

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
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DATE: June 24, 2011

TO: Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

FROM: Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks (651-602-1360)

SUBJECT: (2011-xxx) Indian Mounds Regional Park Master Plan Amendment, City of St. Paul
(Referral Number 50010-1)

INTRODUCTION

The City of St. Paul has submitted a master plan amendment for Indian Mounds Regional Park (Referral No. 50010-1) for review by the Metropolitan Council. This is an update to the 1981 master plan. This memorandum analyzes the master plan against the criteria for reviewing regional trail master plans. It recommends approving the master plan because it is consistent with applicable portions of the *Updated 2030 Regional 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*. 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.

TRAIL MASTER PLAN ANALYSIS

1. Boundaries and Acquisition Costs

Indian Mounds Regional Park is located atop the Mississippi River bluffs on the eastern side of downtown St. Paul. It is 111 acres in size and includes the river bluff, steep slopes, rolling hills, woodlands, grasslands and Indian burial mounds which date to the Hopewell Indian era more than 2,000 years ago. Acquisition of the first 17.5 acres occurred in 1892 . Other parcels were acquired over time. Plus additional lands were donated by the State of Minnesota to be used as a municipal forest. These lands were adjacent to the State Willow Brook Fish Hatchery, now known as the DNR Fish Hatchery.

The park is bordered by Mounds Boulevard and Burns Avenue to the north, Highway 61 to the east, Warner Road, Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad property to the south and the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary to the west. A 15.8 acre parcel owned by the MN Dept. of Natural Resources (MN-DNR) as part of the DNR Fish Hatchery is identified as a potential future acquisition if the MN-DNR decides to sell the parcel. It is estimated to cost \$689,000. **Figure 1** illustrates the park’s boundary and the MN-DNR parcel as “Acquisition Property”.

Figure 1: Indian Mounds Regional Park boundary and potential acquisition if MN-DNR chose to dispose of parcel



Stewardship Plan

Since the park has been acquired and developed, there are no stewardship activities for the City of St. Paul to undertake. This section of the plan notes that the City of St. Paul manages the park and works collaboratively with the MN-DNR on natural resource management of the 15.8 acre Fish Hatchery parcel. Fees are collected from reserving picnic shelters in the park.

2. Needs Analysis

The 2010 estimated visits to the park is 162,000. The 2009 visits were 122,000. The Metropolitan Council's Regional Parks and Trails Survey in 2008 found that walking, hiking, dog walking, and relaxing were the top activities in the park. A majority of the park's visitors learn about the Indian Mounds history and to take in the views of the Mississippi River valley from this vantage point. The master plan's development section proposes interpretive signage, trail and view shed improvements, to maintain existing open space for relaxing non-programmed use, and a potential off-leash dog area.

3. Development

The guiding principal for developing the park has been to recognize, celebrate, interpret and seek to preserve the historic, cultural and natural resources in a way that fosters stewardship while providing recreational amenities appropriate for a regional park. The estimated total costs to renovate existing facilities and develop new facilities in the park is \$7,692,000 excluding possible costs for constructing a basketball court which is not eligible for regional park grant funding since it is a local recreation facility.

Table 1 is a list of projects in priority order for the park's development. The location of these projects are shown in **Figures 2 A and 2B**.

Table 1: Proposed development projects for Indian Mounds Regional Park—Master Site Plan

Project Description	Estimated Cost
A. Interpretive signage for all significant cultural and historical areas	\$ 250,000
B. Entrance signage, walls, railings or other monumentation at major entrances to the park	\$ 500,000
C. Renovate deteriorated trails and realign trail between Plum Street and Earl Street to capture views, reduce 90 degree trail intersections and add viewing pull-offs.	\$ 500,000
D. Traffic calming measures at intersections along Mounds Boulevard and Burns Avenue to enhance trail user safety	\$ 500,000
E. Create a paved trail loop that traverses steep slopes north of Warner Road. Rehabilitate existing concrete stairs, add interpretive signage at site of Burlington Hotel and re-establish the historic road to the Willow Brook Fish Hatchery	\$ 200,000
F. Trail connection to Sam Morgan Regional Trail by reconstructing existing bridge over Warner Road in coordination with Ramsey County	\$ 100,000
Subtotal	\$ 2,050,000
See Figure 2A and Figure 2B Master Site Plan for project locations	

