

# Business Item

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



**Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission:** August 3, 2023

**Committee Meeting Date:** August 7, 2023

**For the Metropolitan Council:** August 23, 2023

## Business Item: 2023-169

Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

<b>District(s), Member(s):</b>	District C, Cana Yang District 6, Robert Lilligren
<b>Policy/Legal Reference:</b>	Minnesota Statutes § 473.313; <i>2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan</i> : Chapter 5, Planning Strategy 1
<b>Staff Prepared/Presented:</b>	Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst, 651-602-1361
<b>Division/Department:</b>	Community Development, Regional Parks Unit

### Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment.

### Background

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) has submitted a long-range plan amendment for Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park. MPRB proposes a minor boundary adjustment by adding two adjacent parcels to the regional park boundary on the east side of Bde Maka Ska; one parcel that is already owned by MPRB and an adjacent parcel currently in private ownership. The plan amendment also codifies a vision plan for both parcels. The amendment represents a minor revision to the long-range plan approved by the Council in 2017, which focused on park and trail areas associated with Bde Maka Ska and Lake Harriet.

Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park is centrally located in the Regional Parks and Trails System in southwest Minneapolis (Figures 1 and 2). Bde Maka Ska and Lake Harriet are the largest and most popular lakes in Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park. These destinations form the backbone of the historic Grand Rounds; a system of parkways, trails, and parks that have made Minneapolis and the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area world renowned.

The two subject parcels were inadvertently excluded during the 2017 planning process for Bde Maka Ska and Lake Harriet but were included in MPRB's recent Southwest Service Area Master Plan (SWSAMP). The SWSAMP was adopted by MPRB in 2020. Relevant portions of this service area plan were included in the submitted materials.

The 1.03-acre Loon Lake Trolley Path is currently owned by MPRB. The 0.2-acre property at 1699 West 34<sup>th</sup> Street is privately owned. A home on this property was recently razed after a fire destroyed it. Both parcels are located between 34<sup>th</sup> Street to the north, 36<sup>th</sup> Street to the south, and East Bde Maka Ska Parkway to the west.

The former trolley path is a somewhat hidden part of the Bde Maka Ska area. Compared to the bustling park areas and paved trails immediately adjacent to Bde Maka Ska, this is a unique option for park visitors looking for a quiet respite. Visitors are rewarded with a cool, wooded, and quiet strip of parkland located above the often-busy parkway, offering scenic views of the lake. The only interruption of the two-block walk is a stairway entering from Conairis Way on the east. It used to provide access to a trolley platform, and still retains artfully designed pine-cone shaped finials on the handrails.

### **Rationale**

The Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, particularly Planning Strategy 1 and other Council policies.

### **Thrive Lens Analysis**

The Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Long-Range Plan Amendment advances the *Thrive MSP 2040* outcome of Livability by increasing access to nature and outdoor recreation, which enhances quality of life in the region.

### **Funding**

The Loon Lake Trolley Path is currently owned by MPRB. Therefore, there are no associated acquisition costs.

The 2023 market value of the parcel at 1699 West 34<sup>th</sup> Street is \$926,000. MPRB is pursuing a Parks Acquisition Opportunity Fund grant for the future acquisition of this parcel via a separate but associated business item (2023-170).

The total estimated development cost associated with the plan amendment is \$534,742. These costs are outlined in Table 1.

Together, the estimated acquisition and development costs associated with this plan amendment are \$1,460,742.



Figure 1. Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park location in the Regional Parks System

