

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
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DATE: July 20, 2007
TO: Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission
FROM: Jan Youngquist, Senior Planner-Parks (651) 602-1029
SUBJECT: Tony Schmidt Regional Park Master Plan, Ramsey County (Referral No. 20035-1)

INTRODUCTION

Ramsey County has submitted a development master plan for Tony Schmidt Regional Park for Metropolitan Council review and approval.

The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* (Chapter 2 – Policies and Strategies, Section D – Planning, Strategy 4A- Master Plans), describes the role of the master plan in the regional park system. The policy requires that any project proposed for funding in the Metropolitan Regional Parks Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) be consistent with a Metropolitan Council approved regional park master plan.

This memorandum contains a review of the Tony Schmidt Regional Park Master Plan based on its consistency with the *2030 Parks Policy Plan*.

AUTHORITY TO REVIEW

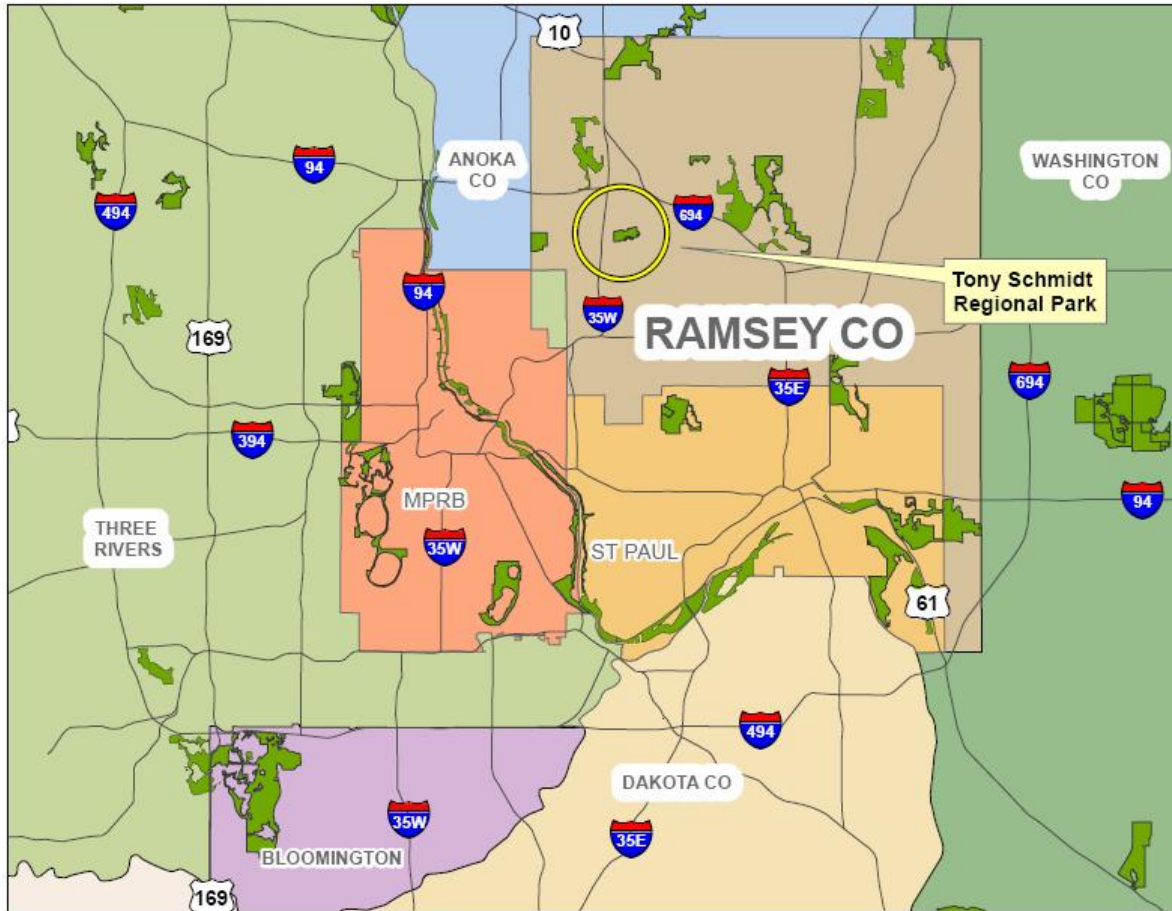
Minnesota Statute 473.313, Subdivision 1 requires Regional Park Implementing Agencies to, “prepare, after consultation with all affected municipalities, and submit to the Metropolitan Council, and from time to time revise and resubmit to the council, a master plan and annual budget for the acquisition and development of regional recreation open space located within the district or county, consistent with the council’s policy plan.” (i.e., the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*)

Minnesota Statute 473.313, Subdivision 2 authorizes the Metropolitan Council to review, with the advice of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, master plans for the regional park system. Plans are reviewed for their consistency with the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and other Council policy plans. If a master plan is not consistent with Council policy, the Council should return the plan to the implementing agency with its comments for revision and resubmittal.

