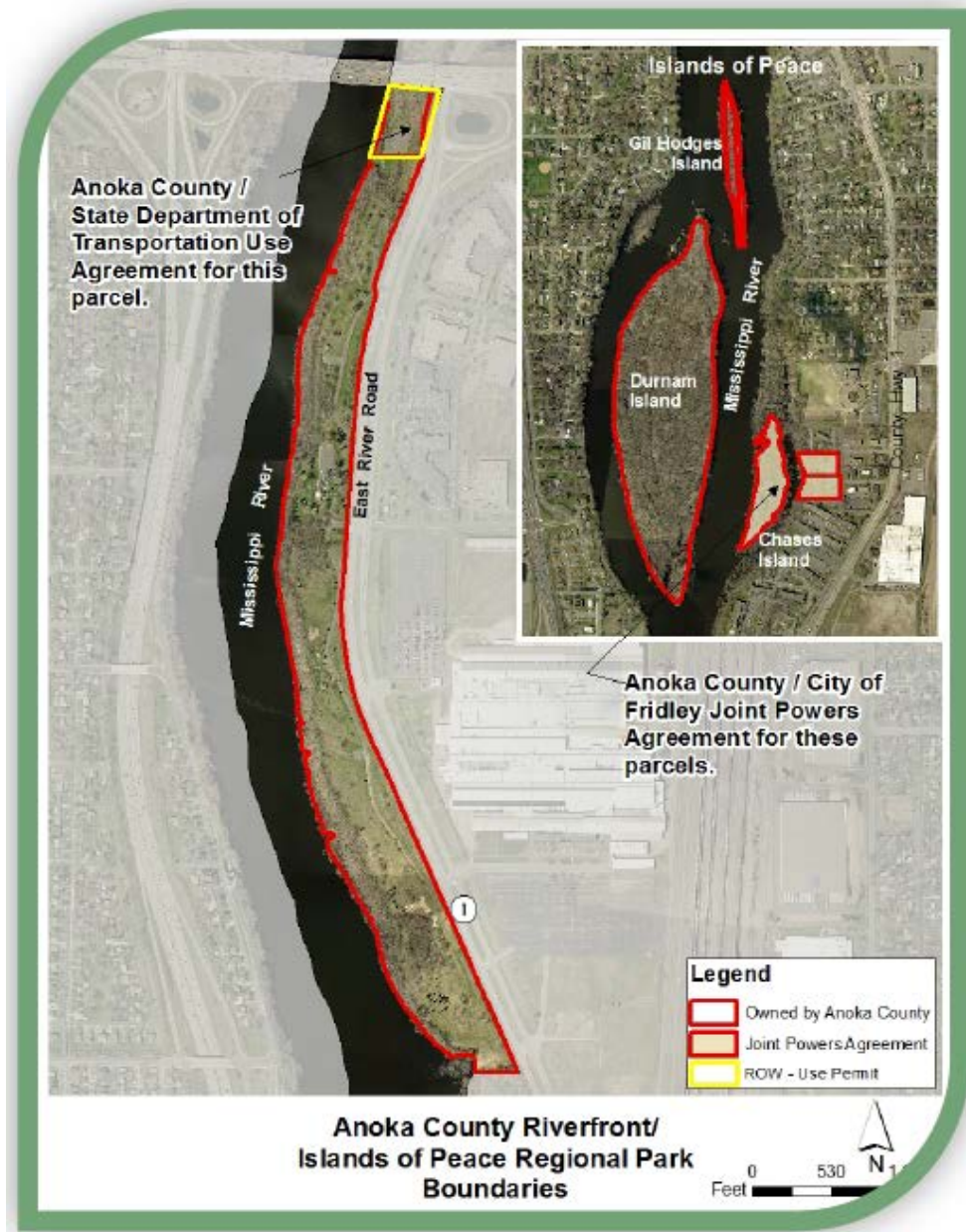


The area north of Interstate 694 (I-694), known as Islands of Peace, consists of 66 acres, including three islands: Chases Island, Durnam Island and Gil Hodges Island. Approximately 10 of the 66 acres are owned by the City of Fridley, but are operated and maintained by Anoka County as regional parkland through a Joint Powers Agreement.

The area south of I-694 is known as Riverfront and consists of 74 acres, including over a mile of river shoreline. A small portion of the park includes public right-of-way for I-694. Anoka County has a Limited Use Permit with the Minnesota Department of Transportation to use the area for park and open space purposes. Currently, the area includes a boat launch, parking lot and small picnic area. The Limited Use Permit states that no permanent structures can be placed in the right-of-way.

