

## Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: July 12, 2018

For the Community Development Committee meeting of July 16, 2018

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of July 25, 2018

**Subject:** Release the draft *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* for public comment and set public hearing date

**District(s), Member(s):** All

**Policy/Legal Reference:** Minnesota Statutes 473.147

**Staff Prepared/Presented:** Emmett Mullin, Parks Manager (651 602-1360), Dan Marckel, Planning Analyst (651 602-1669)

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

### Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

- Release the draft *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* for public comment;
- Authorize a public hearing to be conducted regarding the draft *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* at 4:00 p.m. on Monday, September 17, 2018 as part of the Community Development Committee meeting;
- Receive public comment from July 26 – September 24; and
- Direct staff to publish public hearing notices that includes the link to the draft *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* for public comment under the Council's administrative procedure for public hearings.

### Background

The Council is required by Minnesota Statute 473.147 to prepare and adopt a long-range system policy plan for regional recreation open space as part of the Council's Metropolitan Development Guide. This statute also requires the Council to complete a comprehensive review of the plan every four years. This update addresses this statutory requirement.

Council staff consulted with Metropolitan Council members, the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission (MPOSC), regional park implementing agencies and their boards, other partners and stakeholders, and residents of the region as part of the development of the draft *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. This plan builds on the policy direction established in the most recent policy plan update in early 2015, as well as direction provided in *Thrive MSP 2040*.

A summary of the significant changes being proposed as part of this four-year policy plan update is included in Attachment A. The draft plan update will be posted on the Council's website from Wednesday, July 25 to Monday, September 24, 2018. At this time, a PDF version of the draft update is posted with the July 12 MPOSC agenda. Additionally, the Grant Program Guide, a new companion

document to the plan that houses the more detailed programmatic information about parks funding programs is also posted, along with the legislatively required Metropolitan Council Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan, 2018-2022.

The draft plan will be revised as a result of public comment and participation in the public hearing process.

### **Rationale**

The public comment period and public hearing will offer partners, stakeholders and the public the opportunity to formally comment on the draft *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.

### **Thrive Lens Analysis**

The *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* provides the policy framework for the Regional Parks System, which represents one of the Council's primary means of advancing the Thrive outcomes by responsibly managing natural resources (that is, advancing Stewardship), planning for the quality of life needed for economic competitiveness (that is, advancing Prosperity), creating real choices in where we recreate for all residents (that is, advancing Equity), increasing access to nature and outdoor recreation (that is, advancing Livability), and supporting bicycle facilities to promote bicycling for recreation and healthy lifestyles (that is, advancing Livability).

### **Funding**

Updating the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* is a regular part of the Community Development Division budget.

### **Known Support / Opposition**

The purpose of the public comment period and public hearing is to learn more about the known support and opposition for the language in the draft *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.

## Metropolitan Council

### Notice of Public Comment Period and Public Hearing for the draft update to *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*

The Metropolitan Council has released the draft update to *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, the regional parks and open space chapter of the comprehensive development guide for the Twin Cities metropolitan area, for public comment.

The public is encouraged to view the plan and provide public comment through 5 p.m., Monday, Sept. 24, as follows:

- Write: Metropolitan Council Public Information  
390 Robert Street North  
St. Paul, MN 55101
- Email: Metropolitan Council Public Information at [public.info@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:public.info@metc.state.mn.us)
- Record: a comment on the Public Information Line at 651.602.1500 (TTY 651.291.0904)

The draft plan update is available at [www.metrocouncil.org/parks/planning/parks-policy-plan.aspx](http://www.metrocouncil.org/parks/planning/parks-policy-plan.aspx).

The Metropolitan Council will hold one public hearing on the draft *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*:

Monday, September 17, 2018 at 4 p.m.

Metropolitan Council Chambers

390 N. Robert Street

St. Paul, MN 55101

Served by many transit routes (call 612-373-3333 or visit [www.metrotransit.org](http://www.metrotransit.org))

All interested people are encouraged to attend the public hearing and offer comments. Those attending may register in advance to speak by calling the Council at 651-602-1500. Upon request, the Metropolitan Council will provide reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities. Advance notice, indicating the specific accommodation needed is appreciated.

Staff will review public comments and evaluate changes to the proposed policies to address the comments submitted by the public. A recommendation for final adoption of the update to *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* will be considered by the Metropolitan Council in November 2018.

## 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan Update Summary of Changes

*The Summary of Changes provides an overview of the recommended changes to the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan Update.*

This Summary of Changes memo provides an overview of the significant changes being proposed as part of this four-year policy plan update. This summary should be used to help navigate the draft policy plan. The draft plan breaks the policies and strategies that are currently contained in Chapter 4 into five chapters (Chapter 4: Siting and Acquisition; Chapter 5: Planning; Chapter 6: System Protection; Chapter 7: Recreation Activities and Facilities; and Chapter 8: Finance). Additionally, the administrative and operational details of the Parks funding programs have been separated out of the current plan into the complementary Grant Program Guide.

