

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: February 7, 2017

For the Community Development Committee meeting of February 21, 2017

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of March 8, 2017

Subject: Lake Waconia Regional Park Master Plan, Carver County

District(s), Member(s): MPOSC District B, Robert Moeller

Policy/Legal Reference: MN Statutes 473.313; Planning Strategy 1 *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*

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 Lake Waconia Regional Park Master Plan.
2. Require that prior to initiating development within the main portion of the regional park, Carver County must send preliminary plans to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager at Metropolitan Council Environmental Services, for review in order to assess the potential impacts to the regional interceptor system.
3. Inform Carver County that Metropolitan Council Environmental Services has a proposed project scheduled for 2018 to replace Forcemain Interceptor 7508 that travels through the regional park property.

Background

Lake Waconia Regional Park is located in Laketown Township along the southeast shores of Lake Waconia, which is the second largest lake in the metropolitan area. The 167-acre regional park is owned and operated by Carver County and includes a swimming beach, picnic areas, and a sledding hill. Annual events held at the park include a vintage snowmobile show, fourth of July fireworks, the Lake Waconia half marathon, and the Lake Waconia triathlon. There were approximately 105,000 visits to the regional park in 2015.

The Council approved Carver County's acquisition master plan for Lake Waconia Regional Park in 1995 and a development master plan in 2001. Both the *2030* and *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plans* identified Coney Island as a recommended expansion for the regional park. The Lake Waconia Regional Park boundary was amended in 2015 to add Coney Island and Carver County acquired the entire island in 2016. This master plan updates and replaces the 2001 Lake Waconia Regional Park master plan and establishes the following vision statement for the regional park:

The vision for Lake Waconia Regional Park, including the historic Coney Island of the West, is to provide the region-wide population a unique park experience focused on the shore of Lake Waconia. An accessible and inclusive balance of active, passive, and culturally significant recreational opportunities will be realized within the overall context of a natural park setting, in an economically sustainable manner.

Rationale

The Lake Waconia Regional Park Master Plan is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, including Planning Strategy 1, and other Council policies.

Thrive Lens Analysis

The Lake Waconia Regional Park master plan supports the Thrive outcomes of stewardship and prosperity by recommending the management, restoration, and enhancement of natural resources within the park. The Thrive outcome of equity is supported by a community outreach process that engaged a cross-section of the community during the development of the master plan. Additionally, the master plan advances the Thrive livability outcome through increasing access to nature and outdoor recreation.

Funding

The estimated development costs to implement the master plan are between \$17.7 and \$21.1 million in 2016 dollars. There is no land acquisition proposed in the master plan.

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 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund. Council action is required to approve the CIP, the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund project list, and specific grants to Carver County.

Known Support / Opposition

The Carver County Board of Commissioners approved the Lake Waconia Regional Park Master Plan on October 4, 2016. There is no known opposition.

Analysis

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

Boundaries and Acquisition

Lake Waconia Regional Park consists of 167 acres, which includes the main park parcel of 132.66 acres, as well as the 33.77-acre Coney Island. The Industries of Waconia and the City of Waconia gave a combined total of 7 acres to Carver County in 1987. Additional land was purchased for the park before it achieved regional status. After the Council approved the Lake Waconia Regional Park acquisition master plan in 1995, Carver County purchased more property for the park as well as for the realignment of Highway 5 away from the lake, which improved sight lines and allowed for a larger park property. The master plan was amended in 2015 to add Coney Island to the regional park boundary and Carver County purchased the entire island in 2016.

Figures 1 and 2 shown the boundaries of the main park parcel and Coney Island outlined in red.