BACKGROUND

Tony Schmidt Regional Park is located in northwestern Ramsey County, in the city of Arden Hills. The location of the regional park is depicted in Figure 1. Tony Schmidt Regional Park is a former county park that was identified as an addition the regional park system in the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. With its location on the north shore of Lake Johanna, the park has a long history of serving the region with swimming, boating and picnic facilities.

Figure 1—Location of Tony Schmidt Regional Park



ANALYSIS

1. Boundaries and Acquisition Costs

Land acquisition for Tony Schmidt Regional Park began in 1958 with a 34 acre property. Additional acreage was acquired with Ramsey County funds in the 1970s. The regional park is generally bounded by Lake Johanna and County Road E to the south, Snelling Avenue to the east, Lake Valentine Road to the north and I-35W and New Brighton Road to the west. Ramsey County currently owns 217.28 acres within the boundaries of the regional park.

The master plan identifies two inholding parcels for future acquisition, consisting of 4.61 acres with a total 2006 estimated market value of \$667,300. These parcels will be acquired on a willing seller basis. Additional properties under public ownership will be traversed to accommodate the trail connection proposed in the master plan. These trail connections will be formalized with intergovernmental agreements. The entities that own the properties were involved in formulation of the master plan and are conceptually supportive of the trail connections. The current boundaries of the regional park as well as the location of the inholding and trail connection parcels are shown in Figure 2. Figure 3 describes each of the inholding and trail connection parcels.

