

Business Item

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Community Development Committee: December 16, 2024

Metropolitan Council: January 8, 2024

Business Item: 2024-343

Saint Paul, Phalen-Keller Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment

District(s), Member(s):	District G, Anthony Taylor District 13, Chai Lee
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minn. Stat. § 473.313; <i>2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan</i> : Chapter 5, Planning Policy Strategy 1, Master Plans
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Tracey Kinney, Planning Analyst (651-602-1029)
Division/Department:	Community Development / Regional Planning

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Phalen-Keller Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment.
2. Require Saint Paul, prior to initiating any construction, to send preliminary plans to the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager.

Background

Saint Paul and Ramsey County's 750-acre Phalen-Keller Regional Park is centrally located in the Regional Parks and Trails System. The regional park straddles the northeast part of Saint Paul and the central part of Ramsey County. Phalen-Keller Regional Park has a 2011 Council-approved long-range plan amendment. The City of Saint Paul owns and maintains Phalen Park and Ramsey County owns and maintains Keller Park. This long-range plan amendment focuses on Saint Paul's 10-acre Phalen Daylighting project which is located just south of Lake Phalen within the current Regional Park boundaries (Figures 1 and 2).

Phalen Creek is a long-buried waterway that once meandered from Lake Phalen through Saint Paul's East Side to the Mississippi River. Until the early twentieth century, Phalen Creek served as a thriving wildlife corridor and a cultural and natural resource for the Dakota people. Saint Paul, in partnership with Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi, a Native-led environmental stewardship non-profit organization, are restoring the upper part of Phalen Creek. Currently this area is predominantly a lawn space and open field. The future area will be restored to a more natural state, with areas for community reflection and opportunities for people to connect with nature. Future plans seek to restore the entirety of the Creek (Figure 3).

Rationale

As described in the Analysis, the Phalen-Keller Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* including Chapter 5, Planning Policy Strategy 1.

Thrive Lens Analysis

The Phalen-Keller Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment advances the *Thrive* outcome of stewardship by improving the natural function and habitat of Phalen Creek.

Funding

The total cost to implement the Phalen-Keller Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment is approximately \$4.7 million for development. No acquisitions are required for this amendment, only surveys, agreement modifications and temporary construction easements totaling approximately \$5,000 are included in the development costs.

Anticipated maintenance costs for the Phalen Daylighting Project are approximately \$41,150 annually.

Funding sources for the plan implementation will come from a variety of sources, including the State of Minnesota, Met Council, and Saint Paul. Future State and Met Council funding are subject to future Met Council actions.



Analysis

Planning Strategy 1 of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* provides for focused long-range plan amendments that include a set of plan requirements. This focused long-range plan requirement requires 12 items: boundaries, acquisition costs, stewardship, demand forecast, development concept, conflicts, public services, operations, partner engagement, public engagement and participation, equity analysis, and accessibility. The following summary analyzes the long-range plan amendment against these requirements.

Boundaries

Saint Paul and Ramsey County's 750-acre Phalen-Keller Regional Park is centrally located in the Regional Parks and Trails System. The regional park straddles the northeast part of Saint Paul and the central part of Ramsey County. The City of Saint Paul owns and maintains Phalen Park and Ramsey County owns and maintains Keller Park. This long-range plan amendment focuses on Saint Paul's 10-acre Phalen Daylighting project which is located just south of Lake Phalen within the current Regional Park boundaries (Figures 1 and 2).

The northern and eastern project boundaries are adjacent to Johnson Parkway. The western project boundary is adjacent to Burnquist Street and private properties. The southern project boundary is also adjacent to private properties (Figure 3).

Acquisition Costs

The City of Saint Paul owns the project site land. There are a number of easements located within the site including right-of-way owned by Ramsey County, a Met Council sewer easement, and a Saint Paul Regional Water Service Easement.

No acquisitions are required for this amendment. The daylighting project will need surveys, temporary construction easements, and existing agreement amendments for construction and maintenance with the Met Council, Saint Paul Regional Water Service, and Ramsey County. These costs are approximately \$5,000 and included in the development costs. Construction is anticipated for Spring of 2025.