Figure 1: Lake Waconia Regional Park: Main Park Boundary (outlined in red)



Figure 2: Lake Waconia Regional Park: Coney Island Boundary (outlined in red)



Although no additional land acquisition is proposed, the master plan identifies two adjacent parcels that should be evaluated in the future for inclusion into the park. One parcel is the site of ParkSide Church, which is surrounded on three sides by Lake Waconia Regional Park and shares an access road with the park. At the time this master plan was developed, the church was proceeding with steps toward expansion. The other parcel is a residential property that is adjacent to the northeast portion of the park. The property owners indicated that they may be amenable to selling their property to the County in the future if they do not find a developer willing to purchase it.

Stewardship Plan

The *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires that a master plan describe how park property would be managed prior to developing the property for recreation purposes. The main park parcel at Lake Waconia Regional Park is already developed for recreation purposes. Prior to site development of Coney Island, the initial management and stewardship will consist of signing the property to indicate that the property is owned and managed by Carver County. The island still contains many remnants of previous building foundations, collapsed buildings, signs of vandalism, various debris piles, remnant

paths, and an old car. Due to site conditions, the site will be posted advising visitors that the property is currently unsafe for public use and will undergo remediation to address these unsafe conditions.

Demand Forecast

The population of Carver County has grown significantly since 1990 and continues to grow. Between 2015 and 2040, the Council forecasts that Carver County's population will increase 63 percent and the number of households will increase 76 percent, which represent the highest growth rates of the seven counties in the metropolitan region.

Although the majority of the current population of Carver County is Caucasian, diversity is increasing. Caucasians accounted for 93.7 percent of the County's population in 2010 and 89.6 percent in 2014. The master plan identifies the need to provide access to recreation and natural resources in an equitable fashion, which will continue to be important as the region becomes more diverse.

Another demographic trend is the increase in the senior population. The master plan states that recreational facilities will need to be accessible and meet the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) standards and that more low impact opportunities should be provided to meet the needs of this growing user base.

The population growth in Carver County has increased the demand for recreational facilities at Lake Waconia Regional Park. However, the existing level of development at the park has not been able to serve the demand sufficiently, which underscores the importance of developing the regional park to an adequate level in a sustainable manner.

Public Engagement and Participation

Carver County undertook an extensive public engagement process to inform, consult, collaborate and partner with the community and stakeholders throughout the visioning and design process. Over 500 people were contacted throughout the various engagement activities and public open houses, with additional contact made through online and social media forums. The information collected through the public engagement process included the recreational needs of the community, issues affecting park use, and ideas for future development of the park. Feedback clearly identified the need to accommodate development of the park to balance human use, historical interpretation and preservation, and ecological protection.

The following engagement methods were used:

Public Open Houses—three open house meetings were held at the Waconia Event Center that is in the regional park. The first meeting included an overview of the project and brainstorming activities. Approximately 60-80 people attended. The second meeting was held to present conceptual design options and gather feedback, with approximately 120 people in attendance. The preliminary master plan was presented at the third meeting. The approximately 80 attendees ranked their priorities for both the island the main part of the park. Childcare and activities were provided at the open houses to attract families.

Pop-Up Meetings—three pop-up meetings were held to gather input from a variety of people in different locations. The first was held at the Lake Waconia Regional Park beach during a peak usage time. Approximately 100 people provided input, including members from a large Latino family who were there for a family gathering, an Asian and African-American couple enjoying the day with their grandchildren,

a young Columbian couple, members of a group who were attending baptisms at the lake, and families of varying sizes.

The second pop-up meeting was held at the Chaska Farmer's Market. Most people indicated that they had not been to the regional park. Approximately 25 people provided input. The third pop-up meeting was held at the Waconia Food Shelf and Library, where approximately 15 people provided input. The master plan indicated that the most successful pop-up meeting was the one held at the park, which gathered a variety of viewpoints and allowed the design team to see how the park was being used.

Community Events—the planning team attended three community events to gather input on the park, its uses, and potential programming and development. A small station was set up alongside street vendors at Carver Steamboat Days. Approximately 130-150 people provided input. These respondents were primarily Caucasian families or seniors who lived in Carver County.