Figure 2—Regional Park Boundaries and Inholding Map

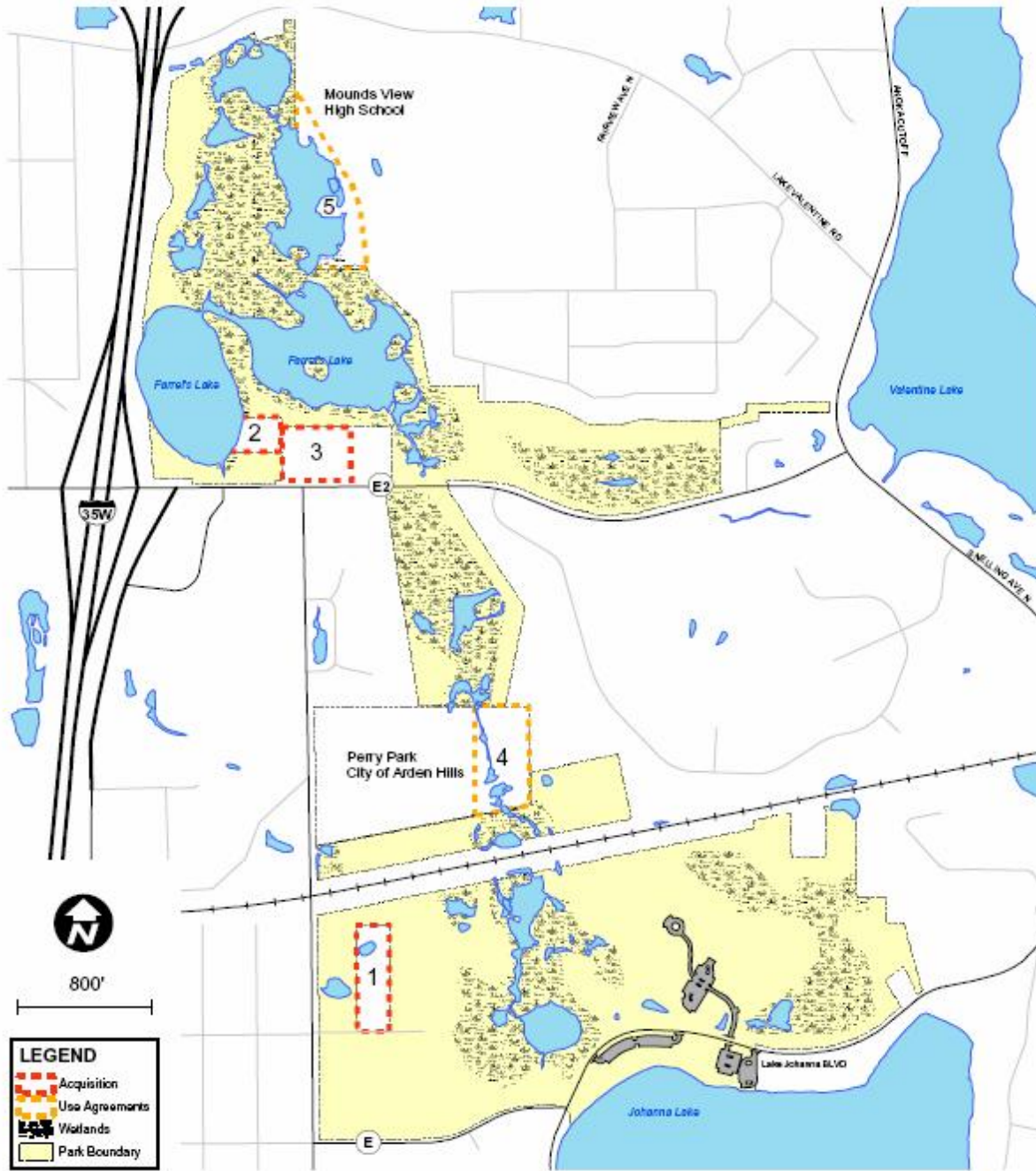


Figure 3—Inholding and Trail Connection Parcel Description

Parcel	Status	Acreege	2006 Estimated Market Value
1	Private residential ownership	2.99 acres	\$276,500
2	Private residential ownership	1.62 acres	\$390,800
3	Ramsey County Library has conceptually agreed to a trail across a portion of the site. The library system has been evaluating alternative library sites that could result in relocation of the library. If the site is vacated in the future, a trail easement will be secured to assure perpetual trail access.		
4	An agreement with the City of Arden Hills will allow the County to construct a trail across Perry Park. The trail will be located on an existing utility road. The City will be permitted to make local trail connections to the trail in order to facilitate access from adjacent neighborhoods and parks. The master plan identifies a trail connection to the active use areas of Perry Park.		
5	This site is a portion of the Mounds View High School property. An agreement will be negotiated to construct a trail across the property. The trail will benefit to the school by providing access to the school and a venue for cross-country running and skiing for school teams.		

2. Stewardship Plan

Much of the park is developed for recreational use. The majority of the undeveloped areas contain wetlands. Other undeveloped portions of the park are managed as natural areas, with opportunities for trail access.

The County performs weekly water quality sampling at the beach throughout the summer. Protocol has been established for beach closure and reopening as well as for follow up monitoring based on pre-established thresholds for water quality indicators. The County is also responsible for plant disease control (Dutch Elm Disease and Oak Wilt Disease) as well as noxious weed control.

3. Needs Analysis

The primary service area for Tony Schmidt Regional Park includes the northwestern portion of Ramsey County—Arden Hills, New Brighton, Mounds View, Shoreview and Roseville; the northeastern portion of Hennepin County—St. Anthony and NE Minneapolis; and southern Anoka County—Columbia Heights and Fridley.

The Annual Use Estimate of the Metropolitan Regional Parks System for 2005 indicates that the park had 287,300 visitors that year. In 2006, the visitation was estimated to be 271,900. A survey conducted by the County in 2004 determined that 51 percent of the park’s use is from people who live outside of Ramsey County.

The greatest demand for the park is completion of the trail system. The additions to the trail system proposed in this master plan will create connections to residential neighborhoods, two schools, a city park, library and a college. The County anticipates a significant increase in trail use once the trail system has been completed.

4. Development

The master plan builds upon an extensive master planning effort undertaken by Ramsey County in 1998. The 1998 master plan was the impetus for park development that occurred in 2000, which included redevelopment of the swimming beach, boat launch, picnic area (with two shelters and gazebo), playground area and associated roads and parking lots.

This master plan focuses on completion of the trail system. A future trail connection to Long Lake Regional Park, which is ½ mile away from the northern portion of Tony Schmidt Regional Park, is also envisioned. Figure 4 describes the existing and proposed trails.