Figure 2A: Master Site Plan—West half of Indian Mounds Regional Park

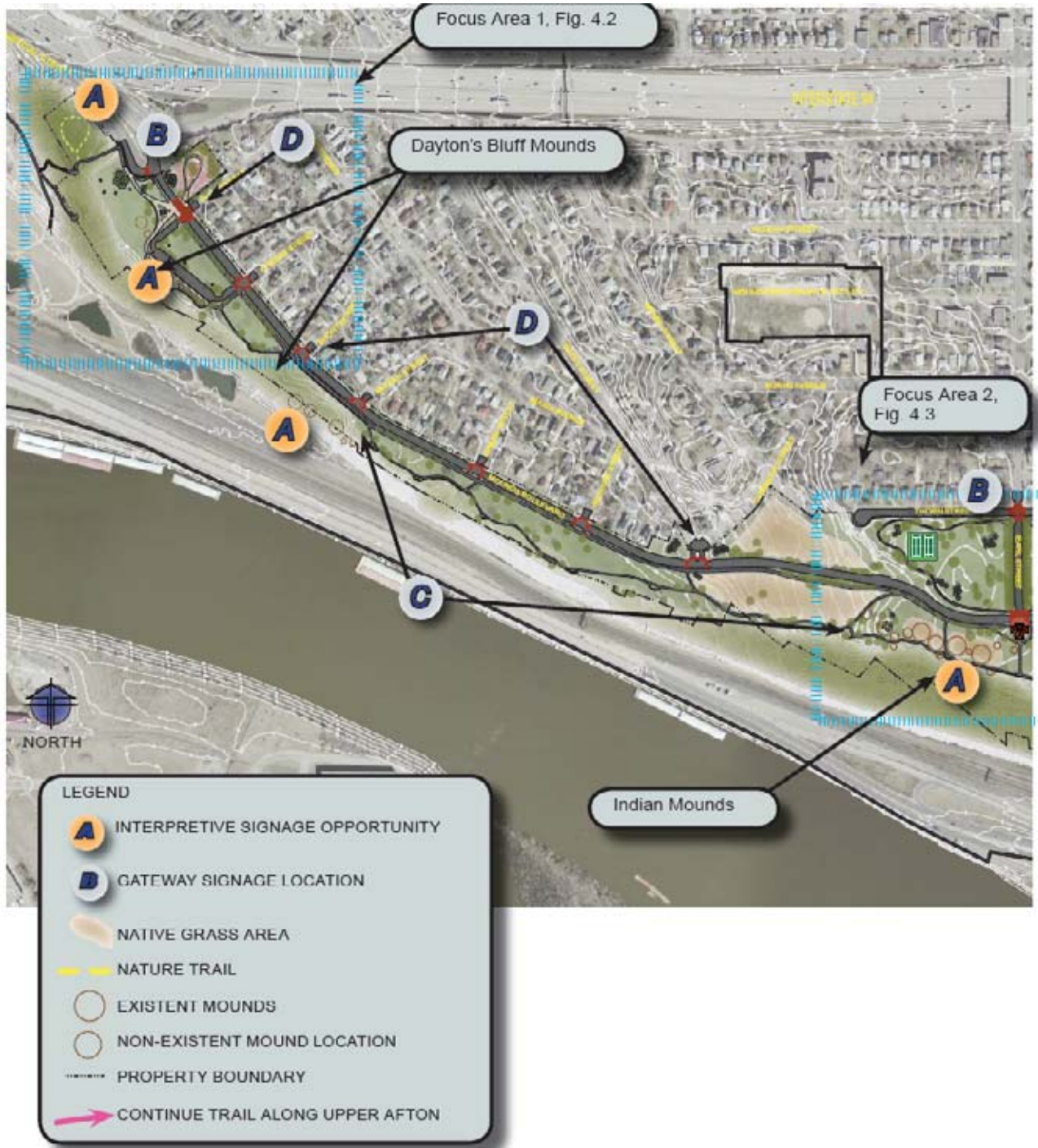


Figure 2B: Master Site Plan—East half of Indian Mounds Regional Park



Table 2 lists projects that are in Focus Area 1 and depicted in **Figure 3**

Table 2: Proposed development projects for Focus Area 1 of Indian Mounds Regional Park

Project Description	Estimated Cost
1a Transform two vacant lots recently acquired by the City into a gateway garden area that may include public art. (Note: Funding for public art could be financed from Arts and Cultural Heritage Account in Land and Legacy Amendment Fund)	\$ 250,000
1b Construct restroom building and attached 1-2 picnic table shelter area, stone seating wall, kiosk and benches	\$ 350,000
1c Potential site for dog park if it is needed. Also includes nature trail, fencing and benches	\$ 35,000
1d Stairway connection to Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary with overlooks along the stairway.	\$ 780,000
Focus Area 1 Subtotal See Figure 3 for project locations	\$1,415,000

Figure 3: Focus Area 1 of Indian Mounds Regional Park



Table 3 lists projects that are in Focus Area 2 and depicted in **Figure 4**

Table 3: Proposed development projects for Focus Area 2 of Indian Mounds Regional Park

Project Description	Estimated Cost
2a Replace existing play structure to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines	\$ 500,000
2b Renovate existing pavilion to include interpretive sign panels on cultural, historic, and natural resources of the park and surrounding area. (Note: Funding for signage panels could be financed from Arts and Cultural Heritage Account of Land and Legacy Amendment Fund)	\$ 450,000
2c Install native plant materials on Indian Mounds in consultation with Minnesota Indian Affairs Council	\$ 80,000
2d Construct trail on western side of Earl Street with exercise signage waypoints	\$ 42,000
2e Install pavers or removable bollards/barriers that would allow a section of Earl Street that runs through the park to be converted into event space	\$ 200,000
2f Replace two concrete picnic shelters with a picnic pavilion (80-100 people) including a kitchen and restrooms, plus construct a picnic shelter (30-40 people) along with new picnic tables, grills, trash cans and benches.	\$1,100,000
2g Construct amphitheatre to accommodate 50-70 people	\$ 350,000
2h Construct small splash pad/water play area that can be used in colder months as climbing structure for children or as an interpretive art element	\$ 350,000
2i Convert former wetland to biofiltration area for storm water, plus picnic area amenities, trail and overlooks	\$ 75,000
Focus Area 2 Subtotal See Figure 4 for project locations	\$3,147,000