### Chapter 1: Planning for the Twin Cities Region

Location in Draft	Summary of Changes
Chapter 1	<b>No significant changes to Chapter 1.</b> Updated Regional Parks system facts, figures, and maps.

### Chapter 2: Overview of the Regional Parks System and the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan

Location in Draft	Summary of Changes
Chapter 2	<b>No significant changes to Chapter 2.</b> Updated Regional Parks system facts, figures, and maps.
Page 27, lines 5 - 12	<b>Interest Earnings:</b> Added Interest Earnings on Parks Funds citation (Laws of Minnesota 2015, First Special Session, Chapter 4, Article 4, Section 138) to <i>Key Legislation</i> Section. Options for using interest earnings will be determined by the Council working in coordination with the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, park implementing agencies, and stakeholders, outside of this policy plan update.

### Chapter 3: System Plan

Location in Draft	Summary of Changes
Chapter 3	<p><b>Regional Parks System map changes:</b> Updated Regional Parks system maps and system totals, including the following facts about the Regional Parks System units open to the public:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 43 Regional Parks (increase of 1 since 2015)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Three Rivers Park District, Lake Sarah Regional Park</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 12 Park Reserves (no change)</li> <li>• 8 Special Recreation Features (no change)</li> <li>• 51 Regional Trails (increase of 11)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Anoka County, Chain of Lakes-Otter Lake Regional Trail</li> <li>○ Anoka County, Sugar Hills Regional Trail</li> <li>○ Dakota County, Minnesota River Greenway Regional Trail</li> <li>○ Dakota County, North Creek Greenway Regional Trail</li> <li>○ Ramsey County/Washington County, Lake Links Regional Trail</li> <li>○ Saint Paul, Trout Brook Regional Trail</li> <li>○ Three Rivers Park District, Crystal Lake Regional Trail</li> <li>○ Three Rivers Park District, West Mississippi River Regional Trail</li> <li>○ Three Rivers Park District/Bloomington, Nokomis-Minnesota River Regional Trail</li> <li>○ Washington County, Central Greenway Regional Trail – South Segment</li> <li>○ Washington County, Point Douglas Regional Trail</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### Chapter 4: Siting and Acquisition Policy and Strategies

Location in Draft	Summary of Changes
Pages 64 - 66	<p><b>Regional Parks System criteria:</b> Added section entitled, “Process and Criteria Overview for System Additions”, and consolidated current Regional Parks System additions criteria into table.</p>
Page 66, lines 2 - 3	<p><b>Lands with restoration potential:</b> Strategy 1: Clarified Siting and Acquisition Strategy 1, to state that lands with restoration potential are a priority for the Regional Parks System.</p>

Page 67, lines 1 - 19	<b>Geographic balance:</b> Strategy 2: Created a stand-alone strategy that separates out the concept of geographic balance from former Siting and Acquisition Strategy 1.
Page 68, lines 21 - 29	<b>New regional trails:</b> Strategy 4: Clarified that regional trails should also connect to state and/or federal recreation units or regionally significant natural resources.
Page 71, line 30 – page 72, line 4	<b>Bridging facilities:</b> In Strategy 5, Special Recreation Features, expanded description of Bridging facilities to clarify intent.

## Chapter 5: Planning Policy and Strategies

Location in Draft	Summary of Changes
Page 75, lines 2 - 5	<b>Council staff assistance:</b> In Strategy 1, Master plan requirements, expanded section on community engagement and participation to include when appropriate, the Council will provide staff assistance with engagement and data/information about race, ethnicity, ability and income.
Page 76, line 1 - 17	<b>Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area:</b> Expanded Strategy 1 to incorporate new Legislative requirement for regional parks, park reserves, and special recreation features in the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA) that master plans must address new standards and criteria.
Page 78, lines 13 - 28	<b>Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area:</b> Expanded Strategy 1 to incorporate new Legislative requirement for regional trails in the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA) that trail master plans must address new standards and criteria.

## Chapter 6: System Protection Policy and Strategies

Location in Draft	Summary of Changes
Page 87, lines 27 - 37	<b>Environmental Site Assessments:</b> In Strategy 4, Environmental Site Assessments, clarified that if the results of a Phase 1 assessment identify a need for further investigation, it may be necessary to proceed to a Phase 2 Site Assessment. The costs for Phase 1 and 2 Environmental Site Assessments are eligible for reimbursement as part of an acquisition.
Page 88, lines 12 - 14	<b>Environmental Site Assessments:</b> In Strategy 4, Environmental Site Assessments, clarified that if the Council concludes that the land should be added to the Regional Parks System, it does not guarantee funding.
Page 90, lines 10 - 16	<b>Regional wastewater infrastructure:</b> In Strategy 6, updated language to reflect statutory authority and practice around locating regional wastewater infrastructure and fairly compensating park agencies.

