

# 2025-6 Draft Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission Colin Kelly, Tracey Kinney, and Kevin Phan



## Draft Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook Overview

## What is it?

- Complementary document to the Regional Parks and Trails Policy Chapter.
- Contains procedural and contextual language outlining Regional Parks and Trails System processes.

## **Handbook Amendment Process:**

- Handbook policy content will be amended every 4 years (same schedule as Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan).
  - Amendment process in partnership with Implementing Agencies and Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission.
    - Substantial updates that directly impact or necessitate implementing agency action will need Council approval.
    - Resources (e.g., webinars, plan examples, infographics) will be updated on as-needed basis or when new content becomes available.



## Sections 1 and 2: Introduction and System Plan



## What's New?

#### **Overall**

- Moved procedural and contextual language from Policy Chapter to Planning Handbook.
- Incorporated graphics and flowcharts to visualize processes.

#### Introduction

- Added contextual language describing Handbook purpose and amendment process.
- Moved research and engagement summary from Policy Chapter to Planning Handbook.

## **System Plan**

- Added contextual language regarding Minnesota's Outdoor Recreation System.
- Consolidated Regional Park and Trail System unit classifications into Policy Chapter one-page descriptions.
- Will add Agency-Level Maps once they become available (later 2025).

## Section 3 and 4: Natural Systems and Climate Resiliency



## What's New?

## **Natural Systems**

- Clarified the system additions process.
- Added graphics and language summarizing how a park search area or trail search corridor becomes operational.
- Realigned study area criteria to match Locating and Acquisition primary factors.
- Continued commitment to monitor local and non-local visitation with park agency partners.

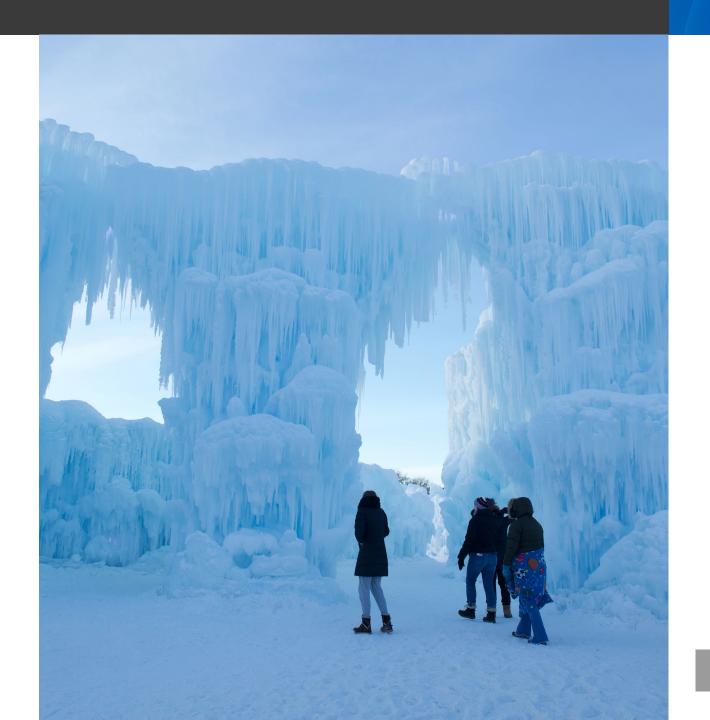
### **Climate Resiliency**

Added placeholder text for future resources and processes.

## **Section 5: Planning**

## What's New?

- Streamlined long-range plan requirements:
  - Created checklist for agency use
  - Reorganized plan requirements into three main categories:
    - Engagement
    - Development Concept
    - Natural Systems
- Elevated design considerations for long-range plans
- Created criteria and process for different types of longrange plan amendments:
  - Full amendment
  - Focused amendment
  - Administrative process for minor amendments.
- Modified criteria and process for boundary adjustments
- Moved language on joint powers agreements from policy plan to planning handbook



## Section 6: System Protection



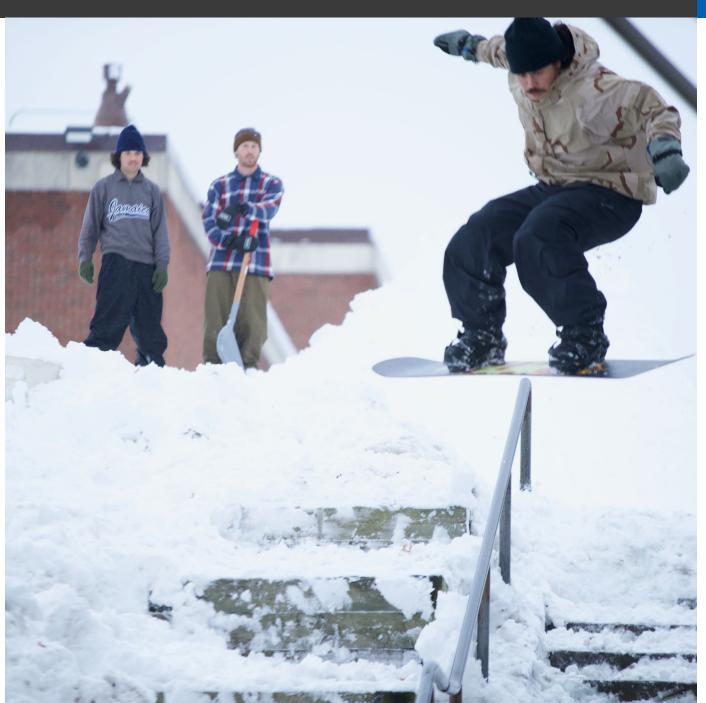
## What's New?