The second event included a booth that was set up at Nickle Dickle Days in Waconia. Approximately 50 people provided input, including children, parents, and senior citizens. The third event was AngelFest which was in Chaska and sponsored by the Guardian Angels Catholic Church. The majority of the respondents were members of the church. In depth information was provided by people who spoke on behalf of their friends, neighbors, and church members, most of whom were from the Latino community.

The master plan indicated that attending these local events was useful to gain input. Many comments were centered around the popularity of fishing and swimming. Other comments were related to the desire to be able to use a shelter building without a reservation, the need for large open areas for games and sports, and improved amenities such as the playground, restrooms, and picnic areas. The desire for rentals, concessions, and a ferry to the island were also expressed.

Stakeholder Interviews—stakeholders contacted for interviews included Waconia Chamber of Commerce members, Carver County Historical Society, Waconia School District (including their Conservation Group and Intercultural Service Committee), Minnesota Off-Road Cyclists, ParkSide Church, adjacent landowners, Crown College, Audubon Society, SPOKES (a bicycle, paddle, and ice cream shop), the Midwest Waconia Vintage Snowmobile Show, and participants of special events at the park. Approximately 20 people were included in the interview sessions.

Technical Advisory Committee—six technical advisory committee (TAC) meetings were held as part of the design process. The 18 TAC members included representatives from Carver County Parks, Planning, Sheriff's Office, Historical Society, Board of Commissioners, and Park Commission; consultants; Waconia and Laketown Townships; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; Trust for Public Land; Chaska Human Rights Commission; and City of Waconia Planning Department.

Development Concept

The development concept for Lake Waconia Regional Park focuses on year-round recreation in a natural resource based park setting, that is shaped by its historical context.

Main Park Parcel—The development concept for the main park parcel remains consistent with the 2001 master plan for the park, but allows the park space to be more flexible and accessible in order to accommodate a wider range of recreational needs. Of the 132.66 acres, approximately 106 acres will remain natural resource based open space, with 26 acres developed for recreation.

The overall development concept for the main park parcel is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Lake Waconia Regional Park Main Parcel Development Concept



The master plan proposes the following developments for the main parcel of the park:

Main Park Entrance Drive and Contact Station: The current entrance drive is shared by the park and ParkSide Church. The entrance will be modified at the location of a proposed contact station to separate the church traffic from the park traffic. The contact station is the first point of contact for park visitors. The boat launch in the park has a maximum number of vehicles and when it is full, boat traffic would be allowed to turn around and exit the site at the contact station.

Main Multi-Purpose Trail: The main trail traverses through the park, creating a number of loops and offers access to various use areas within the park. The trail will include seating, interpretive signage, and stopping points on the hill that provide expansive views of Lake Waconia.

Lakefront Walk: The lakefront walk will include seating areas to offer places for viewing the lake as well as fishing and pedestrian piers to allow visitors to access the water.

Lakefront Development Area and General Plaza: The lakefront development area and general plaza is a recreational space dedicated to the swimming beach, playground, picnic spaces, a central seating plaza and the main parking area. Amenities in this area will include:

- Central plaza buildings with restrooms, event space, rentals and concessions
- Outdoor gas fire pit
- Pedestrian pier with ferry service to Coney Island
- Expanded swimming beach
- Separated beaching area for non-motorized watercraft
- Lifeguard station
- New playground with separated equipment for preschool and elementary ages with a dedicated space for sand and water play events
- Playground shelters that can accommodate large groups and may include a small plaza with grills, with a mix of shelters that allow for some to be reserved
- Open lawn space surrounding the central plaza for flexible space, lawn games, and events
- Parking lot phased over time to contain between 260 and 415 parking stalls

Multi-Purpose Lawn and Lakeside Arbor: The open lawn and lakeside arbor will be an extension of the central plaza and will accommodate park events, weddings, and photo opportunities. Additional picnic shelters would be located in this area.