Stewardship Plan

The City of Saint Paul will continue to own and maintain the Phalen Creek Daylighting project site. The project is a partnership between the City of Saint Paul and Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi. A development agreement will define the roles and responsibilities of each party. The parties will also negotiate a separate, mutually acceptable Maintenance Agreement. Saint Paul Police and Saint Paul Parks & Recreation Security will be maintaining public safety in the park.

Demand Forecast

Saint Paul's Regional Park System has an estimated 8.7 million visits annually, which represents 12.5% of the overall system visits across the 10-agency Regional Parks and Trails System. Saint Paul has the third most visited park system in the region, behind only Minneapolis and Three Rivers Park District. In addition, Saint Paul's park visitor usage increased slightly from 2022, with a 0.2% increase in 2023 (2024, Metropolitan Council's annual parks and trails use estimates).

Saint Paul's population is expected to total 344,100 by 2040, a 10% increase from its 2020 population. In addition, Saint Paul's employment is expected to grow to 213,500 jobs by 2040, a 24% increase from 2020 actual employment. Consequently, population and employment growth in Saint Paul is expected to increase the usage of Phalen Regional Park (Met Council's Thrive MSP 2040 Local Forecasts).

Development Concept

Currently this area is predominantly a lawn space and open field. The future area will be restored to a more natural state, with areas for community reflection and opportunities for people to connect with nature. Future plans seek to restore the entirety of the Creek (Figure 3).

This amendment includes natural system management projects and park improvements.

Natural system improvements include restored wetlands, wet meadows, stream banks, and savanna. Revegetation plans include establishing native plant communities and restoring upland savanna/mesic prairie and riparian habitat to support a variety of plants and animals. The creek corridor contains riparian habitat suitable for periodic flooding and variable soil moisture. Creek depth and volume has been designed to provide safe opportunities for both crossing the creek and physically touching the water (Figures 4 through 6).

Park improvements include a variety of walking trails, seating opportunities, areas for nature play, gathering spaces, stream crossings, interpretive areas, and signage. The primary trail offers public access through the site and connections to key areas along the creek including to the trailhead adjacent to Lake Phalen, headwaters creek overlook, and a southern gathering space. Along this route, a secondary trail spur creates an informal loop. Visitors use the current sidewalk network to cross Maryland Avenue that bisects the site. Visitors use a pedestrian bridge on the south side of the site to safely cross the creek.

Conflicts

This amendment includes measures to resolve questions related to utility access, residential buffers, and creek flooding.

There is a 20-foot wide sanitary sewer easement that grants access to the Metropolitan Waste Control Commission. There is also a Saint Paul Regional Water Service (SPRWS) main water line running through the southwest portion of the site. The proposed design accommodates these utilities by positioning the creek and greater landscape improvements on the east side of the parcels. Continued coordination is needed with Met Council and SPRWS during design to ensure grading and construction activities do not affect the utilities.

The 2011 Phalen-Keller Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment identified a tree grove to separate park uses from residential properties. In addition, Saint Paul Regional Water Service planted several rows of trees on their property at the request of adjacent property owners to separate park uses. As a result, the project retains existing trees and proposes trees along the west side of the site to provide separation between the park and residential properties.

Flooding was a concern by property owners on the west and south sides of the park. Flooding will be mitigated through the use of a weir at the Phalen outlet to control waterflow into the creek. In addition, the creek temporarily ties into a Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed District beltline sewer until future reaches are funded, designed, and constructed. Concerns about the beltline sewer back flooding into the creek have been mitigated by designing a backflow preventer that allows the beltline sewer to function normally during high-water flows.

Public Services

As part of the project, a new lake outlet structure is proposed at the south end of Lake Phalen and another proposed structure is connected to the Beltline Sewer. Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed District has tentatively agreed to maintain the structure and a formal agreement will need to be established to understand ownership, roles and responsibilities.

