

**C** Community Development Committee  
Meeting date: November 15, 2010

ADVISORY INFORMATION	
Date:	October 26, 2010
Subject:	Adoption of the Updated 2030 Regional Parks and Open Space Policy Plan
District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Ann Beckman, 651-602-1669
Division/Department:	Parks

**Proposed Action:**

That the Metropolitan Council adopt the updated 2030 Regional Parks and Open Space Policy Plan.

**Background:**

By statute, the Metropolitan Council must comprehensively review its parks and open space system plan every 4 years. This update also included system changes proposed in the most recent round of comprehensive plan updates. The Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission provided advice and comments on the updated parks system plan. At the August 16, 2010 Community Development Committee, Council members asked to remove Highland Parks as a proposed study area. The proposed plan includes that change.

**Rationale:**

The adoption of the Updated 2030 Regional Parks and Open Space Policy Plan will meet state requirements, and incorporate comprehensive plan updated park plans into the regional park system plan.

**Funding**

None required.

**Known Support / Opposition**

The Metropolitan Parks and Open Space commission recommended approval of the draft updated plan. Additional positive comments were received through the public hearing process.

## 2030 Draft Regional Parks Policy Plan Update – Public Comment Report

ID	Organization	Name	Comment	Staff Response
1	Dakota County	Thomas Egan, Board of Commissioners Chair	<p>Dakota County Board adopted a resolution of support for the draft 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan, which aligns with the 2008 Dakota County Parks System Plan.</p> <p>The County understands that Scott County will lead the planning process for the regional trail addition through Scott County that includes a short link connecting to the Chub Creek Greenway Regional Trail in Dakota County and will work with property owners, Eureka Township and Dakota County.</p>	Support for the plan is appreciated. No revisions necessary.
2	Tri Area Block Club		<p>The Tri Area Block Club supports the extension of the Trout Brook Regional Trail from Lake McCarron’s County Park to Vadnais Snail Lake Regional Park.</p> <p>The trail extension would allow connections to the Highway 96 Regional Trail where further connections could be made to Rice Creek. This would create a regional trail corridor of significant proportion when factoring in the extension of the trail south through Trillium Nature Preserve to the Sam Morgan Regional Trail and Mississippi River as well as the connections to the Bruce Vento Regional Trail and Nature Sanctuary and to the Union Depot multi-modal hub.</p>	Support for the plan is appreciated. No revisions necessary.
3	Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department	Greg Mack, Director	<p>I have a concern about the restrictive nature of System Protection, Strategy 3 that states “the Council will reimburse implementing agencies for contamination clean-up only when there is no real alternative for the park and trail function.”</p> <p>The absolute prohibition on funding does not acknowledge that in some situations, regional park land that was contaminated by a previous party may be acquired by implementing agencies at little or no cost. The land cost, coupled with the remediation costs may be substantially less than the market value of the land. Rather than an absolute prohibition of funding, the Metropolitan Council’s funding participation for acquisition (including land and remediation costs) should be limited to the market value of the land.</p> <p>Ramsey County is working with local and federal government to have 110 acres within the Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant</p>	Staff recommends that this issue be evaluated in more depth as part of the department’s 2011 work plan.

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			<p>(TCAAP) property to be transferred to the County at no cost. There are areas of soil contamination that will require remediation, but it appears that the costs associated with the remediation will be less than the land value. The TCAAP situation could occur at other brownfield sites in the metropolitan area. Funding of the soil contamination cleanup expenses up front may be a cost effective approach to secure essential park lands and trail connections.</p> <p>I encourage the Metropolitan Council to consider modifying this strategy to acknowledge the potential benefit of converting brownfields into regional park and trail areas provided that Metropolitan Council financial participation (acquisition and remediation costs) is limited to the market value of the land.</p>	
4	Friends of the Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County	Kathy Stack, President	<p>Friends of the Parks is concerned about System Protection, Strategy 3 that states “the Council will reimburse implementing agencies for contamination clean-up only when there is no real alternative for the park and trail function.” This is a concern because of the opportunity for land in the TCAAP to be added to the regional parks system in Ramsey County. The County has been negotiating with the federal government to have 110 acres transferred for the Rice Creek South Regional Trail. This transfer will take place through the National Park Service’s Federal Lands to Parks Program at no cost to the County.</p> <p>The entire TCAAP is a Superfund site. There are areas of soil contamination within the boundaries of the property being acquired by the County which will require remediation. Based on current information, it would appear that remediation would be substantially less in cost than the land value. There are other Superfund sites around the metro area that could possibly be added to the regional parks system in the future. Costs of remediating these sites for regional parks and trails might be the most appropriate reuse of these lands.</p> <p>We ask that you reconsider revising Strategy 3 to allow for reimbursement when these opportunities are present.</p>	Staff recommends that this issue be evaluated in more depth as part of the department’s 2011 work plan.
5	Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC)	Ron Biss, TAAC Chair	<p>The TAAC has proposed revisions to language in the Regional Parks Policy Plan related to accessibility requirements for regional park and trail master plans as follows:</p> <p><b>Pages 27 and 29</b> <u>Replace the current Special needs section with the</u></p>	Staff recommends that the regional park and trail master plan requirements section currently titled “Special needs” be changed to “Accessibility”,

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			<p><u>following language:</u></p> <p>Inclusiveness Mandate: A plan that is cognizant of the wide range of populations that are served in a given community. With 20% of the general population identified as disabled and a growing senior population, it is critical that plans address accessibility as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, affordability, integration and all other measures designed to ensure that the facility can be used by all members of the public.</p>	<p>with the follow language:</p> <p>A plan that recognizes the wide range of populations to be served by the facility and addresses: accessible design as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, affordability, and other measures designed to ensure that the facility is inclusively accessible to all members of the public.</p>
6	City of St. Paul Department of Parks and Recreation	Michael Hahm, Director	<p>With regard to the Community Development Committee’s decision to remove Highland Park as a proposed regional park study area from the draft Regional Parks Policy Plan, the City hopes that the CDC and the Metropolitan Council keep an open mind regarding the conclusion that there is no regional park need in the Highland Park area.</p> <p>If the Ford Plant were to close, the site would likely be redeveloped and the location and density of housing would have a significant impact on the surrounding park use and needs. Please keep in mind that the regional parks in the area (Hidden Falls/Crosby Farm) are floodplain parks that are located below the bluff top elevations of adjacent neighborhoods, are not available for use during flood events, can be difficult to access due to steep terrain and have a solely natural environmental focus with very limited capacity for infrastructure. Highland Park is easily accessed and offers many regional recreational opportunities that can never be realized in the floodplain, such as disk golf, pool and picnic facilities and large play area features.</p> <p>The City asks that future Regional Parks Policy Plans accommodate adjustments to local regional park services as needs and opportunities evolve including any potential boundary adjustments to existing regional parks.</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>St. Paul is welcome to propose that the Council reevaluate Highland Park for regional status during future updates to the Regional Parks Policy Plan.</p>