Base Camp Area, Adventure Trail, and Sledding Hill: The base camp area provides adventurous recreational activities and is the prime access point for the adventure trail and sledding hill. This area will include:

- Four season park building with restrooms, indoor fireplace, and warming/park program room
- Outdoor plaza with gas fire pit
- Rentals
- Summer event space/winter skating area

The existing sledding hill will be improved to include a tow rope for easier access to the top of the hill. The hill can also be modified for summer uses such as challenge courses or summer sledding on special courses.

The adventure trail will be a natural trail through the wooded hillside that could include adventure and challenge courses. A deck will be strategically located near the top of the hill to provide sweeping views of the park and Lake Waconia.

Event Center: The master plan envisions two scenarios for the event center:

1. Improvements could be made to the existing Waconia Event Center in the park to include an outdoor deck, indoor programming events, and improved restrooms with connections to city utilities. The extent of the modifications that could be made may require that the building be brought up to existing building codes, which would need to be taken into consideration in decision making for a building that is nearing the end of its lifecycle.
2. A new event center building could be developed on a hilly area within the park that would directly relate to the multi-purpose lawn space and have dramatic views of Lake Waconia.

Coney Island—At 33 acres, the limited size of the island requires a balance between providing access for outdoor recreation and preserving its natural setting and historic context. The development concept places much of the development in two core use areas on the endpoints of the island and limiting development along most of the shoreline and the interior of the island.

The plan for Coney Island includes specific names that are related to the island or other local history. The names identified in the master plan highlight specific historical references, although the final decision for naming areas on the island will be made by Carver County in the future.

Amblard's Point Day Use Area: The area is located on the southwest portion of the island and its name comes from an original land owner who had a cabin on the island and may be responsible for the ornamental walls that exist along the shoreline in this area. To the extent possible, the historic walls and other artifacts will be integrated into the design. The day use area is one of the two key access points for the island. Key features will include:

- Day-use docks for boat mooring (8-10 slips, with room for expansion)
- Boat beaching off the end of the island along the sandbar
- Restroom—either stick built or prefabricated vault
- Lawn area for casual play, hanging out, and picnicking
- Picnic area with scattered picnic tables
- Sitting areas with benches overlooking the lake
- Access trail to the upper island
- Fishing piers
- Information kiosk, interpretative signage and island map

Zeglin's Point Day Use Area: Zeglin's point is located on the southeast side of the island and includes two use areas, with a focus on children's activities and permitted group uses, events, and camping. Key features of the day use area will include:

- Day-use docks for boat mooring (6-10 slips, with room for expansion)
- County barge access/drop off-area
- Small sand beach
- Adventure play area featuring custom built nature-based play features
- Open lawn for casual play, group gatherings, and general picnicking
- Picnic area with scattered picnic tables
- Accessible trail
- Fishing piers and lakeside sitting decks
- Information kiosk, interpretative signage and island map
- Coney Cottage Picnic Shelter with restrooms and maintenance storage

Key features of the flexible use area will include:

- Day-use docks for boat mooring (6-8 slips, with room for expansion)
- Flexible use family and group camping areas for tents, including picnic tables and fire rings
- Open lawn for casual play and group gatherings
- Sitting areas with benches overlooking the lake
- Accessible trail
- Fishing piers, simple docks and lakeside sitting decks
- Information kiosk, interpretative signage and island map
- Start with rustic tent camping pads, progress to primitive camper cabins (prefabricated) or three season tent cabins (initially 3, with space for up to 8)
- Vault toilet to serve the camp area

The Historic Interpretive Trail and Naegle's Tower: The interpretive trail will traverse the upper and central part of the island, creating loops linking a variety of natural and historic features that are unique to the island. Naegle's Tower will be the most prominent feature along the trail. The tower will be aligned with the existing main walkway that goes up the island and provides dramatic views of the island, the rookery on the island, the lake, and the surrounding area. The tower will have two levels, with the lower level being fully accessible.