The current boundaries of Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Current Boundaries of Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park



The master plan proposes to expand the boundaries of Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park by adding two parcels totaling approximately 5 acres in the Islands of Peace area. Parcel 1 includes 3.5 acres which are owned by the City of Fridley. Parcel 1 is proposed to be added to the regional park boundary through a revised Joint Powers Agreement, in which the City would retain ownership and the County would operate and maintain it as regional parkland.

Parcel 2 is currently privately owned. The City of Fridley is proposing to acquire approximately 1.5 acres through park dedication when the area is redeveloped as part of the Transit Oriented Development plan for the Northstar Commuter Rail Station. Once this parcel is under City ownership, the Joint Powers Agreement will be amended. The proposed boundary expansion areas are shown in *Figure 3*.

Anoka County does not intend to purchase Parcels 1 or 2. The land would be incorporated into the regional parks system through a Joint Powers Agreement with the City of Fridley. Therefore, there are no acquisition costs associated with the boundary expansion.

Figure 3: Proposed Boundary Expansion of Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park



2. Demand Forecast: Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park had an estimated 245,500 visits in 2012. As population grows, the need for additional recreational opportunities and amenities grows as well. Anoka County's population is projected to grow to 437,550 by 2030, which is an 18 percent increase from 2010. The City of Fridley has a Transit Oriented Development plan for the general area near the regional park, and number of large parcels in the area are being redeveloped. These developments are projected to add an estimated 3,500 jobs and 575 housing units, which will likely increase usage of the regional park.

The Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) is promoting people living longer, healthier lives through the reduction in obesity and increased physical activity. Anoka County has received SHIP grants to increase access to regional parks and trails and increase health and outdoor recreation awareness. The County also conducted the 2013 Anoka County Adult Health Survey. Findings from the survey will be used to identify priorities to support health and create awareness of the ways that communities, organizations and employers can support healthy adult lifestyles. Outdoor recreation and regional parks can play an important role in healthy lifestyles.

3. Development Concept: Most of the existing recreational amenities in Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park are located at the Riverfront portion of the park and include paved trails, picnic facilities, a playground, boat launch and observation deck. The Reidel Farm Estate is also located at Riverfront. The house was built in the 1880s and served as the home of Albin E. Reidel until it was sold to Northern Pump Company. Anoka County purchased the building in 1987 and now operates it as a special event facility. The Reidel Farm Estate is available to rent for meetings, weddings, receptions and other gatherings. The building is not open unless there is a reservation. Other structures at Riverfront include a gazebo, two picnic pavilions and two restroom buildings.

The Islands of Peace portion of the regional park includes trails on Chases Island that are accessible by a pedestrian bridge. Structures at Islands of Peace include the Islands of Peace Visitor Center, which is home to the Minnesota Recreation and Parks Association, and a small maintenance garage. Existing development within the regional park is shown in *Figure 4*.

Figure 4: Existing Development at Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park



Development proposed in the master plan amendment includes adding new facilities and amenities to the park as well as rehabilitating existing facilities and adding trail connections from East River Road.

Riverfront Development: At the southern portion of Riverfront, the roadway and parking lots will be reconfigured to accommodate a new 12-hole disc golf course, a 100 person capacity picnic pavilion and a new restroom building. The existing trails, picnic facilities and playground will remain, but will be rehabilitated as needed. The concept plan for the south portion of Riverfront is shown in *Figure 5*.

