

## Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: May 2, 2017

For the Community Development Committee meeting of May 15, 2017

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of May 24, 2017

**Subject:** Bunker Hills Regional Park Master Plan Amendment, Anoka County

**District(s), Member(s):** MPOSC District E, Michael Kopp

**Policy/Legal Reference:** MN Statute 473.313

**Staff Prepared/Presented:** Michael Peterka, Planner (651-602-1361)

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

### Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Bunker Hills Regional Park Master Plan Amendment.
2. Inform Anoka County that future grant eligible development costs for the Central Maintenance Facility will be prorated to reflect the proportion of the County' regional park acreage to the total park acreage owned by Anoka County at the time of a grant request for Metropolitan Regional Parks funding.

### Background

Anoka County has submitted a master plan amendment for Bunker Hills Regional Park. The park is approximately 1600 acres in size and is located in the Cities of Andover, Coon Rapids, Blaine, and Ham Lake. Bunker Hills Regional Park offers recreation opportunities including picnicking, trails, playgrounds, Bunker Beach Water Park, disc golf, camping, archery, a dog park, and a stable for horseback riding. The current master plan for the park was approved by the Metropolitan Council in 1998. This master plan amendment proposes the addition of two outdoor gathering areas, additional trail connections, city water and sewer connections, and improvements and additions to the existing maintenance facilities within the park.

### Rationale

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

### Thrive Lens Analysis

The Bunker Hills Regional Park Master Plan Amendment advances the Thrive outcome of livability by enhancing the quality of life in the region through increased access to nature.

### Funding

The estimated cost to implement the master plan amendment is \$6,230,000 for project development. There are no acquisition costs associated with the amendment.

Approval of this master plan amendment makes the development costs eligible for regional parks funding but does not commit the Council to any funding. Future funding based on this master plan amendment 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 Anoka County.

### **Known Support / Opposition**

The Anoka County Board of Commissioners has approved and adopted the master plan amendment. The Cities of Andover and Coon Rapids have adopted resolutions of support for the master plan amendment. All amendment projects are located in the cities of Andover and Coon Rapids. There is no known opposition to the amendment.