The Adventure Nature Trail: The adventure nature trail will traverse the lower part of the island near the lake shore. Optimally, the trail will loop the entire island. In contrast to the interpretive trail, the nature trail will be narrower and more adventurous. Key features of the trail include numerous overlooks and sitting areas.

The overall development concept for Coney Island is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Lake Waconia Regional Park Coney Island Development Concept

Lake Waconia Regional Park

Historic Interpretation

- Focus on historic interpretation will be selective and based around an exploratory theme to discover the hidden history.
- Interpretive signage will be used in select areas to display or tell the story of the island history and existing remains.
- Lot identification may be used along the trails. This may include a stone engraved with a lot number related to an overall lot map identifying lot owners and numbers.
- Decks/boardwalks may cross some existing building foundations with use of interpretive signage.
- Use of names of specific individuals or families that relate to the history of Coney Island, Waconia, and the local history to label use areas of the island may be used in naming of island areas and overlooks. The actual names would be determined in conjunction with County officials and local historians. For the purposes of the Master Plan, temporary names have been used and are shown in italics.

(A) Historic Interpretive Trail

- 6'-8' Wide Granite or Aggregate Trail
- Pedestrian Use Only with Self-Guided Tour
- Walking/Hiking/Snow Shoe/Cross-Country Ski
- Historic Lot Identification
- Interpretive Signage in Select Areas
- Overlooks with Historical Reference (ie: Hirschfield Overlook)

(B) Rookery Trail

- Part of Historic Interpretive Trail
- Gated Off During Nesting Season

(C) Nature Trail

- 4'-5' Wide Earthen or Aggregate Trail
- Boardwalks as Necessary
- Decks Across Foundations
- Overlooks
- Built into Slopes as Necessary
- Optional Routes (depending on constructability)

(D) Amblard's Point Day Use Area

- Stabilize/Restore Walls
- Day Use Docks
- Island Kiosk / Map
- Restroom
- Picnic Space
- Fishing Piers
- Trail Access

(E) Boat Beaching Area

(F) Dock Access



LEGEND	
	Seasonal Trail
	Historic Trail
	Optional Trail
	Rookery Delineation
	Trail Overlook
	Terminus Overlook
	Kiosk / Island Map

(G) Naegele's Tower

- Accessible Lower Deck with Ramp Access
- Upper Observation Deck
- Rookery Blinds & Educational Signs
- Interpretive Historical Displays

(H) Zeglin's Point Flexible Use Area

- Day Use & Campsite Docks / Fishing Piers
- Campsites (accommodates individual or group use; tent sites to portable camper cabins; summer & winter camping; reservable; lakeside and wooded sites)
- Open Lawn and Picnic Space (historic lawn location)
- Trail Access
- Snowmobile Access for Winter Gatherings & Use
- Coney Cottage Picnic Shelter with Restrooms, "Garage" Style Doors, Fireplace and/or Fire Pit

(I) Zeglin's Point Day Use Area

- Day Use Docks / Fishing Pier
- Entrance Island Kiosk / Map
- Shared Coney Cottage Picnic Shelter
- Small Existing Informal Beach
- Adventure / Nature Play Experience
- Open Lawn and Picnic Space (historic lawn location)
- Trail Access (accessible route to tower)

(K) Barge Access Dock

- #### Landscape & Natural Resources
- Highlight Historic Plant Communities (from native to introduced plants brought from original landowners)
 - Invasive Species Control Plan
 - Stabilize Steep / Eroded Slopes
 - Protect Lake Edge
 - Naturalize Lake Edge in Undeveloped Areas

The wayfinding and signage within the park includes plans for a main entrance monument sign to promote the regional park's existence, exterior directional signs located at key areas along vehicular routes to provide guidance to the main park entrance, a small park monument sign at the contact station to provide guidance to the location of park use areas and the DNR boat launch, interior directional signs and informational signs located at key use areas of the park, park kiosks located at main areas of pedestrian travel, and educational/interpretive signs located at select areas along the trails and at the overlook areas.