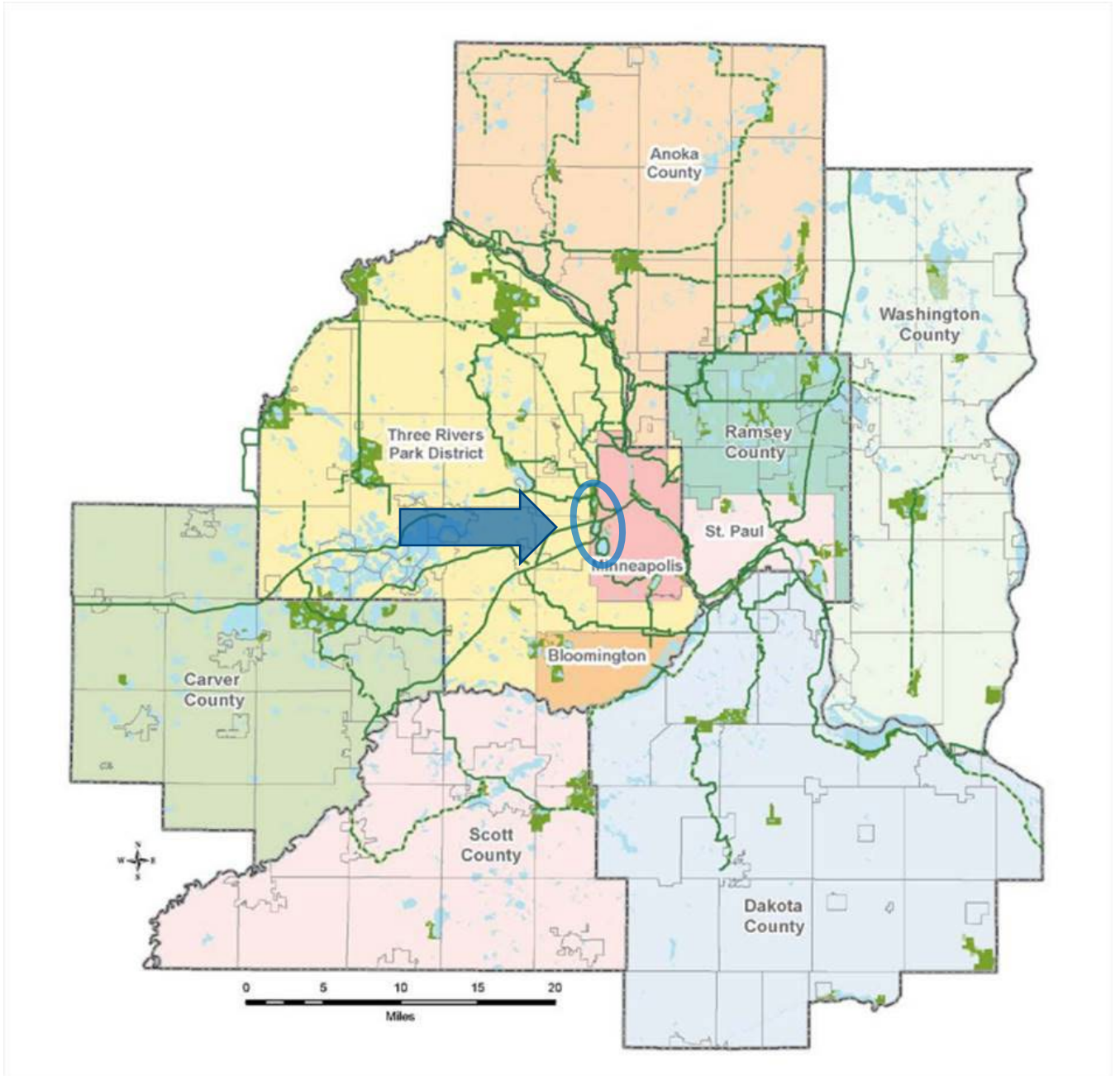
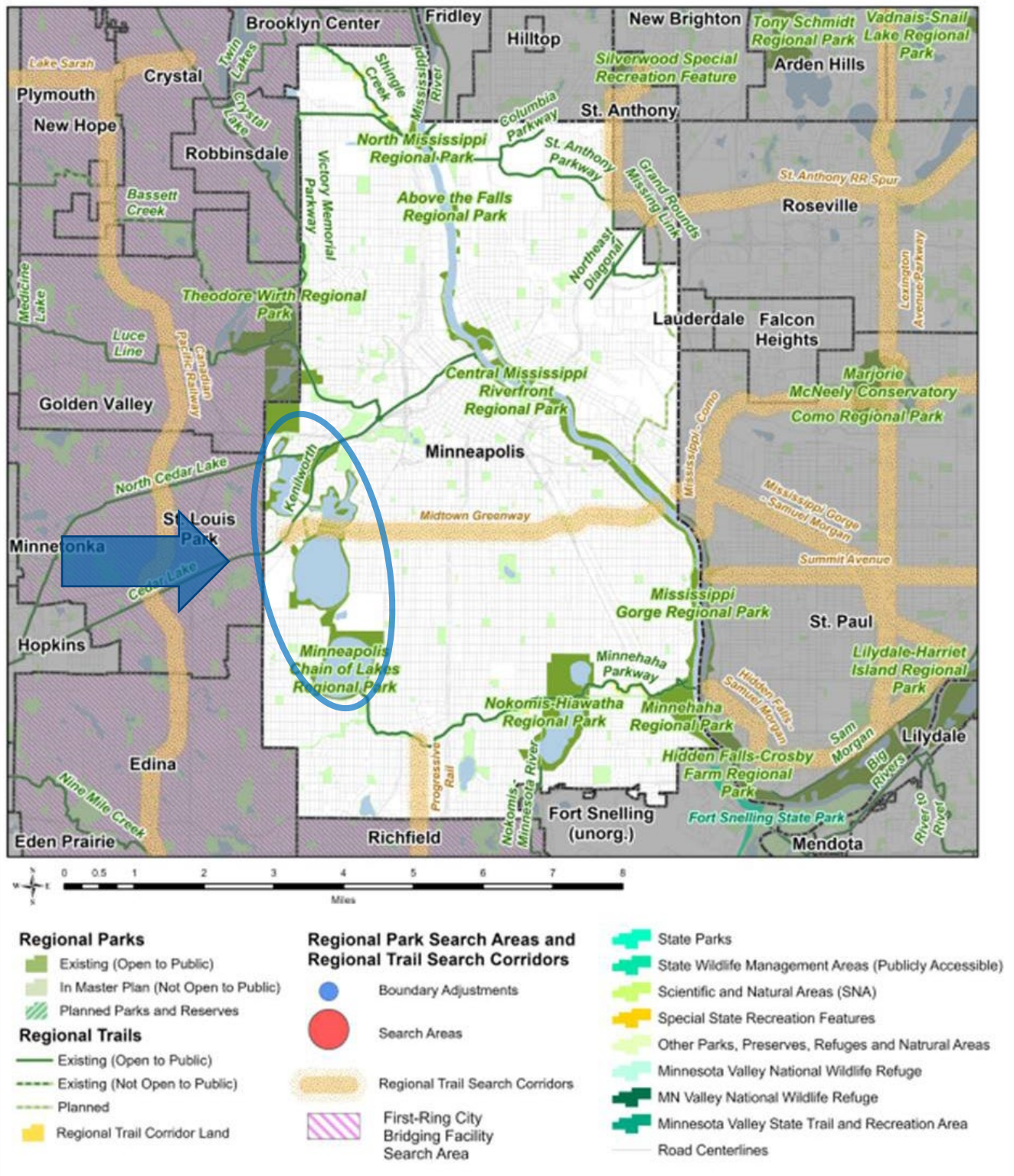