Figure 5: Concept Plan for the South Portion of Riverfront



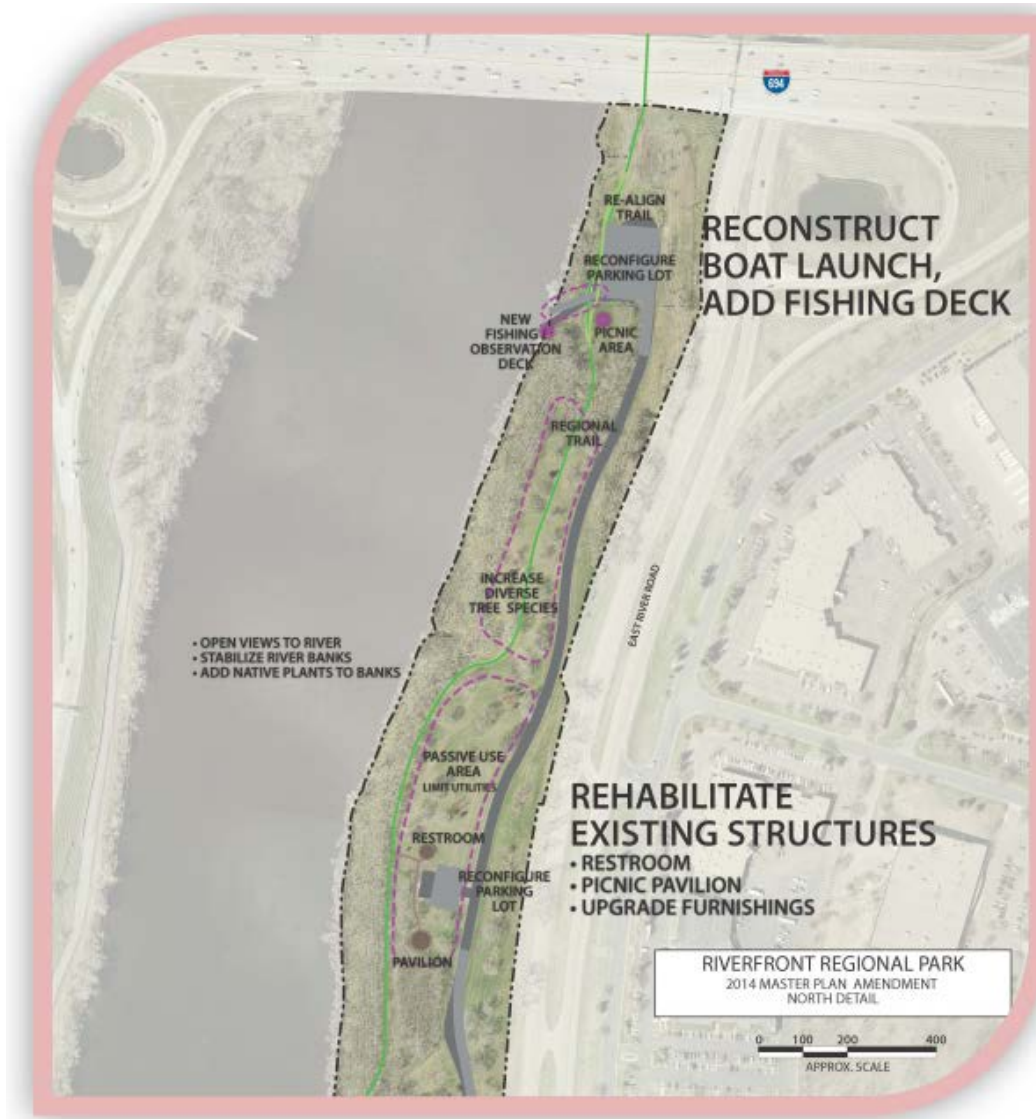
The central portion of Riverfront will include a new maintenance facility, a larger gazebo shelter, a new outdoor plaza, and an observation deck at the river's edge. The existing retaining wall will be reconstructed and lighting and utilities will be upgraded. The park entrance will also be modified to realign the entrance road, add trail connections, a new entrance sign and a gatehouse. The concept plan for the central portion of Riverfront is shown in *Figure 6*.