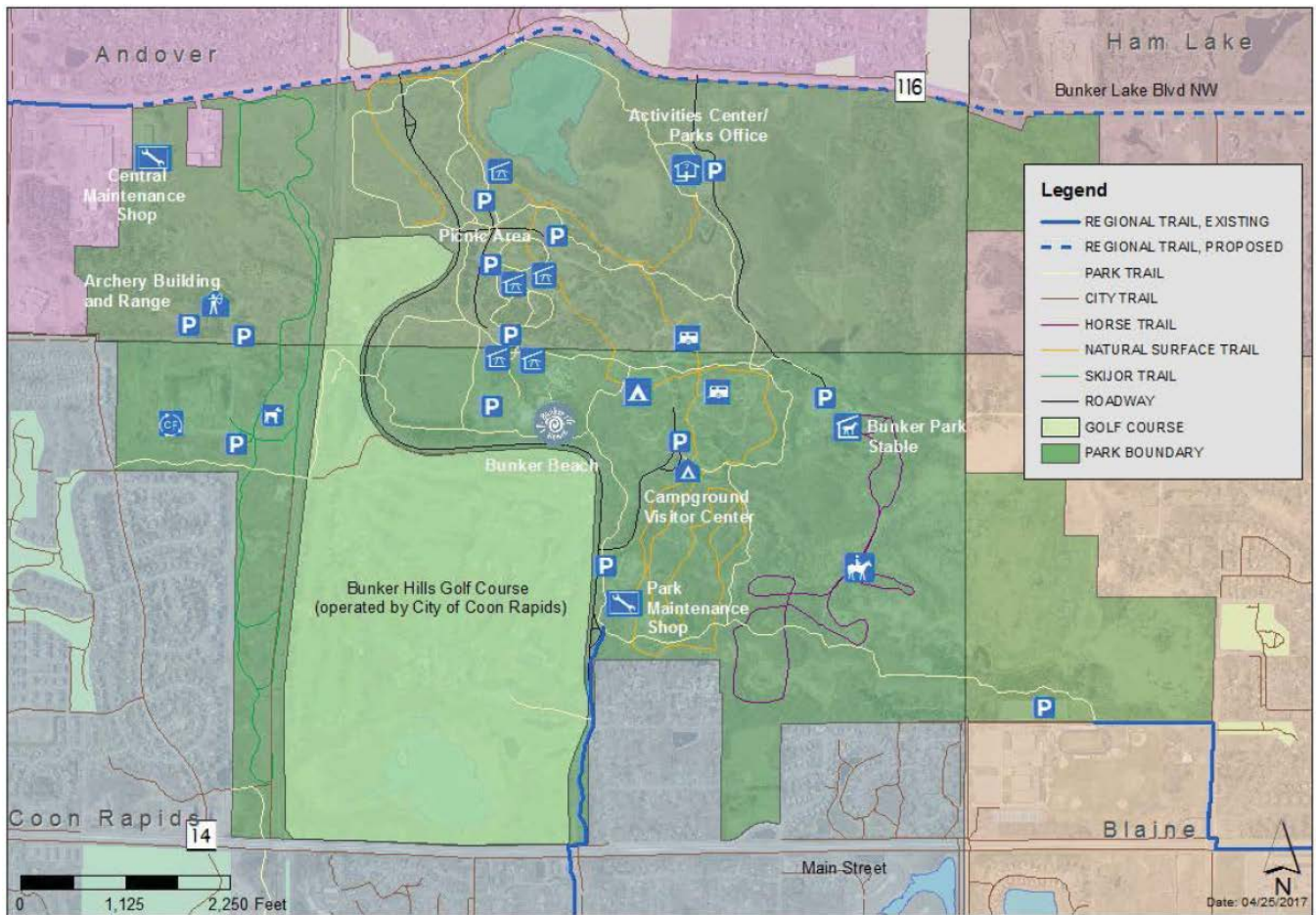
## Analysis

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

### Boundaries and Acquisition

Bunker Hills Regional Park is approximately 1600 acres in size and is located in the Cities of Andover, Coon Rapids, Blaine, and Ham Lake. The regional park provides access to the Coon Creek, Central Anoka County, and Bunker Hills-Chain of Lakes Regional Trails. The master plan amendment does not anticipate any changes to the boundary of the park, therefore, no acquisition costs are included. Figure 1 provides an overview of the park including regional and local trail connections.

**Figure 1: Bunker Hills Regional Park Map**



### Demand Forecast

Bunker Hills Regional Park has seen a steady increase in park visitation. From 2012 to 2015, the Council's Annual Use Estimate showed a 2% increase in visits. Additionally, populations in cities immediately surrounding the park are anticipated to grow by 15-34% by 2040 with the Anoka County population increasing by 25% during that time. Visits to Bunker Hills Regional Park are anticipated to increase as the populations of the County and surrounding communities grow.

The projects in the amendment help to address specific areas of demand within the park. The outdoor gathering spaces will help to meet the increasing demand for pavilions and other rental space at Bunker Hills. The additional spaces will also enhance gathering capacity in accordance with needs outlined in the Council's "Regional Park Use Among Selected Communities of Color" (2014). Additionally, engagement related to the amendment showed an overwhelming interest in walking and