- Added procedural and contextual language regarding Local Comprehensive Plans, Land Conversion Processes, and Telecommunication Towers Placement.
- Added process graphics and requirements for land conversion process.

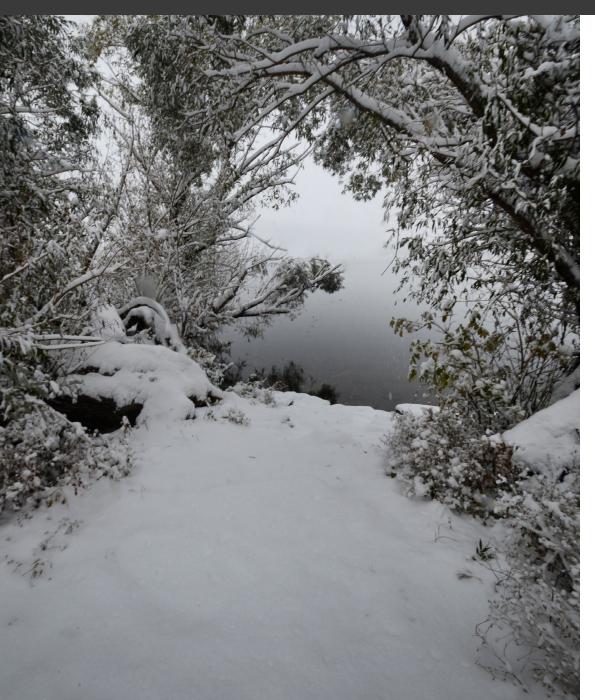
## Section 7: Recreation, Facilities, and Programming

## What's New?

- Added procedural language and graphics describing the process to evaluate and add new Recreational Activities and Facilities
- Added desired outcome examples for Actions 1-4 in Section 7
- Added commitment to continue Trail System Coordination Workgroup. Some work plan highlights include:
  - Coordination with the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network (RBTN)
  - Improved wayfinding and awareness of regional trails
  - Coordinate growth of the system.

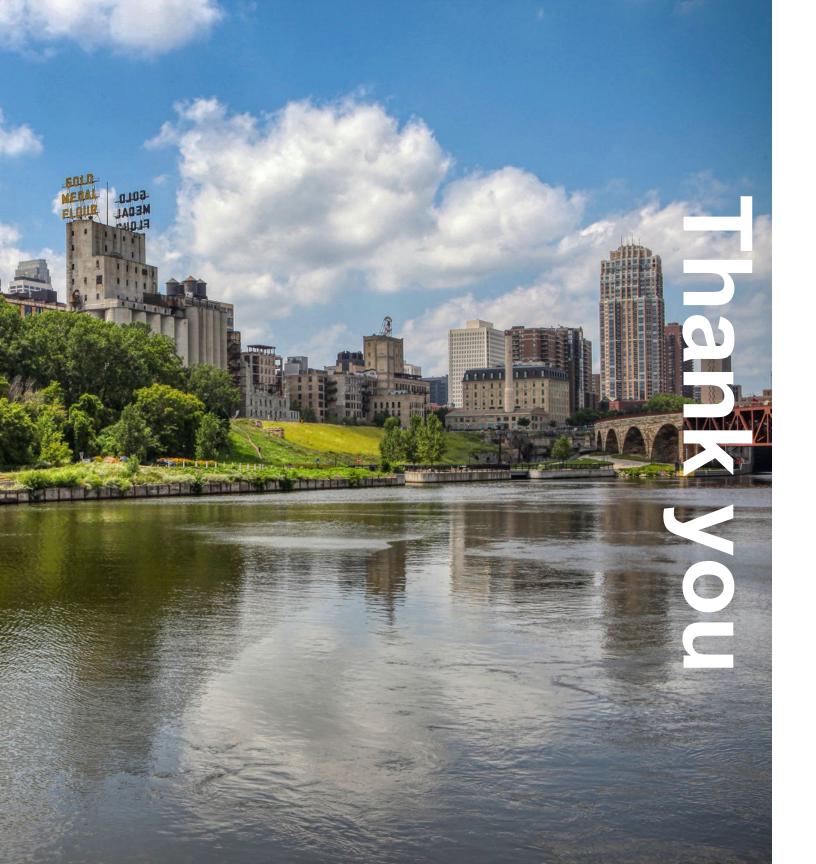


## **Proposed Action**



## That the Metropolitan Council:

- Establish the Regional Parks and Trails Planning
   Handbook as the administrative guide for regional
   parks and trails long-range planning requirements.
- 2. Adopt the attached Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook.
- 3. Authorize Council staff to make administrative changes to the Handbook over time, including additions and updates to related tools and resources.
- 4. Direct Council staff to bring any updates that directly impact or necessitate implementing agency action related to Sections 3, 5, 6, and 7 of the Planning Handbook to the Council for approval, aligning with any updates to the Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan.



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