Figure 4—Summary of Existing and Proposed Trails

BITUMINOUS TRAILS		TRAIL SEGMENT LENGTH
Existing trail within picnic area		1.0 mile
Proposed main north-south trail		
Lake Johanna Blvd to County Rd E-2		0.7 mile
County Rd E-2 to Lake Valentine Rd		0.7 mile
Proposed off road Lake Johanna Blvd		0.6 mile
Total paved trails		3.0 miles
UNPAVED TURF TRAILS		TRAIL SEGMENT LENGTH
Existing		0.6 mile
West Farrel’s Lake loop		0.8 mile
Total unpaved trails		1.4 miles
TOTAL TRAIL MILES		4.4 miles

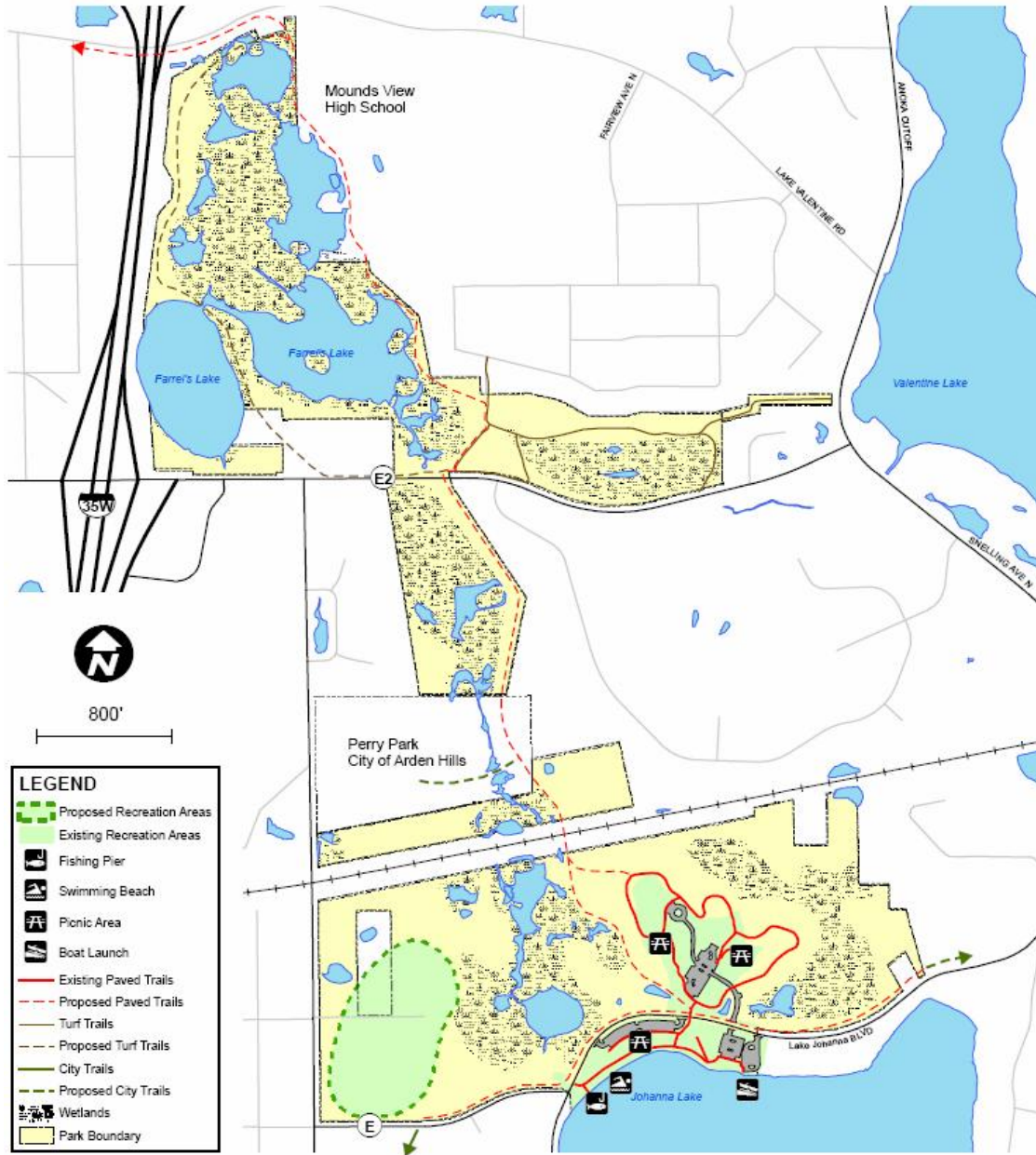
A recreation development area is planned for the southwest corner of the park. Development in this area will include a group picnic area, disk golf, winter sledding and day camp. Development of the area will occur once the residential inholding Parcel 1 has been acquired and the yard waste site (described in Section 5 of the staff report) has been relocated.