The master plan breaks out the development concept into phases with cost estimates. The estimates are calculated in 2016 dollars at the master plan level and are not based on final design.

Phase One development for the island includes removing debris and other hazards to allow for safe public use of the island. Improvements will focus on the two access points day use areas, boat docks, a kiosk with information, picnic space, restroom facilities, and trails. The estimated cost is approximately \$1,123,650. Future remaining island development will be done as funds become available and range from approximately \$2.5 to \$3.2 million.

Phase One development for the main park parcel includes bringing public water and utility services into the park, improving access for vehicles and pedestrians, starting a natural resources management plan, and focusing development on the waterfront, including beach expansion, the lakefront walk, fishing piers, and the park buildings in the central plaza area. The estimated costs are approximately \$10.75 million. Future remaining main park improvements will be done as funds are available and in response to recreational demands. These costs range from approximately \$3.3 to \$4.6 million.

Total costs to implement the development concept range from \$17.7 to \$21.2 million in 2016 dollars.

Conflicts

The master plan discussed minor conflicts in relation to the park as well as planned mitigation measures, which include:

- The northeastern portion of the park is adjacent to a large privately owned residential parcel. Currently, there are some conflicts with park users using the private drive and property as a way to access the park to avoid the entrance fee. The master plan proposes to provide a buffer to the property and clearly delineate the park entrance. The property owners may sell their land to a developer in the future.
- Highway 5 borders the regional park near an area that is identified mainly for open space and natural resource improvements. Noise from the highway is apparent along upper portions of the park and especially at the top of the sledding hill. The lower portions of the park near the lake are well buffered from the noise. The master plan proposes increasing the wooded areas and buffer space along Highway 5 to reduce noise and the views of the highway from the upper portions of the regional park.
- Small wetlands were created when water flow patterns were altered, such as in previous ditches along the former alignment of Highway 5. Portions of the park drive and some of the new parking areas will affect some of these small wetlands. The master plan identifies areas for wetland mitigation on site, as well as areas for storm water treatment for new impervious surfaces. The large wetlands on the east and west sides of the main park parcel will remain protected.
- The lake shore edge on the main park parcel and the island contain a mixture of steep and eroded banks, vegetated banks, and rocky/gravelly shoreline with more gradual slopes. The

master plan identifies the intent to correct the eroded bank area and allow for natural vegetation along the majority of the shoreline to protect the water quality. The portions of the shoreline that are not identified for swimming, fishing, and boat access will be transitioned to a natural edge.

- There are wooded areas on the main park parcel as well as on the island that will be impacted with the inclusion of new trails. The trail alignment will be field verified at the time of construction to make the least amount of impact from earthwork operations. The wooded area on the main park parcel is planned to be expanded to improve the park's beauty as well as to provide a natural buffer. Steep eroded slopes on the island need revegetation and slope stabilization. Some of the trail alignments and grading will allow for more gradual and improved slopes.

Public Services

Options for connecting the main park parcel to city services and modifying existing services within the park were explored as part of the master planning process. The master plan identifies the following strategies:

- Rerouting electric and gas lines further away from the main beach development area.
- Bringing water service to the park either off Old Beach Road or from Yellowstone Trail in conjunction with the services for ParkSide Church.
- Routing sanitary sewer either to the east to connect to a future development northeast of the park or routing it to the west to connect to existing sanitary sewer at the Beach Road cul-de-sac. Both options require a lift station within the park.

Historically there were electrical lines running from the city of Waconia to Coney Island. During the master planning process, it was determined that the island is a secluded and adventurous portion of the regional park and that development should be consistent with these qualities. If there are some minor electrical needs, there is the potential to examine options such as wind or solar energy as well using a generator or battery operated amenities that do not detract from the remote island characteristics.

Restrooms facilities for the island will be located on the two ends of the island that serve as entrance points and will likely be portable facilities or vault latrines. There is a possibility to construct wells and septic fields on site, but this was not included in the master plan and would require further examination of feasibility.