Figure 6: Concept Plan for the Central Portion of Riverfront



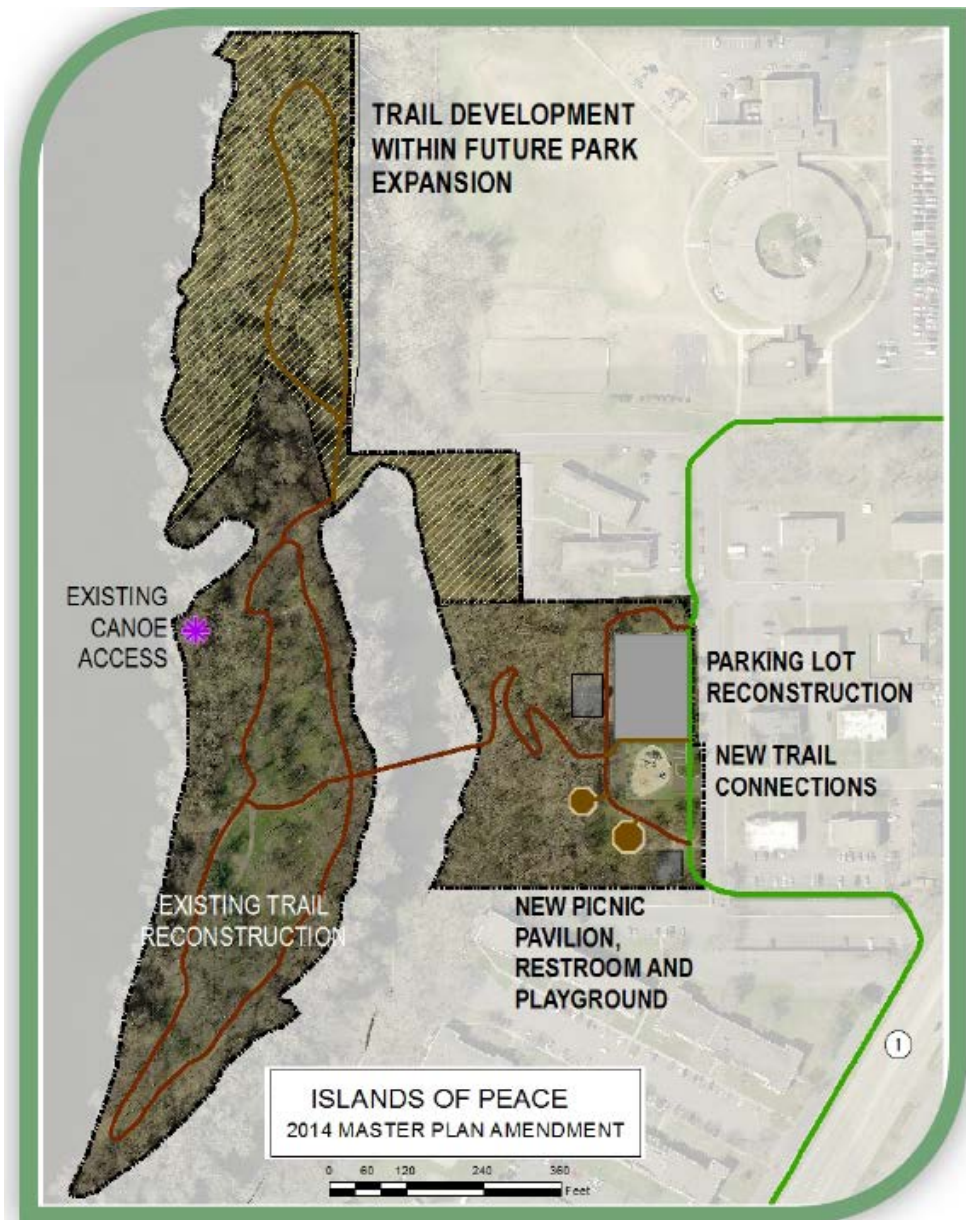
Development at the northern portion of Riverfront includes rehabilitation of existing facilities, including the picnic pavilion and restroom. The existing boat launch and parking lot will be reconstructed, and a small fishing deck and picnic area are proposed. The concept plan for the northern portion of Riverfront is shown in *Figure 7*.

Figure 7: Concept Plan for the North Portion of Riverfront



Islands of Peace Development: Development at Islands of Peace will include reconstructing and reconfiguring the parking lot, entrance drive and trails. The pedestrian bridge leading to Chases Island will need to be repaired or replaced in the future. The master plan identifies a new picnic pavilion, restroom building and playground, as well as a more formal canoe access on Chases Island. The future park expansion areas will allow for additional trail development. There is no development proposed for Durnam or Gil Hodges Islands. The concept plan for Islands of Peace is shown in *Figure 8*.

Figure 8: Concept Plan for Islands of Peace



The estimated development costs to implement the master plan are \$5,300,000 and are detailed in *Figure 9*.

Figure 9: Estimated Development Costs of Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park

Description	Estimated Cost
Design Fees	\$250,000
Site Analysis Work	\$100,000
Rehab Existing Buildings	\$250,000
New Pavilion/Restroom (Riverfront)	\$350,000
Maintenance Facility (Riverfront)	\$600,000
Reconstruct Boat Launch (Riverfront)	\$50,000
Fishing/Observation Decks (Riverfront)	\$60,000
Reconstruct Retaining Wall/Gazebo/Plaza (Riverfront)	\$150,000
Disc Golf Course (Riverfront)	\$75,000
New Pavilion/Concessionaire Building (Islands of Peace)	\$400,000
Construct Canoe Launch (Islands of Peace)	\$20,000
Construct Playground (Islands of Peace)	\$80,000
Reconstruct Plaza (Islands of Peace)	\$35,000
Bridge Reconstruction (Islands of Peace)	\$300,000
Roads/Parking Lots/Trails	\$1,800,000
Entrance Sign	\$30,000
Landscaping/Natural Resource Restoration	\$75,000
Lighting/Utilities	\$125,000
Site Furnishings/Signage	\$50,000
Fees and Contingencies	\$500,000
TOTAL	\$5,300,000