Figure 2. Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park location in the City of Minneapolis



## Analysis

*Minnesota Statutes, section 473.313* requires that long-range plans developed by regional park implementing agencies be consistent with the *Regional Parks Policy Plan*; however, it does not specify when revisions are necessary. Regional park implementing agencies submit plan amendments to the Council to change their original proposal for acquisition or development, or when the agency has developed significant additional details that need to be reflected in the long-range plan. Changes to a regional park or trail boundary is a typical trigger for a plan amendment.

Planning Strategy 1 of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* outlines a subset of requirements for plan amendments including public engagement, partner engagement and a development concept. When a boundary change is proposed, information about the parcels to be added is also a requirement. However, when the plan amendment does not impact or alter other components of the original plan, those components are typically not included in the plan amendment. This staff report includes brief sections on Boundaries, Acquisition Costs, Development Concept, Partner Engagement, and Public Engagement and Participation.

### **Boundaries**

Taken together, the 1.03-acre Loon Lake Trolley Path (PID: 0402824320003) and 0.20-acre parcel at 1699 West 34<sup>th</sup> Street (PID: 0402824310077) would add 1.23 acres to the existing 489 acres of land in Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park. Including water, the regional park currently covers 1,555 acres. The proposed addition would increase land acres to 490.23 and total acres to 1,556.23. The proposed addition is approximately 0.25% of the existing land area and approximately 0.08% of the total regional park area.