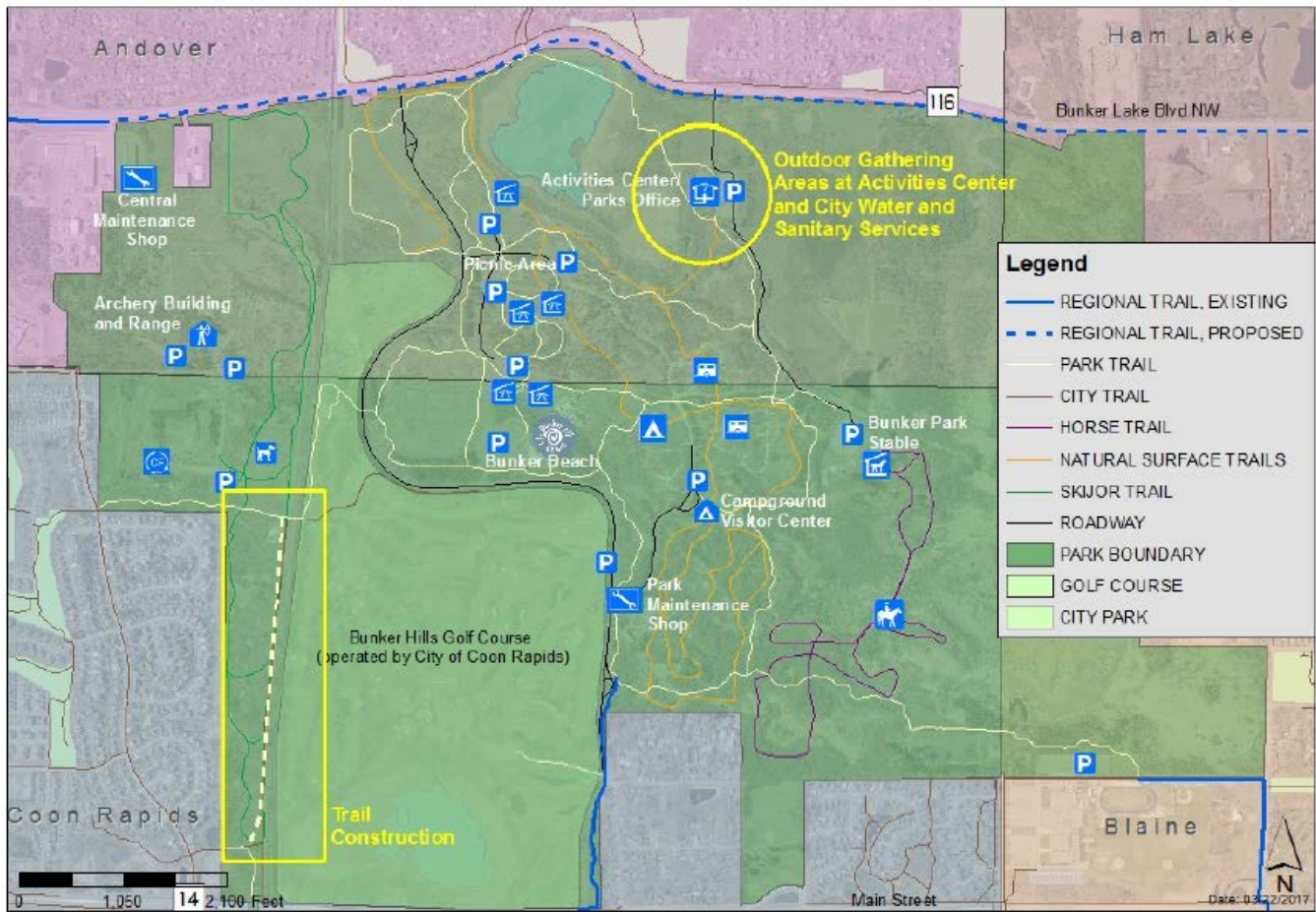
biking as preferred activities for park visitors. The proposed trails will meet this demand while providing an additional connection for residential areas surrounding the park.

### **Development Concept**

The amendment proposes two types of development in Bunker Hills Regional Park, new facilities and improvements/expansions. New facilities included outdoor gathering areas, trail construction, and city water and sanitary service connections. The locations of the new facilities are shown *Figure 2*.

Improvements and expansions will be done at the Central Maintenance Shop and the Park Maintenance shop along with adding a cold storage building at the activities center. These can be seen in *Figure 3*.

