

Information Item

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting Date: June 2, 2022

Community Development Committee: June 6, 2022

Topic

Historical Cultural Study Update

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, Chapter 9

Staff Prepared/Presented: Jessica Lee, Senior Parks Planner (651-602-1621); Amanda Lovelee, Parks Ambassador (651-602-1375); and Kevin Phan, Parks Intern (651-602-1345)

Division/Department: Community Development

Proposed Action

Information item; no action is proposed at this time.

Background

The Regional Parks System Historical Cultural Study project began in Spring 2021 with a kick-off meeting between Council staff and Regional Park Implementing Agency leaders. Working together in partnership, this study seeks to establish a baseline understanding of the formation of the Regional Parks System. More importantly, the study focuses on highlighting the impacts of past inequitable practices and how this resulted in current day inequities within this system. This project will strive to find ways to acknowledge our past and build a more inclusive system moving forward.

In Summer of 2022, the Parks team developed a draft baseline historical report that has been shared with the Regional Park Implementing Agencies. Council project staff then met individually with each Implementing Agency over the winter to share the historical report presentation and to talk about the project's next steps and desired goals and outcomes.

The Council is working to hire a consultant in late Spring 2022 to help with the next phases of the project. The ideas and suggestions heard at stakeholder meetings (Implementing Agencies, Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commissioners, Council Members) were incorporated into the Request for Proposal (RFP), which has been posted on the Council's website. Once a consultant is hired, we will convene conversations with a variety of stakeholders across the region around this work and the study's intentions.

At the Commission meeting, Council staff will provide an update on the project and discuss project goals, next steps, and timeline.

Rationale

The Regional Parks Policy Plan committed the Metropolitan Council to conducting a cultural-historical study that describes and documents the impacts that inequitable policies have had on the development of the Regional Parks System (Chapter 9, Table 9-1, 2020-2023 Workplan for the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*).

Thrive Lens Analysis

The Historical Cultural Study seeks to advance the *Thrive MSP 2040* outcome of equity by informing the Council and Implementing Agencies about how some of the harmful policies of the past helped create the Regional Parks System of today. The development of a more comprehensive history will allow us to better understand past and current day inequities, share lesser-known stories, and build a more equitable regional parks and trails system moving into the future.

Funding

Project funds are included in the Community Development Division's 2022 budget.