4. Conflicts: Anoka County will work to keep conflicts to a minimum through proper planning and community involvement in development of the regional park. The Riverfront portion of the regional park is mostly surrounded by industrial and commercial land uses, while the Islands of Peace portion of the park is surrounded by residential and institutional land uses. Potential conflicts may be related to safety and security around the park. The County provides park ranger patrols and works with the City of Fridley Police and the Anoka County Sheriff’s Department to ensure that the park is safe and secure.

Potential conflicts between pedestrian and vehicular traffic will be kept to a minimum by reducing the number of trail and road crossings within the park and by working with the Anoka County Highway Department and City of Fridley to ensure safe crossings at road intersections. These crossings may include signage, striping and signalized pedestrian crossings. Signage within the regional park will alert visitors to these crossings and will provide wayfinding and interpretive information.

5. Public Services: There are a variety of existing public services, such as roadways, trails, restroom facilities, picnicking facilities, and parking already available to users at both the Riverfront and Islands of Peace areas of the regional park. While many of the existing public services are proposed to be reconstructed with this master plan amendment, no new public services are required or proposed to be installed.

6. Operations: The use of Anoka County's parks and trails is regulated through Anoka County Park Ordinance #2012-01 and is enforced by local police departments and the Anoka County Sheriff. County Park Rangers educate park visitors about park ordinances and also provide park information.

Anoka County will provide the on-going daily and general routine maintenance of the park, including mowing, sweeping, plowing, clearing, debris removal. Solid waste will be collected from trash and recycling receptacles. Anoka County will inspect the park and trails regularly and will provide any capital improvements. Park signs will be provided and maintained by the County.

Annual operations and maintenance costs for Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park are estimated to be approximately \$40,000. Annual operations and maintenance costs are funded through Anoka County's budget, which receives its funding from picnic shelter rentals, room rentals, programs, park entrance fees and the County's general fund. Supplemental funding is received from the State of Minnesota as part of the Operations and Maintenance Fund allocation administered by the Metropolitan Council.

The County takes into account energy efficiency and sustainable design when redeveloping its parks and trails. For example, the County uses remote building automation systems that have saved the department \$5,000 to \$10,000 per year compared to traditional energy monitoring systems. The County has a refuse and recycling policy that requires the recycling of paper and plastics and typically uses recycled materials in its buildings, where possible.

7. Citizen Participation: Anoka County worked with local governmental and regulatory agencies in the master planning process. The National Parks Service, US Army Corps of Engineers, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Rice Creek Watershed District and the City of Fridley were invited to share comments on the draft master plan. Anoka County held an open house on October 24, 2013 to gather feedback from the public. The comments that were received primarily focused on the lack of pedestrian access between the south portion of the regional park and East River Road as well as vegetation management within the park. These comments were addressed in the master plan.

The Anoka County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved the Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park Master Plan Amendment on January 14, 2014. Additionally, the City of Fridley passed a resolution of support for the master plan amendment on March 10, 2014.

8. Public Awareness: Anoka County Parks and Recreation provides public information and education about its facilities through maps, websites, social media, publications and brochures.

9. Accessibility: The facilities and amenities within the regional park will be developed in accordance with ADA standards and guidelines. Anoka County strives to provide equal access to its parks and trails. There is not a fee for entrance to the regional park, which eliminates economic barriers for park users. The Islands of Peace portion of the park is located along a Metro Transit bus route and is less than .5 mile from a Northstar Commuter Rail station. Additionally, Anoka County's "Traveler" program provides transportation services for a minimal fee to County citizens who are in need.

10. Natural Resources: The land cover at the Riverfront portion of the park consists of a mix of impervious surface, perennial grasses, non-native deciduous forest and maintained grasses. The upland area is relatively flat and does not include any wetlands as identified by the National Wetlands Inventory. At the river bluff, there are slopes averaging 30 percent down to the river, which makes the area susceptible to erosion.