## Chapter 7: Recreation Activities and Facilities Policy and Strategies

Location in Draft	Summary of Changes
Page 91, lines 6 - 30	<b>Balance conservation and recreation:</b> Modified Strategy 1 language to more accurately reflect that park implementing agencies must balance conservation and restoration of natural resources with the provision of recreational opportunities. Added a bullet to the criteria that activities and facilities should avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects and restore and enhance environmental quality. This does not represent a change in practice.
Page 91, line 31 - page 92, line 14	<b>Activity and Facility Criteria:</b> In Strategy 1, expanded the criteria to direct and define potential new activities and facilities, helping evaluate how the proposed activity or facility could be consistent with the character of the Regional Parks System. This is an opportunity to ensure that the Regional Parks System continues to evolve by providing activities and facilities that meet the needs of all the region's residents, across race, ethnicity, income, and ability.
Page 94, lines 5 - 8	<b>Range of recreational opportunities:</b> Clarified language in Strategy 2 that the Regional Parks System provides a range of outdoor recreation opportunities, from developed to rustic.

Location in Draft	Summary of Changes
Pages 94 - 97	<b>Equity strategies:</b> Strategy 3 reaffirms the Council’s commitment to advance equitable usage of the Regional Parks System across race, ethnicity, income and ability through multiple strategies. One of these commitments is development and implementation of the Equity Grant Program before the end of 2019.
Pages 97 - 101	<b>Trail system coordination:</b> Strategy 4 enhances the commitment of the Council to better coordinate implementation of Regional Trails and the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network in partnership with stakeholders.

## Chapter 8: Finance Policy and Strategies

Location in Draft	Summary of Changes
Chapter 8	<b>New Finance Chapter:</b> The new Finance chapter consolidates the financial information from the policy plan into one chapter, and it moves financial administrative and operational guidance to the new Grant Program Guide, the policy plan’s companion document.
Page 102, lines 28 - 29	<b>Uses of bond funds:</b> Strategy 2 clarifies that bond funds may be used for natural resource restoration work such as transforming cropland into a more representative native landscape.
Page 104, line 34 - page 105, line 6	<b>Five Year Capital Improvement Plan:</b> Strategy 2 updates the Metropolitan Council’s Five-Year Parks Capital Improvement Plan, 2018-2022 as required by Minnesota Statute 473.147, Subdivision 1.



<p>Pages 105 - 106</p>	<p><b>2017 legislative changes:</b> The 2017 State Legislature directed that the Parks and Trails Legacy funding be spent only on projects approved by the park implementing agencies' elected bodies. As such, the following changes have been made to the existing policy plan language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Strategy 3, which concerns use of the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund, the requirement to establish a minimum level of funding to “connect people and the outdoors” has been removed.</li> <li>• In Strategy 4, Equity Considerations, the language around prioritization of Legacy projects was removed. Discussion around this plan update indicated that prioritization of Capital Improvement Program projects was an important discussion topic too. Staff identified ways to advance equitable use of parks without Council prioritization of projects for this funding source too.</li> </ul>
<p>Page 106, line 32 - page 107, line 13</p>	<p><b>Equity toolkit:</b> Strategy 4 strengthens the strategy language and provides updated language regarding the use of the Council's equity toolkit. The purpose of the toolkit is to raise questions of equity in conversation with the regional park implementing agencies and their boards, as they select and prioritize projects. These discussions are held with the Metropolitan Regional Parks and Open Space Commission, during the review of the agencies' Parks and Trails Legacy project proposals and Bonding project proposals. The toolkit helps identify populations that the project seeks to better serve. The toolkit will not be used to prioritize projects.</p>
<p>Page 107, lines 14 – 21</p>	<p><b>Equity Grant Program:</b> Strategy 4 commits the Council to establishing the Equity Grant Program by no later than 2019. It will be used to strengthen equitable use of the Regional Parks System. It will be developed in close collaboration with regional park implementing agencies, community-based partners, and stakeholders.</p>
<p>Page 108, line 24 - page 109, line 8</p>	<p><b>Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Program:</b> Strategy 7 is a new strategy that describes the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund program and its purpose. Details about this program have been moved to the Program Guide.</p>
<p>Page 109, lines 9 – 34</p>	<p><b>Operation and Maintenance Program:</b> Strategy 8 is a new strategy that describes the Operation and Maintenance program and its purpose. Details about this program have been moved to the <b>Grant</b> Program Guide.</p>

<p>Page 110, lines 11 – 15</p>	<p><b>Other Funding:</b> In Strategy 9, Other Funding, the Council states <b>that</b> it will work on behalf of the park implementing agencies to explore other funding sources, including expanding the use of the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund in partnership with the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources.</p>
<p>Pages 110 – 112</p>	<p><b>Estimated costs to complete the system:</b> In Strategy 9, the Council includes an updated estimate of costs to complete the system calculation, as required by Minnesota Statute 473.147. The estimated build-out of the entire system is roughly \$2.6 billion.</p>