Two culverts will be included as part of the project including a 24" culvert under Wheelock Parkway to convey the lake water to the creek and a box culvert under Maryland Ave to continue the creek south of the project site. The project team will coordinate with Saint Paul Public Works - Sewers and Public Works - Street Design, for maintenance and phasing during construction.

Operations

Anticipated maintenance costs for the Phalen Daylighting Project are approximately \$41,150 annually.

Partner Engagement



The project team, a partnership between Saint Paul and Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi worked closely with a wide variety of partners including Ward 6 City Council, Payne Phalen Community Council, Four Dakota Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed District, Ramsey County Public Works, Saint Paul Regional Water Services, Metropolitan Council Environmental Services, and Metro Transit (Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit). The amendment includes design success criteria identified by stakeholders, project partners, and the design team that outline specifics on creek headwater elevations, Lake Phalen water source information, and target creek flow coordination. Partner coordination will continue throughout the project implementation period.

Public Engagement and Participation

The Phalen Creek Daylighting Project was developed through extensive community, partner, and stakeholder engagement over seven years beginning in 2017. Engagement activities ranged from larger community events, tabling, speaking in academic spaces, and American Indian community events. Surveys were translated into Spanish, Karen and Hmong. The overall engagement themes are listed below:

- Add future interpretive signage along the restored creek to teach visitors about Dakota & Cultural Knowledge, Creek History, Nature/Environment, Water Facts, and Maps/Wayfinding.
- Include nature-based activities and passive recreation
- Desire to rename Phalen Creek as a recognized Dakota space.
- Retain the open views for safety and comfort.

Equity Analysis

The project team conducted an equity analysis as part of the long-range plan amendment. The advice heard during the planning process shaped the long-range plan.

Project Data

The project team engaged communities that were within a half-mile radius from the project site including the Phalen Neighborhood and adjacent users and residents of District 4's Dayton's Bluff Community Council, Swede Hollow Park, and Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary.

As of 2021, the Payne-Phalen neighborhood has an estimated 33,644 residents. Of these residents:

- 33% are under 18, about 27% are ages 18-34, 23% are ages 35-54, and about 17% are 55+.
- The neighborhood is predominantly people of color (68.5%) and 27% are white.
- 41.8% are Asian/Pacific Islanders, 14.5% are Black/African American, and 2.2% are American Indian/Alaskan Natives.

The Phalen Creek Corridor is located within a US Environmental Protection Agency Inflation Reduction Act Disadvantaged Communities Map area that provides funding to identified communities for financial and technical assistance to carry out environmental and climate justice activities. In 2019, Saint Paul adopted a Climate Action & Resilience Plan. In this plan, Saint Paul identified that the northern Payne-Phalen neighborhood is one of several neighborhoods identified as having the highest combined risk of negative impacts resulting from climate change.

Public Engagement and Participation

The project team conducted targeted engagements between 2017-2024, including with American Indian and Asian/Asian American communities.

American Indian engagements included community events and working with an American Indian Review Committee to gain perspective from people that historically inhabited the Payne Phalen neighborhood prior to European immigration.

Asian/Asian American community engagements included tabling at the Mid-Autumn Festival at the Saint Paul Changsha China Friendship Garden and at the Hmong Village Shopping Center.

Themes:



- Restore the Creek just south of Lake Phalen
- Include nature-based activities and passive recreation
- Add a way to engage the water
- Desire to rename Phalen Creek as a recognized Dakota space

Evaluation Summary

Transparency: Engagement advice shaped the plan. Below is a list of elements that the project includes from the engagement advice heard.

- Passive recreation activities such as walking, bird/wildlife watching and educational opportunities
- Trails and seating
- Opportunities to cross the creek and physically touch the water
- Future interpretive signage in multiple languages with information about Dakota & cultural knowledge, creek history, nature/environment, water facts, and maps/wayfinding
- Open views and low native grass plantings.
- Renaming Phalen Creek as a recognized Dakota space is planned to take place in a future discussion with the Department of Natural Resources, Ramsey County and City of Saint Paul

Accountability: The City of Saint Paul and Phalen-Keller Regional Park sits on the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Dakota homelands. Acknowledgment of this land and the legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement are important to recognize in the context of Phalen-Keller Regional Park. The geography of this project helps address significant environmental justice needs. Daylighting waterways is a viable nature-based solution to mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing pollution from runoff, providing flood mitigation, improving urban areas for residents, and restoring environmental health and building ecosystem resilience to watersheds and local ecosystems.