**Figure 2: New facilities proposed in the amendment**



**Figure 3: Improvements and expansions proposed in the amendment**



The amendment proposes constructing two outdoor gathering areas at the Bunker Hills Activities Center. One will be a large outdoor deck with a capacity of approximately 100 people. The other area will be a smaller gathering area in the form of a shaded patio for park visitors. Both outdoor gathering spaces are visible in *Figure 4*. Looking at the figure, the large deck is on the left side of the building and the smaller gathering area is located to the right.

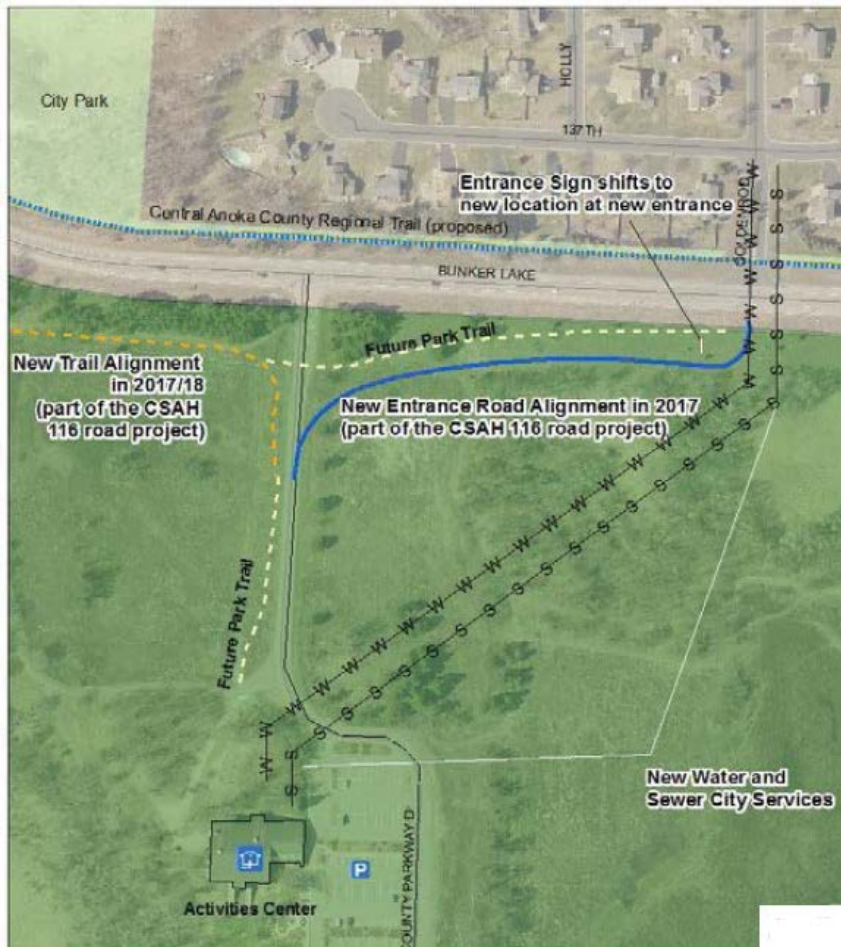
**Figure 4: Outdoor gathering space development concept**



The proposed trail projects for the park include two short connector trails near the activities center and one longer trail in the southwest portion of the park. The two shorter connector trails will link the activities center to the new trail along CSAH 116. These will be completed with the CSAH 116 road

project in 2017. The longer segment in the southwest portion of the park will provide safe and easy access to park amenities from a residential area that is not currently connected to the park. The trail segments can be seen in *Figures 5 and 6*.

**Figure 5: Connector trails near the activities center**



**Figure 6: Trail in the southwest corner of the park**



The activities center and central maintenance facility are currently on a well and septic system. Both systems are old and in need of repair. By connecting to City of Andover’s water and sanitary services, there will be a reliable and safe drinking water supply at the building. The County will also be able to eliminate the nearby septic system that has a high potential for surface to groundwater interaction. In March 2017, the Council approved a future reimbursement consideration for the activities center portion of this project in business item [2017-61](#).

