



PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
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## Planning Department Memorandum

**To:** City Council

**From:** Dave Timmer, Planner

**Meeting Date:** December 21, 2020

**Re:** Park and Trail Master Plan

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Take note of the attached Executive Summary for the November 12 Planning Commission meeting which describes the significant updates to the Park and Trail Master Plan.

At the November 12 meeting, the Planning Commission recommended approval of the proposed update with conditions/suggestions for additional consideration prior to the City Council hearing. These conditions, and a description of the considerations since given, are addressed in this Executive Summary.

- 1. The Park and Trail Plan include potential ways to garner community involvement in the development of parks and trails. This section could also include suggestions on involvement by local students and churches as these groups have assisted with restoration work and planting in the past.**

In subsequent consideration of this condition, I don't believe it is necessary to add another section on this topic. The Plan identifies the importance of leveraging community volunteers and fundraising as a significant component of achieving the vision that is being put forward. The Plan mentions and discusses community involvement in several locations (Page 38 - 4.2.7, Page 38 - 4.3, Page 40 - 4.4.2, and Page 46 - Goal #4.4). It also acknowledges that the City already does rely on this support and some of the Park system's greatest achievements are a result of community fundraising and volunteer support.

Of course, the City can always improve on this and the Plan also recognizes this. On page 38, it states that the City could be more proactive with planning for and actively seeking out volunteer and community fundraising opportunities. This will require additional staff time specifically allocated to doing this. The effect of that would likely be immediate and substantial. But currently, as we know, Park staff are pretty well maxed out.

Council should note the importance of maximizing community volunteer and fundraising efforts. Future staff decisions should bear this in mind.

- 2. The City develop Benson Park to utilize all 40-acres of that city-owned property.**

The Park Plan lists Benson Park as 20-40 acres noting that the final size is yet to be determined. Because there are important decisions to be made regarding the future development of Benson Park and the



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overall Pepin Creek Subarea, I don't believe it is the place of this proposed update to determine the final size of Benson Park.

Future park planning and the progressive development of the Pepin Creek Subarea should take note of the Planning Commission's unanimous desire to see the entire 40 acres be developed as park land.

**3. The Plan prioritize or make a plan for protecting and maintaining the existing trails that we have within the City. Specifically, in relation to the management of shoreline areas of Fishtrap Creek where the waterway threatens the condition or safety of existing parks or trails.**

Section 2.2.2 (Page 17) was added to address this recommendation. Similar to volunteer coordination, this is really a question of prioritizing and allocating City resources to this task. Because City resources are finite, proactive natural areas management has not been at the top of the priority list. That being said, even in recent years, we are seeing more property owners request assistance with managing an eroding stream bank or dealing with the dying alders in their backyards. With those public demands, the City has been more involved (ex. Neymeyer property) in supporting their efforts but, these tend to be reactive responses rather than a proactive natural area management program.

As the City continues to grow, as pressure increases on these areas, and residents continue to ask for this type of public service (as is being requested by the Planning Commission), proactive natural resource management should be further prioritized.

**4. Parks and trails are an even higher priority than they have been in the past as residential lots are now smaller and provide less outdoor play space. Definitely. Noted.**