Operations

The Carver County Parks Department operates Lake Waconia Regional Park. Maintenance of the facilities and land is essential to protect the public investment in the park as well as to provide users clean, safe, and enjoyable park experiences. The general regulations related to the use of the park system can be found in the County's Parks and Recreation Ordinance #72-2011.

The Parks Department's 2016 Operations Budget totals approximately \$1.3 million, which funds administration, management, recreation and volunteer programming, visitor services and natural resources management. Revenue sources for the operations budget come from the County's general fund, programming fees, special events, permits, and State funds administered through the Council.

Current operations and maintenance expenses for Lake Waconia Regional Park are approximately \$130,000 annually. As improvements to the regional park are considered, the County will examine the viability of what can be properly operated and maintained within park budgets. The estimated

operations and maintenance expenses associated with the development proposed in the master plan are \$300,000 annually.

The provision of emergency services to Coney Island such as from fire, medical emergencies and storms was a concern that was evaluated during the design process. The following items were noted in the master plan for future implementation:

- A dock is identified at the main portion of the park for a Sheriff's boat to access the island, as well as a County Parks boat.
- The island will have a barge access location large enough to dock an emergency boat and allow transfer of individuals from the island to the boat.
- The island shelter building will include a storage area that could contain emergency equipment and an all-terrain vehicle for maintenance and emergency needs.
- The island shelter building can be constructed to act as an emergency shelter.
- The emergency watercraft may need to be upgraded in the future to adequately board a person on a stretcher.

The community engagement process indicated that there are increased demands for additional park programming and services at Lake Waconia Regional Park, including rentals, concessions, improved restroom facilities, music in the park, and park programs for a wide range of users. A challenge identified in the master plan is that while improvements and programming may generate increased revenue, it generally may not be enough to sustain ongoing staffing and maintenance costs. Portions of Carver County are in close proximity to several Three Rivers Park District facilities, which do not charge entrance fees. The master plan indicates that Carver County should evaluate its practice of charging an entrance fee to determine if there are alternate sources of revenue that could replace the entrance fee, such as rentals and concessions.

The master plan identified potential partnerships that should be explored regarding operations of the regional park, including:

- Local businesses that can provide the boat ferry/shuttle to and from the island.
- Local businesses that can run rentals or educational/recreational programs, such as paddle boarding, kayaking, nature observation
- School conservation groups and programs that could provide labor for construction of nature trails and educational signs
- Groups and associations that use the park for their programs and events, such as Ducks Unlimited, Vintage Snowmobiles, triathlons, and marathons

Public Awareness

The Carver County website provides information on the County's regional parks and trails, including park program opportunities, recreational amenities, reservations policies, and way to get involved. Information is also available at kiosks and the entrance contact station at the regional park. Through the public engagement process, Carver County found that longtime residents had a high level of awareness of Lake Waconia Regional Park and Coney Island. Carver County may consider additional methods to reach out to the public, including senior citizens who may not be familiar with the internet or populations who may not use English as their primary language.

Accessibility

The master plan discusses the importance of developing facilities to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. Accessibility was taken into account to provide a comparable recreational experience where feasible. For example, the pier extending from the central plaza on the main park parcel will be wide enough to accommodate pedestrians and wheelchairs in both directions. Most trails on the island will be accessible, with the exception of the adventure nature trail, which will be located in areas of steeper slopes and will be more rugged. The lower deck of Naegle's Tower will be fully accessible.

The master plan encourages signage within the park to use universal symbols and alternate languages to provide clear information.

Natural Resources

The main park parcel currently contains remnant characteristics from previous land uses, including turf lawn spaces near the lake. The previous agricultural fields on top of the hill adjacent to Highway 5 have been transitioned to prairie plantings. A large hillside separates the upper prairie and the lakeside portion of the park and contains a mature Maple-Basswood forest, with buckthorn present in the sub-canopy.