In 2016, Anoka County performed a system-wide maintenance facility assessment. The assessment indicated a need for improvements to several facilities in the park. The central maintenance facility needs include remodeling the existing facility to add offices, a break room, and a locker room. Additional central maintenance facility needs include warm and cold storage for equipment, paving a portion of the storage yard, a designated ventilated welding area, and an equipment wash bay.

Estimated development costs for the central maintenance facility, which include water and sanity connections, are \$4,082,000. This facility serves all of Anoka County’s parks and trails, some of which are not part of the regional parks system. Future grant eligible development costs for the central maintenance facility should be prorated to reflect the proportion of the County’ regional park acreage to the total park acreage owned by Anoka County at the time of a grant request.

The Bunker Park Shop also requires renovations to address storage needs and install a wash bay. Additional Bunker Park Shop site work includes paving, utilities, security fencing, and a security gate. Needs at the activities center include additional cold storage in the form of a nearby 1000 square foot building.

Wayfinding within the park includes several different types of signage including trailhead and directional signs. Trailhead signage is typically placed near parking areas that provide access to a park or trail. Directional signage and maps are located where trail intersections occur to provide confirmation or additional wayfinding information. Vehicular wayfinding is provided in the form of monument entrance signs and directional signs once in the park.

**Figure 7: Development Cost Estimate**

Project Development Cost Estimate	
Bunker Hills Activities Center Outdoor Gathering Areas	\$788,000
Activities Center Water/Sanitary Services	\$250,000
New Trails	\$600,000
Central Maintenance Facility Building Construction/Renovation	\$3,332,000
Central Maintenance Facility Site Work, including City Water and Sanitary Services	\$750,000
Activities Center Storage	\$130,000
Bunker Park Shop Renovations	\$380,000
<b>Total Development Cost Estimate</b>	<b>\$6,230,000</b>

**Conflicts**

Anoka County anticipates that conflicts related to the Bunker Hills Regional Park Master Plan Amendment will be minimal. A natural heritage survey was conducted in order to avoid disturbing special plant species. Conflicts related to pedestrians and vehicles will be kept to a minimum by reducing trail and road crossing within the park and by working with local cities and the County Highway Department to ensure safe crossing at road intersections.

**Public Services**

The master plan amendment proposes connecting to city services for water and sewer at the activities center and central maintenance facility. These costs have been included in the development section of this document. No other public services are required to accommodate the proposed amendment projects.

**Operations**

Anoka County Ordinance #2012-01 regulates parks and trails under the jurisdiction of Anoka County and is enforced by local police departments and the Anoka County Sheriff’s Department. Annual operations and maintenance cost for Bunker Hills Regional Park are approximately \$1.1 million. This includes daily operations for picnicking areas, the campground, gatehouses as well as general maintenance within the park. General maintenance includes mowing, sweeping, plowing, debris removal, and sign maintenance. Expenses are typically off set by revenue generated through daily and annual park pass sales, picnic pavilion rentals, programs, special events, the parks operating budget, and the Regional Park Operations and Maintenance grant program. Proposed projects in the master plan amendment will have a negligible impact on the annual operations and maintenance of the park.



## **Public Engagement and Participation**

Anoka County conducted a six-month-long community engagement process between October 2016 and March 2017. During this time, the County shared the Bunker Hills Regional Park Master Plan Amendment projects with community members for feedback and input. The County's methods included multi-lingual postings, email blasts, social media, pop-up events, and other methods to advertise the projects. Below are some efforts used in the engagement process

### **Sticky Dot Voting**

The County placed static picture boards on easels at several different locations throughout the county to allow the public to "vote" on preferred amenities, trail surfacing, and park safety.

### **Plan Your Parks**

The County shared a "Plan Your Parks" advertisement on social media. The post specifically targeted populations currently under represented in park visitor surveys who live within a 20-mile radius of the park. The post included a short survey in English, Spanish, and Somali. The survey asked for input on access to parks, transportation to parks, preferred amenities and activities, preferred trail surfacing, and park cleanliness. The County also asked for the home city of the respondent as well as their age, sex, and race/ethnicity.