Adjacent to and just east of Bde Maka Ska, the Loon Lake Trolley Path is a narrow strip of land that used to be the route of a Minneapolis trolley line. The parcel rises in elevation as it extends northward from 36<sup>th</sup> Street, eventually reaching the top of a bluff at 34<sup>th</sup> Street. It averages about 50 feet in width and includes considerable slope down to East Bde Maka Ska Parkway. The parcel is currently owned by Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

A single residential lot located at 1699 West 34<sup>th</sup> Street sits between the Loon Lake Trolley Path parcel and regional parkland along Bde Maka Ska, with access from 34<sup>th</sup> Street. This unusually shaped parcel is surrounded by parkland and public right-of-way (Figure 1). As noted in the development concept for the Loon Lake Trolley Path, this site would provide contiguous greenspace and parkland, and allow for an expanded nature play area with an elevated view of the lake.

Sadly, a fire at 1699 West 34<sup>th</sup> Street destroyed the home on this parcel, putting the future ownership of and development on the parcel in question. This unfortunate incident was the impetus for this boundary adjustment and amendment request. MPRB expects to enter into negotiations to potentially purchase this property.



Figure 1: 1699 West 34th Street (PID: 0402824310077)



Metropolitan Council

### Acquisition Costs

As noted in the Funding section above, the Loon Lake Trolley Path is currently owned by MPRB. It does not have an acquisition cost.

The 2023 market value of the parcel at 1699 34<sup>th</sup> Street West is \$926,000. MPRB is pursuing a Parks Acquisition Opportunity Fund grant for the future acquisition of this parcel via a separate but associated business item (2023-170).

### Development Concept

The kind of elevation change that exists on the Loon Lake Trolley Path is unique around Bde Maka Ska and the development concept takes advantage of the topography with overlooks, interpretation opportunities, and nature play nodes (Figure 2). A soft-surface trail would continue to traverse the parcel, connecting 36th to 34th and offering a different experience than the paved trails adjacent to the lake.

The development concept focuses on preserving the somewhat more remote and naturalized feeling of this linear park space while enhancing safety and access. The trail that runs the length of the park north-south will remain and be upgraded with natural soft surfacing and ground-level lighting along its entirety. At each end, enhanced wayfinding and gateway features will clearly mark the trail as a public facility. Two new types of spaces will be formally incorporated along the trail – small nature play nodes using natural materials and overlooks with views of the lake that can also include public art or interpretive signage highlighting the transportation and environment-related history of the area. The former streetcar stairway which connects Conairs Way to the trail will remain, along with its unique pinecone-shaped finials. Development cost estimates are outlined in Table 1.

Habitat and view protection are goals of the regional park system, and these parcels would contribute to the protection and enjoyment of Bde Maka Ska.

Figure 2: Development Concept for Loon Lake Trolley Path and 1699 West 34th Street (SWSAMP pg. 335)



Table 1: Development Concept Cost Estimate (SWSAMP pg. 337)

Park Name	Asset Type	Project	2020 Estimated Cost/Project	Notes
Loon Lake Trolley Path	Play	Nature Play Nodes	\$ 260,196	
Loon Lake Trolley Path	Landscape	Naturalized Areas	\$ 91,898	
Loon Lake Trolley Path	Other	Overlooks with Public Art/Historic Interpretation Opportunity	\$ -	Implemented in collaboration with City and non-profit groups
Loon Lake Trolley Path	Other	Shared Use Soft Surface Path with Ground-Level Lighting	\$ 167,648	
Loon Lake Trolley Path	Other	Miscl. signs, trees, furniture	\$ 15,000	
<b>Loon Lake Trolley Path TOTAL</b>			<b>\$ 534,742</b>	

### **Partner Engagement**

In 2001, representatives from the East Calhoun Community Organization (ECCO) sought to preserve the alignment of the trolley path for recreation while also improving the trail, calming traffic, and increasing pedestrian safety. At the time, the neighborhood didn't have the funding to support the full project, so MPRB considered addressing the larger improvements in a future phase two. ECCO asked MPRB to complete easier, low-cost improvements like removing unwanted vegetation and installing a new layer of wood chips on the trail. The area has been undeveloped since that time.

During the SWSAMP process, City of Minneapolis staff participated on a technical advisory committee and reviewed proposed park improvements, new park proposals, and parkland expansions, including for the Loon Lake Trolley Path. This is a standard practice for all MPRB planning efforts.

The MPRB Board of Commissioners approved the SWSAMP in November 2020. This service area plan codified the inclusion of the subject parcels and the vision for them in policy. Resolution 2020-310 is included as Attachment 1.