Figure 4: Focus Area 2 of Indian Mounds Regional Park

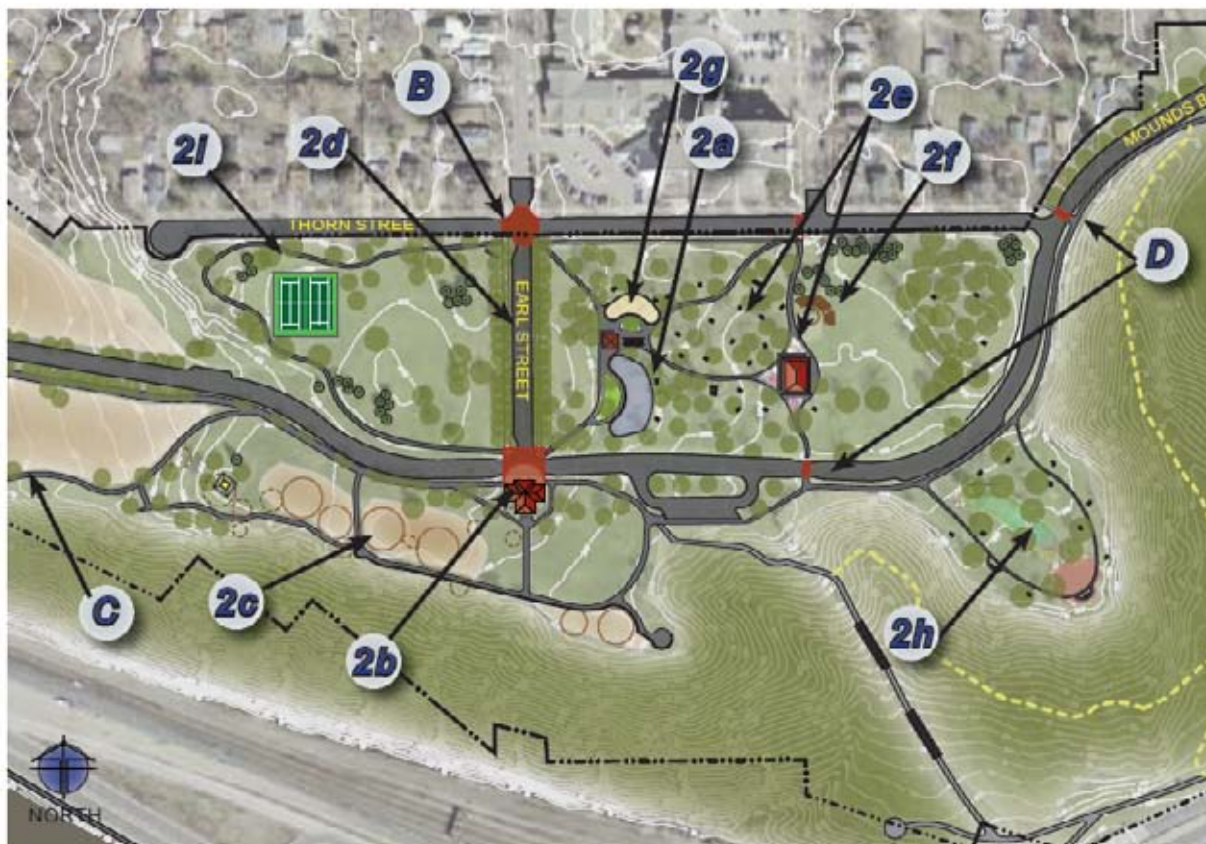


Table 4 lists projects that are in Focus Area 3 and depicted in **Figure 5**

Table 4: Proposed development projects for Focus Area 3 of Indian Mounds Regional Park

Project Description	Estimated Cost
3a Construct trail connection across Burns Avenue to Johnson Parkway, a kiosk, benches, trash receptacle and drinking fountain	\$ 250,000
3b Realign trail at Burns Avenue and Mounds Blvd. to reduce 90 degree trail intersection and take into account loss of roadway through this area. Add access points to Burns Avenue, Clarence Street and Johnson Parkway.	\$ 250,000
3c For nature trails in the park, cut back overgrowth, add way finding signage, close highly erosive trails, and reconstruct remaining trails to reduce erosion, plus add natural resource and/or cultural and historic interpretive signage	\$ 65,000
3d Manage natural resource areas according to native plant communities designated in the Natural Resource Management Plan section of the master plan	\$ 120,000
3e Develop nature trails, add signage, improve existing parking area, and possibly provide access to the Fish Hatchery pond	\$ 350,000
3f Possible location of a 9-hole disc golf course. The design/location will avoid adverse impacts on natural resources.	\$ 45,000
3g If a basketball court currently located the Mounds Maintenance facility is removed, this is a possible relocation site. However, it should be noted that the costs to relocate the basketball court here would not be eligible for regional park grant funding from the Metropolitan Council since this is a local recreation facility.	\$ 75,000
Focus Area 3 Subtotal except basketball court See Figure 5 for project locations	\$1,080,000

Figure 5: Focus Area 3 of Indian Mounds Regional Park



4. Conflicts

The plan calls for the proposed development projects minimize and avoid disturbance to culturally and historically significant sites in the park with no adverse impacts on the Indian Mounds.

