

Information Item

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting Date: March 7, 2024

Topic

2050 Regional Development Guide and Regional Parks Policy Plan Update

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minn. Stats. §§ 473.145 and 473.147
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst (651-602-1361) Tracey Kinney, Senior Planner (651-602-1029) Kevin Phan, Planner (651-602-1333)
Division/Department:	Community Development / Regional Parks

Proposed Action

Information item; no action is proposed at this time.

Background

The Council continues its work on developing the 2050 Regional Development Guide, *Imagine 2050*. The current Regional Development Guide, *Thrive MSP 2040*, along with the Council's system and policy plans, help guide the orderly growth and development of the Twin Cities metropolitan region. The four policy plans include the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, the *2040 Transportation Policy Plan*, the *2040 Water Resources Policy Plan*, and the *2040 Housing Policy Plan*.

At the March 7, 2024 meeting, Council staff will share revised draft regional parks and trails objectives (below), and emerging ideas on policies and actions based on recent discussions with Regional Park Implementing Agencies and the Metropolitan Council's Committee of the Whole. Council staff will also provide the Commission with background information on the existing Regional Parks Policy Plan and how components of it may change going forward.

The intent for *Imagine 2050* is to fully integrate each of the Council's four policy areas (Parks, Transportation, Water Resources, and Housing) into a single document rather than having standalone policy plans. As a result, Parks staff are carefully reviewing the existing Regional Parks Policy Plan content to ensure alignment within the broader strategic framework of *Imagine 2050*. Additionally, Council staff is proposing to move current regional parks policy plan content that is not fundamentally oriented to objectives, policies, or actions, or is considered contextual or procedural, into a new Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook. Staff will share emerging thinking on this idea with the Commission at the March meeting.

Council staff will continue to revise regional parks and trails objectives, policies, and actions, as well as the organization of regional parks content within *Imagine 2050* and the proposed Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook, as a result of this and future discussions with Regional Park Implementing Agencies, Council committees, and others.

The March 7, 2024, Commission meeting continues a set of focused discussions on the Regional Development Guide and Regional Parks Policy Plan that began last spring. At the March 2023

Commission meeting, staff shared Council-endorsed values and vision statements for the Regional Development Guide. The *Imagine 2050* Vision Statement is below. Staff also shared a summary of the Regional Parks Policy Plan update work to-date, including a project timeline and a plan for working directly with Regional Park Implementing Agencies via a series of workgroups.

At the April 2023 Commission meeting, Council staff led small group activities focused on developing vision, mission, and value statements for the regional parks and trails system. An Implementing Agency-Council workgroup continued this work.

In June 2023, Council staff sought the Commission's advice on developing shared regional goals and policy area objectives. Policy area objectives connect regional goals to policies and actions.

In August 2023, Council staff sought the Commission's feedback and advice on community engagement activities, and regional parks and trails system vision, mission, and values. Staff also shared updates on regional goals and the launch of two additional parks policy plan workgroups. The regional goals are below.

In November 2023, Council staff shared outcomes of the most recent Agency-Council workgroups and draft regional parks and trails objectives. The Commission provided feedback and advice on draft parks objectives.

At the January 4, 2024 meeting, Council staff shared a proposal for engaging the Commission for the first five months of 2024 (Table 1) and sought advice on a revised set of draft parks objectives. Staff intends to present an overview of a 60% draft plan to the Commission in May.

At the February 1, 2024 meeting, Council staff shared a revised set of draft parks objectives based on the input of the Commission and Regional Park Implementing Agencies. Again, the Commission provided advice on priorities to achieve draft parks objectives.

Minnesota law requires the Council to conduct a comprehensive review of the Regional Parks Policy Plan at least every four years (Minnesota Statutes, section 473.147). The policy plan was last updated in December 2020. Completion of the policy plan update, as an integrated part of *Imagine 2050*, is expected in late 2024 or early 2025.

***Imagine 2050* Vision Statement**

A prosperous, equitable, and resilient region with abundant opportunities for all to live, work, play, and thrive.

Regional Goals

Our region is equitable and inclusive

Racial inequities and injustices experienced by historically marginalized communities have been eliminated; and all people feel welcome, included, and empowered.

Our communities are healthy and safe

All our region's residents live healthy and rewarding lives with a sense of dignity and wellbeing.

Our region is dynamic and resilient

Our region meets the opportunities and challenges faced by our communities and economy including issues of choice, access, and affordability.

We lead on addressing climate change

We have mitigated greenhouse gas emissions and have adapted to ensure our communities and systems are resilient to climate impacts.

We protect and restore natural systems

We protect, integrate, and restore natural systems to protect habitat and ensure a high quality of life for the people of our region.

Draft Regional Parks and Trails Objectives

- **Foster Equity and Belonging.** Connect people with community, natural, and cultural landscapes to better support their physical, mental, and emotional well-being.
- **Take Care of What We Have.** Reinvest in existing regional parks and trails to maintain and enhance visitor experiences.
- **Meet Future Needs.** Meet the growing demand for regional parks and trails through strategic and timely land acquisition and development.
- **Adapt and Mitigate.** Increase the region’s resilience to climate change by adapting land management practices and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Protect and Restore.** Protect and restore natural systems to safeguard the well-being of all living things.

Table 1: Proposed Early 2024 Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission Engagement

Timing	Proposed Topics, Focus
January 4, 2024	<i>Imagine 2050:</i> Latest timeline, organizational approach. Focus: Priorities (policies and actions) to achieve objectives.
February 1, 2024	<i>Imagine 2050:</i> Emerging regional parks policies and actions Focus: Demographic changes, climate adaptation and mitigation.
March 7, 2024	<i>Imagine 2050:</i> Updated regional parks policies and actions 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan: Chapters 1-6, including Overview, System Plan, Siting and Acquisition, Planning, and System Protection policies. Focus: Proposals to reorganize content, develop a Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook
April 4, 2024	<i>Imagine 2050:</i> Updated regional parks policies and actions 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan: Chapters 7 and 8, including Recreation Activities and Facilities and Finance policies. Possible focus: Operations and maintenance challenge, completing the system.
May 2, 2024	Focus: Present overview of 60% draft plan and Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook.