### **Public Engagement and Participation**

During the SWSAMP process, neighborhood residents engaged fully and robustly in support of the vision plan for the Loon Lake Trolley Path and were the catalyst to include it and the 1699 West 34<sup>th</sup> Street parcel in the regional park boundary.

The SWSAMP was created after nearly two years of community-based engagement, planning and design with individuals, neighborhood groups and community organizations throughout Southwest Minneapolis. The document represents the final recommendations of the Southwest Parks Plan Community Advisory Committee, which met 16 times over 18 months. The planning process is summarized in Table 2.





Table 2: Planning Process (SWSAMP pg. 336)

	1: General Input Spring-Winter 2018 <i>Input themes prior to initial concepts</i>	2: Initial Concepts Winter-Spring 2019 <i>Input themes on initial concepts</i>	3: Preferred Concept Now <i>Key elements of the concept</i>
aquatics	No comments	No comments	No aquatics planned for this park
play	Interest in nature play	Support for nature play nodes	Nature play nodes added along path
athletics	No comments	No comments	No athletics planned for this park
courts	No comments	No comments	No courts planned for this park
winter	No comments	No comments	No winter amenities planned for this park
landscape	Like existing tree canopy and natural area A magical forest for kids Needs areas of open views to lake Needs gathering spaces Too overgrown in some spots Prefer trail to not be paved Like wood chip path	Split support for three overlooks  Support for soft surface trail Mixed support for mountain biking Need low lighting, protect dark skies	Tree canopy remains  Two lake overlook areas added  Shared use soft surface path remains  Ground level lighting added
other	Need to define entrance Unclear if trespassing at south end Needs wayfinding and signage Need seating, picnic tables Keep it mostly informal Stairs at Conairis important	Support for enhanced entrances Support for wayfinding Want historic/natural interpretation Not right place for fitness equipment  Keep stairway	Gateway features with signage added at entrances Overlooks added with public art/historic interpretation opportunity  No seating, picnic tables, or fitness equipment planned for this park  Existing stairway retained

### Consistency with Other Council Policies and Systems

Council staff have reviewed and found the proposed long-range plan amendment to be consistent with the other plans and policies of the Council, including *Thrive MSP 2040*, the *Water Resources Policy Plan*, the *Transportation Policy Plan*, and the *Housing Policy Plan*.

There are no additional review comments.





**Resolution 2020-310**

**Resolution Adopting the Southwest Service Area Master Plan as Amended**

Whereas, The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) is the steward of the Minneapolis parks;

Whereas, The MPRB was founded in 1883 by an Act of the State Legislature, and has the responsibility to design, improve, and manage parks in Minneapolis;

Whereas, The MPRB has completed a community-driven master planning process for the Southwest service area, the project area for which is bounded by I-394 on the north, 1-35W on the east, and the Minneapolis city limits on the west and south, and which addresses 42 neighborhood park properties and one regional feature;

Whereas, The Southwest Service Area Master Plan (SW Parks Plan) sets an overarching vision for the service area and creates a park plan for each neighborhood park property and the included regional feature;

Whereas, The SW Parks Plan will guide the development, rehabilitation, and operation of southwest neighborhood parks over the next 20-30 years, and will also guide capital expenditures under the 20-Year Neighborhood Park Plan for funding (NPP-20);

Whereas, The SW Parks Plan is based on the recommendations of an appointed Community Advisory Committee (CAC), which in turn are based on extensive community engagement over the course of nearly two years;

Whereas, The MPRB project team has refined the Draft SW Parks Plan document based on comments received from MPRB staff, stakeholders, and from the general public during a comment period that concluded on August 1, 2020;

Whereas, A public hearing has been scheduled to allow additional public comment on the final Master Plan;

Whereas, The final SW Parks Plan represents a community-supported and equitable vision for neighborhood parks in the southwest service area; and

Whereas, This resolution is supported by the MPRB 2007-2020 Comprehensive Plan, which envisions "Urban forests, natural areas, and waters that endure and captivate," "Recreation that inspires personal growth, healthy lifestyles, and a sense of community," "Dynamic parks that shape city character and meet diverse community needs," and "A safe place to play;"

Resolution 2020-310

Page 1





RESOLVED, That the Board of Commissioners approve the Southwest Service Area Master Plan;  
and

RESOLVED, That the President of the Board and Secretary to the Board are authorized to take  
all necessary administrative actions to implement this resolution.