The proposed stairway connection to the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary must minimize any adverse affect on the view shed to the bluffs and minimize tree removal and erosion.

The proposed trail connection at the Warner Road Bridge needs to be coordinated with Ramsey County. The connection may be difficult due to the location of the lower bluff line to the north and the feasibility to create an accessible connection to the Sam Morgan Regional Trail on the south side of the bridge.

Future development must also adhere to regulations from the Metropolitan Airports Commission since the park is close to the St. Paul Airport. Any applicable Mississippi River Critical Area regulations must also be adhered to since the park lies within the Mississippi River Critical Area.

5. Public Services

The City of St. Paul provides sewer and water utilities to the park and Excel Energy provides electrical utilities. The sewer and water utilities may need to be expanded to the park's western end for the proposed restroom building. Rehabilitation of some existing utilities may also be required.

6. Operations and Maintenance

The master plan includes the annual estimated costs to operate and maintain the park based on existing and proposed amenities. That estimate includes \$791 for maintaining the existing tennis courts—which are a local recreation amenity. The total costs excluding the tennis court maintenance is \$96,684 per year.

7. Citizen Participation

The master plan was prepared in consultation with a Design Advisory Task Force. The task force included representatives from the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, National Park Service, Friends of Mounds Park, Friends of the Mississippi River, Lower Phalen Creek Project, Cerenity Care Center, and residents of District 4—the neighborhood where the park is located.

A community open house on the plan was conducted in January 2011. Appendix B of the Executive Summary of the plan includes comments from that meeting.

8. Public Awareness

The plan indicates that the Friends of Mounds Park will work with various government agencies and residents to increase awareness of the park. Plus the City of St. Paul will expand its website to advertise special events in the park and work with the Metropolitan Council on its regional park system awareness program.

9. Special Needs

The plan indicates that all park facilities will be developed in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Other guidelines, such as the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' Trail Planning, Design and Development Guidelines will be used in constructing bicycle and pedestrian trails.