Large wetlands are located on the east and west ends of the park. Although portions of the previous Highway 5 alignment are still in place, the removal of portions of the roadway and other site modifications have created some additional wetland areas within the park.

Coney Island is heavily covered with mature deciduous trees and much of the island includes an understory of invasive and undesirable species including buckthorn, smooth sumac, and poison ivy. A large area of native Maple-Basswood forest is located on the western side of the island, with a smaller area on the east-central portion of the island. Altered/non-native deciduous forest areas are located through the center of the island and on the lower points of the island. The vegetation in these two areas generally consist of green ash with a dense understory of buckthorn and smooth sumac.

Figures 5 and 6 depict the Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS) mapping of the main park parcel and Coney Island, respectively.

Figure 5: MLCCS Map: Lake Waconia Regional Park Main Park Parcel



- Project Area
- 26% to 50% impervious cover with perennial grasses
- Cattail Marsh
- Floating algae - intermittently exposed aquatic bed
- Lacustrine Sand Flats - Bars
- Maple-basswood forest
- Medium-Tall Non-Native Dominated Herbaceous Vegetation
- Other exposed/ transitional land
- Pavement with 91-100% impervious cover
- Permanently Flooded Altered/Non-Native Dominated Herbaceous Vegetation
- Saturated altered/non-native herbaceous vegetation
- Seasonally Flooded Altered/Non-Native Dominated Herbaceous Vegetation
- Semipermanently flooded altered/non-native dominated herbaceous vegetation
- Short grasses and forbs on upland soils
- Upland soils with planted or maintained grasses and sparse tree cover
- Upland soils with planted, maintained or cultivated deciduous shrub/vine vegetation
- Upland soils with planted, maintained or cultivated deciduous trees
- Wet Meadow

Figure 6: MLCCS Map: Lake Waconia Regional Park Coney Island



The goals of the natural resource management plan are to improve the natural resources of the park and focus on creating prime habitat and food sources for pollinators. The following restoration efforts are a focus of the natural resource management plan for the main park parcel:

- Maintain lawn spaces where appropriate using eco-friendly maintenance methods
- Manage, restore, and expand the Maple-Basswood forest system
- Restore non-native prairie to native prairie focused on pollinator species that would support bee habitat as well as educational programs
- Manage and restore wetlands to control invasive species
- Naturalize portions of the lakeshore edge to improve water quality and control erosion

Enhancement of the natural features of Coney Island focus on the following restoration efforts:

- Maintain lawn spaces where appropriate on the two ends of the island to be used for day use recreation and picnic areas using short growing grasses for less maintenance
- Manage, restore, and expand the Maple-Basswood forest system
- Manage the non-native deciduous forest to be converted to a native Maple-Basswood forest system
- Stabilize steep slopes and embankments to control erosion
- Naturalize portions of the lakeshore edge to improve water quality and control erosion

Review by Other Council Divisions

Community Development – Environment and Surface Water Management (Jim Larsen 651-602-1159) – My initial review comments were adequately addressed by the supplemental information that was provided by Carver County. I do not have additional comments on the revised master plan.

Environmental Services – Sewers (Roger Janzig 651-602-1119) – Metropolitan Council Forcemain Interceptor (9204) runs through the park property. This interceptor was built in 1998 and is a 16-inch ductile iron pipe (DIP) at a depth of approximately 9 feet. Also, Metropolitan Council Forcemain Interceptor (7508) runs through the park property. This interceptor was built in 1976 and is a 14-inch DIP at a depth of approximately 9 feet. To assess the potential impacts to our interceptor system, prior to initiating any project near the two Interceptors, preliminary plans should be sent to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager (651-602-4503) at the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review and comment.

The Metropolitan Council has a proposed project scheduled for 2018 to replace the older Forcemain Interceptor (7508).

Transportation/Transit Planning (Steve Mahowald 612-349-7775) –No comments.

Local Planning Assistance (Angela Torres 651-602-1566) –No comments.