Accessibility

The proposed interior trails will be American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant for use by people with limited mobility. Similar to other non-regional interior park trails, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation will not maintain the trails during the winter. Accessible connections to existing sidewalks and crosswalks are identified for future design phase development and coordination with agency partners.

Other Council Policies and Systems – Advisory Comments

Environmental Services – Wastewater Services (Roger Janzig, 651-602-1119)

The construction of any new or updating of existing paths, trails, bridges, or any other construction project may have an impact on multiple Metropolitan Council Interceptors in multiple locations. To assess the potential impacts to our interceptor system; prior to initiating any project, preliminary plans should be sent to Tim Wedin, Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager (651-602-4571) at the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services.



Figure 1. Phalen-Keller Regional Park location in the Regional Parks and Trails System

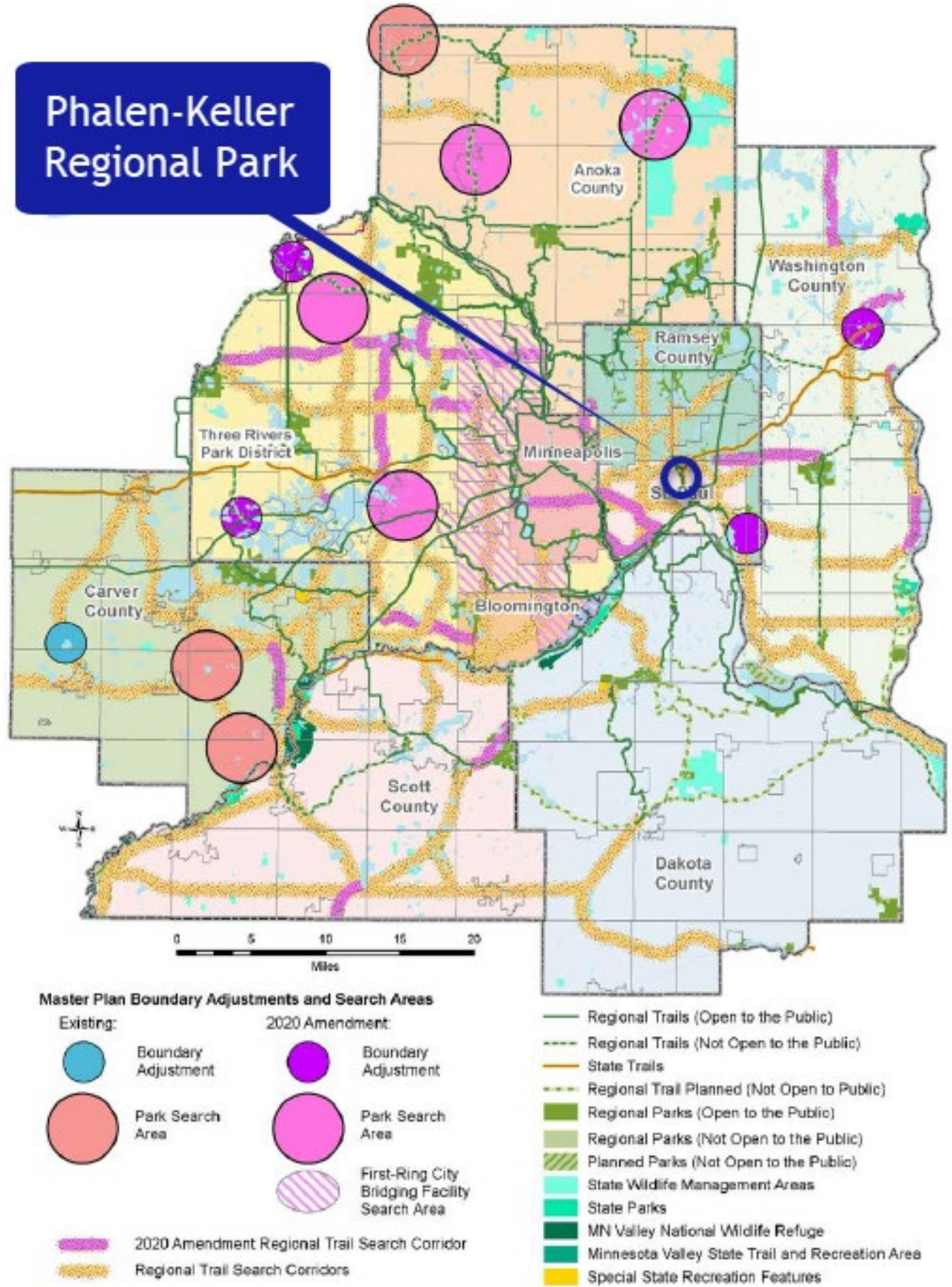


Figure 2. Phalen-Keller Regional Park location in Saint Paul

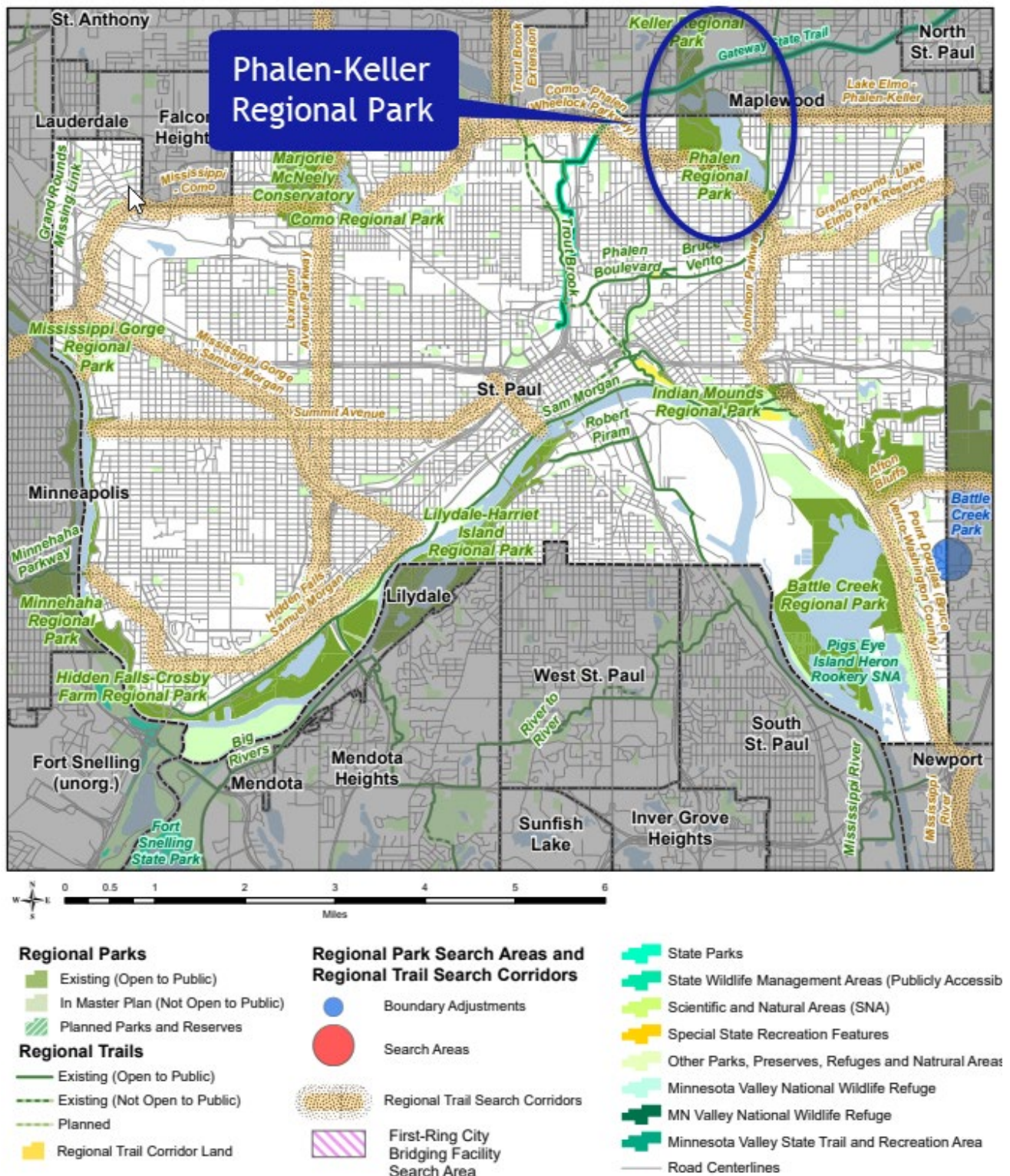
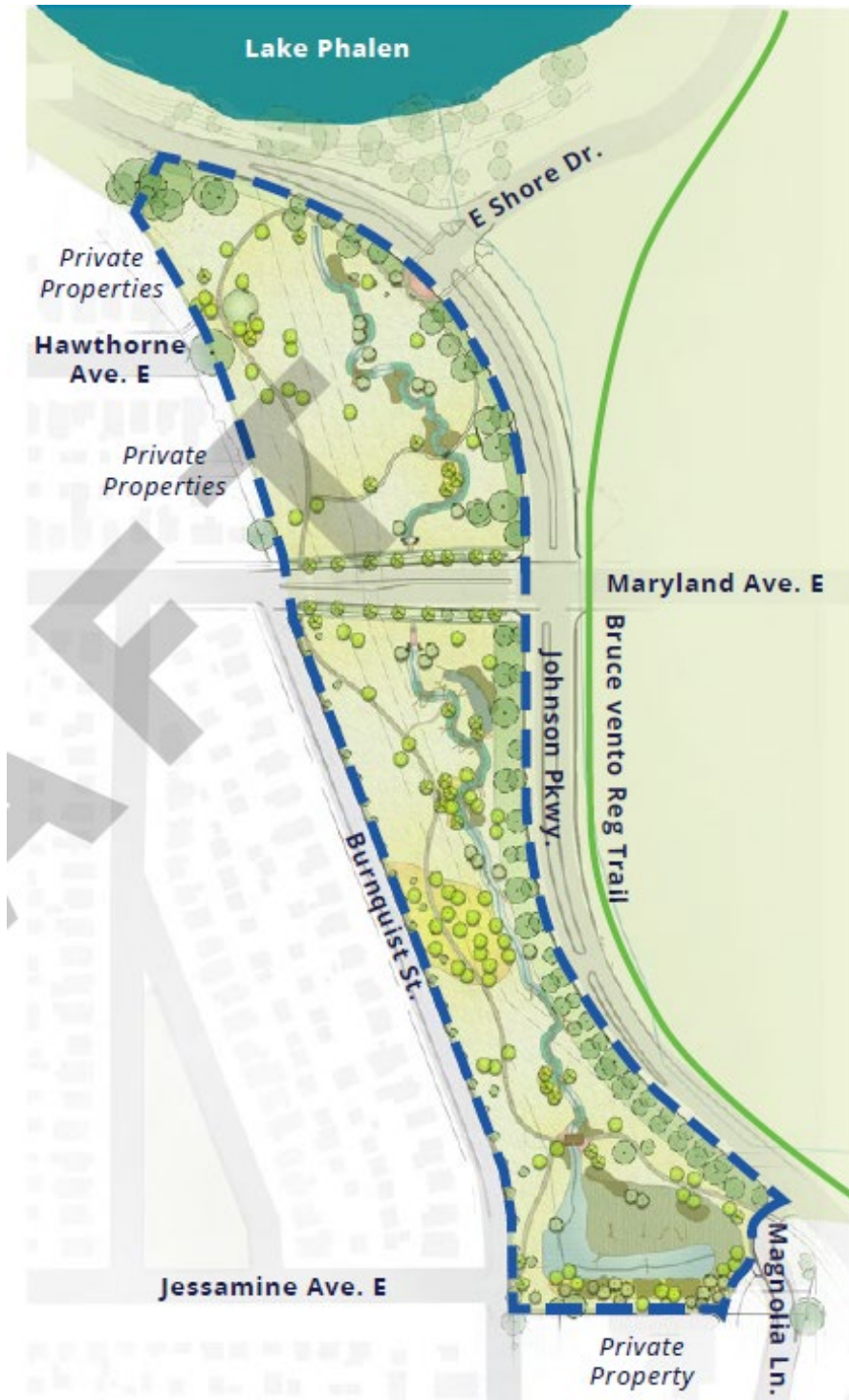