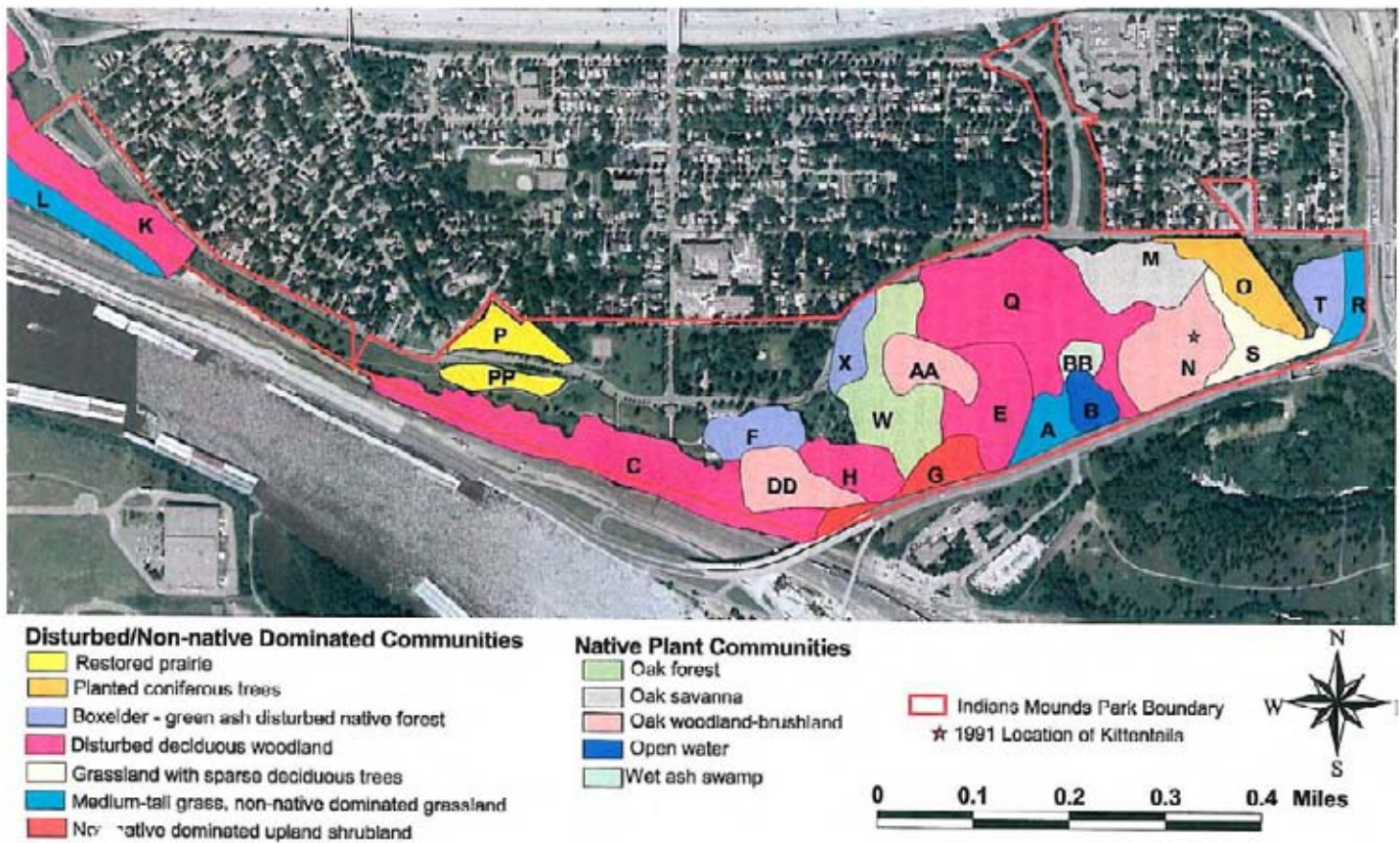
10. Natural Resources

The master plan includes excerpts from “Natural Resource Inventory and Management Plan for Indian Mounds Park” prepared by Great River Greening in 2007. **Figure 6** on the next page illustrates the native and non-native plant communities in the park. The cost to restore degraded plant communities is \$825,000 as depicted in **Table 5**. These costs were also listed in the Section 3 Development of this memorandum. More details are provided here.

Table 5: Natural Resource Management Costs for Indian Mounds Regional Park

<i>Restore Oak Savanna in east end of the site:</i>	<i>\$175,000.00</i>
<i>Goal: Clear shrubs in woodland area and return native savanna plants</i>	
1. <i>Burn oak savanna hilltop (Unit M)</i>	
2. <i>Clear brush on ridge near location of sited Kitten-tails</i>	
3. <i>Control invasives and continue burning</i>	
4. <i>Return native species under cut areas and bare soil</i>	
5. <i>Continue burning and controlling brush</i>	
<i>Forest Restoration:</i>	<i>\$400,000.00</i>
<i>Goal: Control invasive shrub species</i>	
1. <i>Remove invasive shrub species</i>	
2. <i>Return native species under cut areas and bare soil</i>	
3. <i>Plant native trees that will eventually grow into the canopy</i>	
4. <i>Monitor and control invasive species</i>	
<i>Expand Oak Savanna</i>	<i>\$250,000.00</i>
<i>Goal: Restore native Oak Savanna in areas dominated by non-natives</i>	
1. <i>Control invasive grassland species</i>	
2. <i>Remove invasive shrubs and thin trees</i>	
3. <i>Plant native savanna species in cut areas (harvest seed sources from local areas)</i>	
4. <i>Control invasive species and mow newly planted areas</i>	
5. <i>Controlled burns</i>	

