

Information Item

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting Date: November 2, 2023

Community Development Committee: NA

Topic

Young Leaders Collaboration 2050 Parks Policy Plan Recommendations

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minn. Stat. §§ 85.53, subd. 3 and 473.351, subd. 3; <i>2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan</i>
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Darcie Vandegrift, Principal Researcher (651-602-1669); Mulki Haile, Intern
Division/Department:	Community Development / Regional Planning

Proposed Action

Information item; no action is proposed at this time.

Background

The Met Council launched the Young Leaders Collaboration in late 2022, a partnership with organizations from across the Twin Cities that enabled young residents to express what regional issues are of greatest concern to them.

The collaboration comprised of Met Council staff and members of six local youth organizations located in Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, and Scott Counties and in Saint Paul: 4H, Raíces Latinas, the Environmental Stewardship Institute, Esperanza United, Friends of the Mississippi River, and World Youth Connect. Over the course of 20 hours of workshops, participants collaborated with staff to gather, interpret, and draw conclusions from data relating to the Met Council's regional planning. Their processes and findings were presented to Met Council members at a Committee of the Whole meeting. All engagement was analyzed to identify young leaders' recommendations about regional parks and trails policy and land use related to the Regional Park System.

Key findings included:

- Parks fill many important needs for youth and adults
- Litter and pollution are a barrier to enjoying parks and water amenities
- Transportation infrastructure could better support park visitation
- Funding and infrastructure for environmental education leads to support for the Regional System and park/trail visitation
- Parks and trails are protected through land use policy decisions that protect open space, tree canopy, native habitat, water quality, and other natural elements found in the Regional System

Rationale

Young people have a significant stake in regional planning efforts, but often lack the resources to influence regional authorities and decision makers. Council Members have directed engagement for the Regional Development Guide to intentionally include youth and additional historically excluded communities to inform the regional development guide.

Thrive Lens Analysis

Young people's access to the Regional Parks System is crucial to reach the goals of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. Parks offer multiple health and recreational benefits that contribute to the Region's *livability*. Young people's park use is an important component of *equity*; Twin Cities residents under age 20 experience higher rates of poverty and are more racially and ethnically diverse than older generations. Their use of Regional Parks and Trails is vital to the *stewardship* and *sustainability* of the System. The System's existence depends on an ongoing societal commitment and public support. Today's youth will create the shared future dedication to preserve the high-quality natural resources offered by our System.

Chapter 1 of the Policy Plan notes that involvement in nature-based outdoor recreation among young adults and their children has decreased since the 1990s. Their support is needed for maintaining broad-based public support for park and trail investments. The chapter continues that "[b]y 2040, 39% of the population will be people of color, compared to 24% in 2010. The share of people of color increases among younger age groups; 53% of residents younger than age 18 will be people of color in 2040."

Funding

The Young Leader's Collaboration was created with staff time and supplies paid for from Community Development Division's budget.