### **Pop-Up Events**

The County conducted two events to reach non-park users and underserved populations. One event was held at a local mall during a busy shopping season. The other event was held at the County's Blaine Service Center. At these events, participants provided input on access to parks, transportation to parks, preferred amenities and activities, preferred trail surfacing, and park cleanliness. The County also asked for the home city of the participant as well as their age, sex, and race/ethnicity.

Anoka County estimates that a total of 400 people were engaged during the public participation process. Out of the 400, 132 were actively engaged through a one-on-one discussion at a pop-up event. The others participated through online surveys or the sticky dot exercise. While discussions regarding the amendment projects were positive in nature and supportive, the County did not receive any substantive comments that affected the outcome of the master plan amendment. Two comments related to vehicle permit fees and lighting along trails were received. Due to the complex nature of these items, both will be reviewed during the next comprehensive system planning process.

## **Public Awareness**

The engagement process for this amendment showed there is a lack of knowledge regarding Anoka County parks and trails. In order to address this finding, the County will work with the Metropolitan Council to create awareness for the regional system through public information maps, websites, social media, publications and brochures, as well as the parks ambassador program. The County will also continue community engagement activities throughout the year to both receive feedback and promote the County's parks and trails. Anoka County also promotes awareness for its parks through maps, websites, publications, and brochures. Additionally, Anoka County's transportation management organization, Commute Solutions, has been used to show residents how easily access County Parks through various transportation modes.

## **Accessibility**

Anoka County strives to provide equal access to parks for all residents of Anoka County. Bunker Hills Regional Park charges a nominal \$5.00 daily entrance fee, which can be applied to a \$25.00 annual permit if desired. While the park is not directly served by transit, Metro Transit Routes 854 and 56 both

have stops within one mile of the park. The development of facilities and amenities within the park will conform to Americans with Disabilities Act standards and guidelines.

### **Natural Resources**

A large portion of Bunker Hills Regional Park contains native plant communities and outstanding biodiversity. Within the park, there is a diverse systems of wildlife species and natural areas that include upland forests, deciduous woodlands, upland prairies, forested wetlands, shrub wetlands, and open wetlands.

Anoka County's natural resource management practices for the park include:

- The protection, restoration, and enhancement of native plant and animal habitats throughout the park and along the trail corridor;
- Protection and improvement of water and soil resources;
- Increasing public awareness regarding the diverse natural resources in the area;
- Sustainable practices related to park development, operations, and maintenance.

The trail projects outlined in the master plan amendment have been proposed to cross an area with native plant communities and threatened or of special concern plant and animal specials. A natural heritage survey has been done, and the County is confident it can avoid sensitive species by constructing the southwest trail in an area that has previously been disturbed by a natural gas pipeline. Additional survey work will be completed prior to the city water/sewer connection construction.

Protection and conservation of surface and ground water resources are a top priority for projects in the amendment. Anoka County will work with the Cities of Andover, Blaine, Coon Rapids, and Ham Lake along with the Coon Creek Watershed District, MN DNR, MPCA, and the Met Council to ensure standards and requirements for resource protection are met. The County is also reviewing turf management practices in order to ensure appropriate care is taken when applying fertilizer and other nutrients in areas where there is high potential for surface to ground water interaction.

### **Stewardship Plan**

Bunker Hills Regional Park is the highest used regional park in Anoka County. The County will continue to manage it as regional recreational open space. Expenses generated from the park are related to the maintenance and operations of the park. These expenses are partially offset through the use of daily and annual park passes, rental fees, and special use permit fees. The remaining funds used to offset operations and maintenance are provided by the Metropolitan Council's operations and maintenance grant program. Therefore, Anoka County believes the stewardship plan for the park is sustainable with assistance from the Metropolitan Council.

### **Review by Other Council Divisions**

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

**Metro Transit** (Kyle Burrows 612-349-7749) – No Comments.

**Environmental Services – Sewers** (Roger Janzig 651-602-1119) – No Comments

**Local Planning Assistance** (Eric Wojchik 651-602-1330) – No Comments