Figure 6: Non-Native and Native Plant Communities in Indian Mounds Regional Park



REVIEW BY OTHER COUNCIL DIVISIONS:

Environmental Services (Anna Bessel)

We recently received the Indian Mounds Regional Park Master Plan, which describes a variety of improvements to the existing park, including the construction of additional trails and facilities. After reviewing the Plan, it was determined that two of the outlined park improvements are located in the vicinity of MCES facilities and therefore may result in an impact to the regional system. The improvements of interest include the proposed loop trail, which is labeled “E” on page 13 of the Plan, and the new restroom/shelter facility, which is labeled “1b” on page 14 of the Plan.

Because the improvements outlined in the Plan are adjacent to or coincide with MCES facilities, plans must be submitted for further review to assess any potential impact to the regional system. Therefore, after preliminary plans for the project are completed, it is requested that one set be forwarded to Scott Dentz of MCES for review and comment.

The plans should include the following improvements: 1) the new paved loop trail located just north of Warner Road; and 2) the restroom/shelter facility at Carver's Cave overlook parking lot. Coordination with MCES should occur to ensure that MCES facilities will not be negatively affected by any construction activities. The plans should be mailed to the following address:

Scott Dentz
3565 Kennebec Drive
Eagan, MN 55122-1058

Pending the submittal of plans to Mr. Dentz, we have no objections or concerns regarding the proposed project.

Environmental Services (Jim Larsen)
No issues.

Metropolitan Council Transportation (Ann Braden)
No issues.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The Indian Mounds Regional Park Master Plan Amendment (Referral No. 50010-1) is consistent with requirements of the *Updated 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.
2. A portion of the estimated acquisition cost of \$689,000 and park development and natural resource management costs of \$7,692,000 are eligible for Metropolitan Council Regional Park Capital Improvement Program (CIP) consideration. Metropolitan Council approval of the master plan amendment does not obligate future funding from the Regional Parks CIP to finance those costs. Plan approval only allows the City of St. Paul to seek funding for projects in the plan through the Regional Parks CIP.
3. Coordination with Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) should occur with their review of preliminary construction plans for the new paved loop trail north of Warner Road and the restroom/shelter facility at Carver's Cave overlook parking lot to ensure that nearby MCES facilities will not be adversely affected.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Indian Mounds Regional Park Master Plan Amendment (Referral No. 50010-1).
2. Request the City of St. Paul to submit plans for the following park improvements to Scott Dentz at MCES for review: 1) the new paved loop trail located just north of Warner Road; and 2) the restroom/shelter facility at Carver's Cave overlook parking lot.

Attachment 1: Indian Mounds Regional Park Master Plan Submittal Letter—City of St. Paul

REV NO. 50010-
REC'D 06.02.11
METROPOLITAN
COUNCIL

DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION



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Mayor Christopher B. Coleman

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June 1, 2011

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

TO: Arne Steffrud
Metropolitan Council – Parks
390 N. Robert St.
Saint Paul, MN 55101

FROM: Kathleen Anglo *KA*
Saint Paul Parks and Recreation
25 W. 4th St., 500 CHA
St. Paul, MN 55102

RE: Indian Mounds Master Plan Amendment

Item

Qty Description

- 4 Paper copies of Indian Mounds Master Plan Amendment
- 1 CD

- For Approval** Approved As Submitted Re-Submit () Copies for Approval
- For Your Use Approved As Noted Submit () Copies for Distribution
- As Requested Returned For Corrections Return () Corrected Prints
- For Review & Comment

Please call if there are any questions, 651-266-6368

Thank you.

Kathleen

Cc: Brian Tourtelotte
Jody Martinez

AA-ADA-EEO Employer