Figure 3: Phalen Creek Daylighting Project - Boundaries



Legend

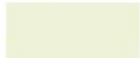


-  City-Owned Park Land
-  Phase One Boundary
-  Existing Bruce Vento Regional Trail



Figure 4: Phalen Creek Daylighting Project – Development Concept



Figure 5: Phalen Creek Daylighting Project – Development Concept Perspective Illustration



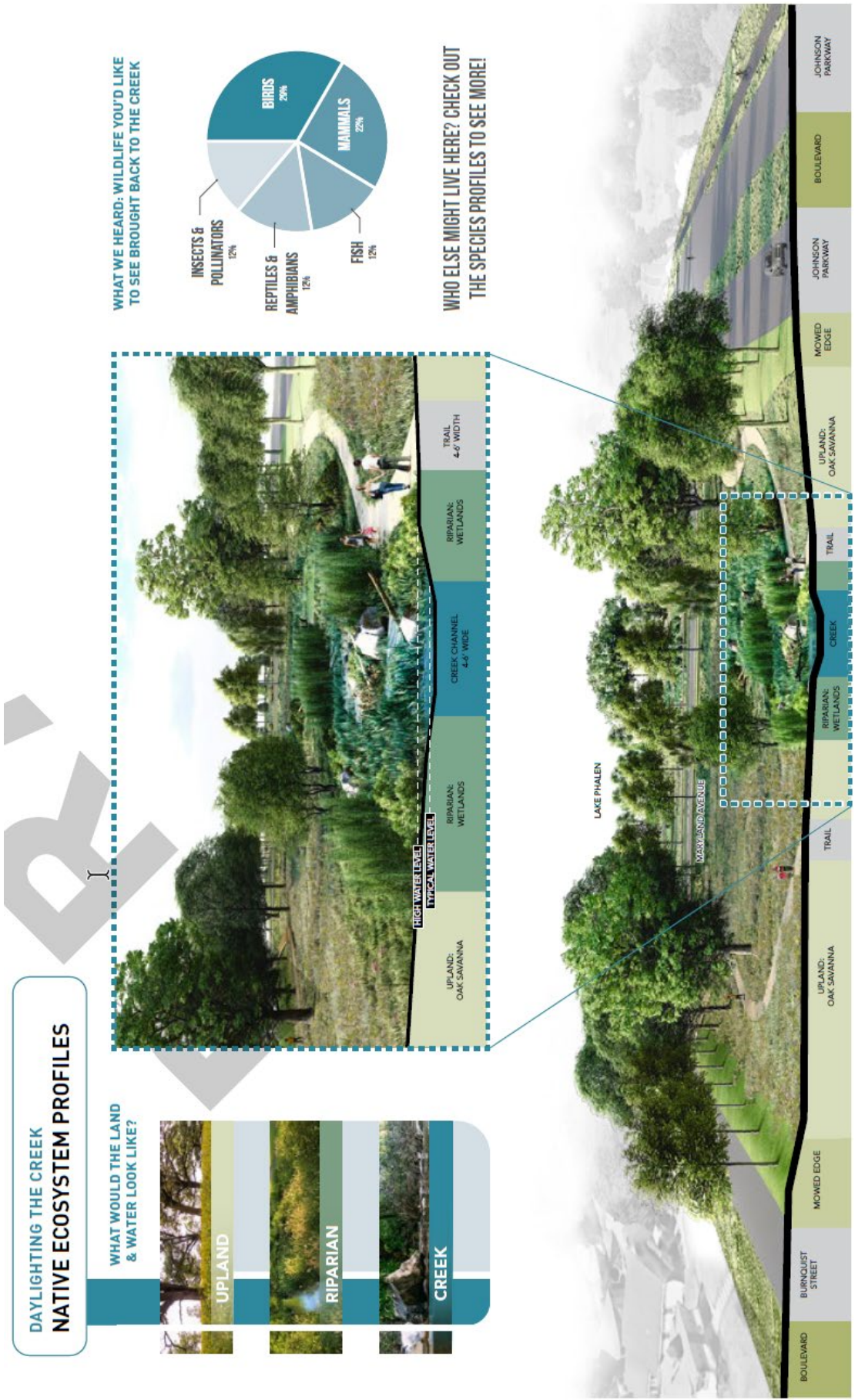


Figure 6: Phalen Creek Daylighting Project – Development Concept Section Illustration



City of Saint Paul

City Hall and Court House
15 West Kellogg Boulevard
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Legislation Details (With Text)

File #: RES 24-1706 **Version:** 1
Type: Resolution **Status:** Mayor's Office
In control: City Council
Final action: 11/20/2024
Title: Approving the Phalen Keller Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment.
Sponsors: Nelsie Yang
Indexes:
Code sections:
Attachments: 1. Keller Regional Park Project Description, 2. Phalen - Keller Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
11/20/2024	1	City Council	Adopted	Pass

Approving the Phalen Keller Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment.

WHEREAS, the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission ("Commission") is an appointed body established to advise the Mayor and City Council on long-range and city-wide matters related to the Department of Parks and Recreation ("Department"); and

WHEREAS, Section 105.06 of the Saint Paul Administrative Code outlines the Parks and Recreation Commission's duty to review and comment on regional park master plans and the process that it must follow; and

WHEREAS, the Plan is a visionary document to guide future development at Phalen-Keller Regional Park; and

WHEREAS, the city is the owner of Phalen Regional Park property encompassing the future location of the daylight Phalen Creek ("Creek") from Lake Phalen to the Mississippi River, an ecologically and culturally important waterway that has long been pushed underground by development, which project is known as the Daylighting Phalen Creek Project ("Project"); and