Figure 5 outlines the proposed development and associated costs from the master plan. Figure 6 is a map of the master plan’s development concept.

Figure 5—Proposed Development and Estimated Costs

Priority	Project	Estimated Cost (in 2006 dollars)
1	Pave the north-south bituminous trail from Lake Johanna Boulevard to County Road E-2	\$150,000
2	Construct the north-south bituminous trail , including bridges/boardwalk on the east side of Farrel’s lake wetland complex from County Road E-2 to Lake Valentine Road (Mounds View High School)	\$500,000
3	Construct off-road paved trail along the north side of Lake Johanna Boulevard	\$500,000
4	Construct non-paved trail, including bridges, on the west side of Farrel’s Lake wetland complex	\$450,000
5	Construct the southwest recreation area: parking lot, restrooms, group picnic area, disk golf, day camp	\$1,000,000
	TOTAL	\$2,600,000

Figure 6—Master Plan Development Concept



Tony Schmidt Regional Park

MASTER PLAN - Development Concept

Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department - 2006



5. Conflicts

The master plan describes the following conflicts:

- **Power lines**—Xcel Energy hold easements for two large overhead electric power lines. Neither is a physical impediment to the park, although they are highly visible from a portion of the park. Relocation of the power lines is not feasible.
- **Street crossing**—Two at grade street crossings are necessary for the trail system. The crossing at Lake Johanna Boulevard was addressed during park redevelopment in 2000 by adding a center safety island and visually identifying the crosswalk. The crossing at County Road E-2 will be evaluated and designed during future trail construction in this area.
- **Railroad tracks**—The Canadian Pacific Railroad presents a significant barrier that separates the north and south portions of the park. A trail underpass was developed in 2006 for connectivity to the north. The raised railroad grade presents a visual barrier for views along the wetland corridor.
- **Yard waste site**—The St. Paul and Ramsey County Public Health Department operates one of its yard waste sites in the western part of the park. This is an interim use until that portion of the park is developed, once inholding parcel 1 is acquired. This use is identified as a conflict because it is not a recreational use. It does not conflict with existing recreational uses of the park, however.

6. Public Services

The master plan indicates that all public services, such as roads, sewers, water and electric are in place to provide for the development proposed in the plan. The Ramsey County Sheriff's Department provides police services and dispatches emergency ambulance service vehicles when necessary. The Lake Johanna Fire Department provides fire protection services.

7. Operations

Rules, regulations and ordinances

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners has adopted an "Ordinance for Control and Management of Open Space Areas and Facilities Under the Jurisdiction of the Board of Ramsey County Commissioners." The Ordinance governs the conduct of the public during use of the regional park and its facilities and resources.

Operations –Public Safety

The Ramsey County Sheriff will be responsible for enforcement of park hours, which are one half hour before sunrise to one half hour after sunset. The Sheriff's Department will also provide enforcement of the Ordinance and general police services. The Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department will provide first aid, lifeguard service and security throughout the park. Park Department staff will supplement the regular Sheriff's patrol to help educate and direct the public in the appropriate uses of the park.

Operations –Maintenance

The County Parks Department will provide the personnel, equipment and materials necessary for the maintenance of resources, structures and facilities of the regional park. Specific routine maintenance includes:

- Tree maintenance (includes disease control)
- Turf maintenance

- Litter pick up and disposal
- Pavement sweeping and repair (includes parking lots and paved trails)
- Snow plowing (includes parking lots and trails)
- Beach lifeguard services
- Site furnishings (picnic tables, grills)
- Sign maintenance
- Natural resources management
- Playground inspection and repair
- Boat launch
- Building repair (picnic shelters, beach building, restrooms and gazebo)

Operations and Maintenance Costs

The following table shows the annual operation and maintenance cost breakdown for Tony Schmidt Regional Park (in 2006 dollars):

Turf maintenance	\$ 15,000
Tree inspection, maintenance, removal	\$ 3,000
Litter pick up and disposal	\$ 22,000
Parking lot repair/maintenance	\$ 12,000
Building repair and maintenance	\$ 33,000
Trail maintenance	\$ 8,000
Sign maintenance	\$ 1,000
Natural resource management	\$ 5,000
Lifeguard services	\$ 32,000
Snow plowing	\$ 4,000
Security	\$ 3,000
Utilities	\$ 8,000
TOTAL	\$146,000

Funding Sources

Funding for operation and maintenance of the park is appropriated from County tax revenue, supplemented by regional operation and maintenance funds. Life cycle maintenance is implemented according to the County’s Capital Asset Management Plan. Lottery in lieu of sales tax provides additional sources of funds. Ramsey County manages these funds in a Regional Park and Trail Rehabilitation Account.