Due to past ordnance and munitions manufacturing in the area, there is some environmental contamination at the south end of the park. The US Navy monitors the condition of this area on a regular basis. The Navy has installed a number of groundwater monitoring wells that range in depth from 20-150 feet, which are used to check water levels and take water samples to determine the amount of volatile organic compound contamination in the area. Soil borings are also taken periodically to determine the level of soil contamination. The Navy has also used injection wells to help determine the microbial biomass present. Since the contamination is located deep within the soil structure, the US Department of the Navy has stated that there is little to no health risk to the general public. The area of environmental conditions is shown in *Figure 10*.

Figure 10 Known Environmental Conditions at Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park



The Islands of Peace portion of the regional park consists of mostly floodplain forest with some silver maple subtype on the islands and the upland areas include impervious surface with some

perennial grasses and sparse trees. The topography in this area is also steep between the upland and the river. There are no known environmental contamination conditions at Islands of Peace.

The master plan indicates that in order to manage the natural resources and maintain natural connection to the river, Anoka County will provide for:

- The protection, restoration and enhancement of native plant and animal habitats throughout the park
- Protection and improvement of water and soil resources
- Increase public awareness regarding the natural resources of the area
- Sustainable practices related to park development, operations and maintenance

General natural resources management strategies include identifying and assessing remnant plant and animal communities, monitoring rare species, controlling invasive species, restoring native plant and animal habitat, controlling detrimental insects and disease, wildlife management, enhancing water quality, erosion control and cooperative land stewardship.

Protection of surface water resources is a top priority. The County will work closely with the City of Fridley, the local watershed district, the National Park Service's Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to ensure that standards and requirements for resource protection are met.

Priority natural resource projects include:

- Removal of invasive species throughout the park
- Continued planting of trees and shrubs along East River Road and open turf areas to diversify the tree species
- Planting of native trees on Chases Island to replace trees lost due to diseases or storm damage
- Restoration of native prairie in the disc golf area at the Riverfront portion of the park
- Removal of Siberian Elms throughout the park

11. Stewardship: Anoka County will continue to manage the land and act as stewards to the regional park. Since the regional park is located along the Mississippi River and is part of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, natural resources play an important role in the overall health of the park. The County has conducted invasive species removal projects within the riparian area and has planted additional native trees and shrubs throughout the park. Anoka County also proposes to add a variety of tree and shrub species as part of the development concept for the regional park.

Review by Other Council Divisions

Environmental Services – Sewers (Roger Janzig 651-602-1119) – Metropolitan Council Interceptor 4-NS-521 runs adjacent to this regional park parallel to East River Road. The interceptor was built in 1965 and is a 96 inch reinforced concrete pipe at a depth of approximately 3 feet. To assess the potential impacts to our interceptor system, prior to initiating any development, preliminary plans should be sent to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager (651-602-4503) at the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review and comment.

Community Development – Environment and Surface Water Management (Jim Larsen 651-602-1159) – No comments.

Transportation Planning (Russ Owen 651-602-1724) – No comments.

Metro Transit (Steve Mahowald 612-349-7775) – No comments.

Conclusions

1. The Anoka County Regional Park Master Plan Amendment is consistent with the requirements of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and other Council policies.
2. The estimated cost to implement the master plan is \$5,300,000 for development. The master plan proposes to add two parcels, totaling approximately 5 acres, to the regional park boundary. A 3.5 acre parcel is owned by the City of Fridley and a 1.5 acre parcel is currently privately owned, but the City is proposing to obtain the land through park dedication when the area is redeveloped. Both parcels would remain under City ownership; a Joint Power Agreement between Fridley and Anoka County would allow the County to operate and maintain the property as regional parkland. Therefore, there are no acquisition costs associated with the master plan.
3. A Metropolitan Council regional interceptor runs adjacent to the regional park, parallel to East River Road from the main park entrance at 51st Way NE to the southern boundary of the park. The interceptor as built in 1965 and is a 96 inch reinforced concrete pipe at a depth of approximately 3 feet. The master plan calls for modifications at the main entrance of the park, including realignment of the entrance road, new trail connections, a new entrance sign and a gatehouse as well as a new trail connection to a bus stop further south in the park. In order to maintain the integrity of the regional interceptor system, prior to initiating any construction, preliminary development plans for these facilities within the regional park should be submitted to Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review and comment.
4. Approval of this master plan does not commit the Council to any funding at this time. Future development funding based on this master plan may be issued through the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Land Acquisition Opportunity Fund. Council action is required to approve the CIP and to approve specific grants to Anoka County.