WHEREAS, the Commission held a public hearing on the Phalen-Keller Long-Range Plan amendment on July 11, 2024; and

WHEREAS, Lower Phalen Creek Project (d/b/a Wakanj Tipi Awanyankapi), is a registered 501(c)(3) Minnesota non-profit corporation ("LPCP") assembled and facilitated a series of community and key stakeholder meetings, and worked across City departments and partner agencies to develop Guiding Principles for the Plan amendment; and

WHEREAS, the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission endorsement and Saint Paul City Council adoption of the plan is a prerequisite for Metropolitan Council adoption of the Long-Range Plan Addendum; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee of the Saint Paul Planning Commission, having reviewed the proposed Phalen-Keller Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment and a memorandum containing analysis provided by Parks and Recreation Department staff, provided a recommendation for consideration by the Saint Paul Planning Commission;

File #: RES 24-1706, Version: 1

WHEREAS, under the authority of the City's Administrative Code, the Saint Paul Planning Commission recommend the Phalen-Keller Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment for approval on October 11, 2024 (Res# 24-32); and

WHEREAS, the Plan contains information required by the Regional Parks Policy Plan and otherwise conforms to regional policy; and

WHEREAS, that the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission recommended the Phalen-Keller Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment for approval by the Saint Paul City Council on November 14, 2024; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul City Council hereby approves the Phalen-Keller Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment and is hereby authorized to submit said plan to the Metropolitan Council for review and approval.