By policy, Ramsey County does not charge user fees for general use of the park and facilities. There is a fee for rental of the picnic shelter and pavilion. Revenues from food and beverage vending machines also help fund park operations.

8. Citizen Participation

Extensive citizen participation occurred when the 1998 county master plan for the park was prepared. A citizen’s task force was appointed by the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners and the Arden Hills City Council to prepare a master plan for the park. The task force included a variety of members, including neighborhood representatives, the City of Arden Hills Planning and Parks and Trails Commissions, the local school district, as well as Ramsey County at large.

All major elements of that plan have been incorporated into this regional park master plan. This master plan was reviewed and recommended for approval by the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Commission and the Arden Hills Trails, Parks and Recreation Commission. Subsequently, the master plan was approved by the Arden Hills City Council and the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners.

9. Public Awareness

Since the park has been functioning as a county park for nearly 50 years, public awareness of the park is high. The park name will be changed from “County” to “Regional” on signs, brochures and the County’s website.

10. Special Needs

The master plan states that all facilities will be developed for accessibility in accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

11. Natural Resources

Natural Resources Inventory

The Rice Creek Watershed District conducted a Minnesota Land Cover Classification System Inventory in 2005. The inventory showed a highly altered upland habitat and relatively low diversity wetlands.

The park is mainly located within the St. Paul-Baldwin Plains subsection of the Minnesota Ecological Classification System. A small portion of the western and southwestern edges of the park fall into the Anoka Sand Plain.

Surface Water and Groundwater Resources

Ramsey County works with Rice Creek Watershed District to reduce runoff into wetlands. All appropriate erosion prevention measures are taken during development projects. Ground water protection measures include the sealing of all wells during redevelopment.

Vegetation Management

The natural vegetation of Tony Schmidt Regional Park was oak woods, scattered savannas and extensive wetlands. Much of the natural habitat is highly degraded and invasive species, such as buckthorn and garlic mustard, have become widespread. Ongoing vegetation management activities include buckthorn removal and prescribed burns of the planted prairies. Invasive species, especially black locust, are controlled with herbicides and bio-control, which is done in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The oak woods are being managed to contain and control Oak Wilt Disease.

Wildlife Management

The regional park hosts a variety of wildlife, including nesting songbirds, waterfowl and raptors. Nest boxes are provided for wood ducks and eastern bluebirds. Larger mammals include white-tailed deer, coyotes, red fox and raccoons. There are no threatened or endangered species located in the park.

Deer populations are surveyed annually. If needed, the deer herd will be managed with special hunts under the Ramsey County Cooperative Deer Management Plan in partnership with the City of Arden Hills. The Canadian goose population is marginally controlled through lake shoreline management and periodic removal of birds prior to flight. Migratory birds have no natural predators and continue to pose a sanitation problem.

REVIEW BY OTHER COUNCIL DIVISIONS:

Environment & Surface Water Management (Jim Larsen) –No comments.

Environmental Services – Sewers (Roger Janzig) – This is a Ramsey County Park located within the city of Arden Hills. The master plan calls for construction in the southwest recreation area which includes the addition of restrooms west of Lake Johanna. The Metropolitan Disposal System that provides service to this project location has adequate capacity.

Metropolitan Council Transportation (Ann Braden) –No comments.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires that master plans include information on eleven items reviewed in the “analysis section” above. It also requires that sufficient information be included on the estimated cost of the acquisition and development proposed in the master plan. This review concludes that the Tony Schmidt Regional Park Master Plan (Referral No. 20035-1) contains sufficient information to meet the requirements of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and that it is generally consistent with the requirements of the plan.
2. The estimated cost of master plan development is \$2,600,000 in 2006 dollars. The master plan also identifies two inholding parcels for acquisition, with a combined 2006 estimated market value of \$667,300. Therefore, the estimated cost for total implementation of the master plan is \$3,267,300 in 2006 dollars.
3. Approval of this master plan does not commit the Council to any funding at this time. Future development funding based on this master plan would be done through the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Council action is required to approve the CIP and to approve specific grants to Ramsey County.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Metropolitan Council approve the Tony Schmidt Regional Park Master Plan (Referral No. 20035-1).