



Addenda
Minnetonka Park Board
Meeting of Wednesday, October 6, 2021

ITEM 7A – POST Plan draft Mission Statement and Guiding Principles

- Attached is feedback from the Friends of Minnetonka Parks received after the packet was distributed.



Friends of Minnetonka Parks Response to Draft POST Plan Mission and Guiding Principles

October 4, 2021

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our feedback on the draft POST Plan Mission and Guiding Principles and we support the city's work on this important project and resulting plan. We have discussed the draft plan as a board of directors and offer our suggestions for clarification and strengthening it. Our suggestions fall into two categories; overall observations and specific suggestions.

Overall Observations.

1. The document includes many comments that came through in the city's outreach concerning a heightened interest in and need for funding the restoration of the important natural amenities in our city and the need for more nature-based activity options for park users. We think these considerations could be clarified and strengthened throughout the document.
2. Critical terms like *balance* and *active* and *passive* recreation are used but need further clarification and definition. The word *balance* is used to describe the relationship between more active, equipment-based, sporting activities like tennis or soccer and more passive activities such as walking, hiking, bird watching and nature-based education. We believe that the term *balance* is used without describing what is meant, how it will be applied in decision making and how it will be measured. *Balance* needs to be defined. Budgeting and critical resource allocation for the different types of activities and amenities should be measured which could help define what is meant in the city's priorities and initiatives. The modifying term *equitable* can be placed in front of *balance* (*equitable balance*) to show more clearly what is meant. The terms *active* and *passive* need to be better defined as well. There seems to be confusion around these terms in the community including those that serve on elected boards and commissions. By *passive* we mean nature-centered activities that have a low ecological impact on natural amenities (enjoying the beauty and solitude of nature itself, educating others on its benefits and researching its mysteries) which emphasize nature itself as the key, central element of the activity. By *active* we mean activities where nature is a secondary or ancillary component of the activity, the activity requires sporting equipment and, in some cases, a specific facility, and the central focus is not directly related to nature itself. For example, a tennis court in a beautiful setting is enjoyed by tennis players but the focus of the activity is the game of tennis itself and the game requires equipment (rackets and balls) and built infrastructure (tennis court). The experiencing of nature is secondary. Both active and passive activities have their place in our city. Having a clearer definition can help us better determine what the current balance of activities is, which are best suited to what areas in our city and how an equitable budget is developed.
3. The idea of restoration and maintenance of parks, trails and open spaces is mentioned. We would like to see a stronger recognition of the health and well-being of the key natural amenities within the city and the biodiversity within the areas as a priority for the city and how they are important centrally to defining our community's character, priorities and health. Describing and cataloguing what these key, natural amenities are and where they are could help focus restoration efforts and our programming priorities.
4. The Natural Resources Plan is referenced but is not included. The city has promised that the two documents would dovetail together. With the NRMP absent it is difficult to fully review and provide feedback on the POST Plan.



Specific Suggestions.

In the side by side comparison below we include in the left column the draft POST Plan Mission and Guiding Principles followed by our comments in blue. In the right column we present our proposed changes in red added to the draft.

Draft POST Plan Mission and FoMP's Comments	Draft POST Plan Mission Plus FoMP's Suggested Changes
<p>The mission of the Minnetonka Parks, Open Space and Trail System Plan is to provide a welcoming, comprehensive, and balanced system of high quality parks, natural areas, and trails, shaping the character of the community and creating a desirable place to live, work, and recreate. The park system shall enhance the quality of life for all residents, workers, and visitors of Minnetonka by making parks accessible, providing recreation-oriented activities and programs, and advancing environmental sustainability.</p> <p>FoMP's Comments: The mission slants the balance toward active recreational activities without equal attention to the importance of nature and nature-based experiences, which were a significant part of the data and conclusions from the POST survey. It should emphasize more significantly the importance of the natural amenities of our parks, open spaces and trails and the importance of experiencing nature to human well-being and the quality of life. Using the general term <i>recreation</i>, that most people think of as active recreation such as soft ball and tennis, is too vague. It needs to be spelled out. Climate change is not mentioned which is a strong driver of the need for sustainability.</p>	<p>The mission of the Minnetonka Parks, Open Space and Trail System Plan is to provide a welcoming, comprehensive, and balanced system of high quality parks, natural areas, and trails, shaping the character of the community and creating a desirable place to live, work, and recreate. The park system shall enhance the quality of life for all residents, workers, and visitors of Minnetonka by making parks accessible, providing recreation-oriented activities and programs, preserving, restoring and enhancing our unique natural amenities and providing robust nature based activities and programs, and advancing environmental resiliency in the face of climate change.</p>

Draft Guiding Principles and FoMP's Comments	Draft Guiding Principles Plus FoMP's Suggested Changes
<p>1. PRESERVE AND PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES BY SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AND CONSERVATION AND BUILDING LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PARK SYSTEM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote environmental resilience throughout the park system to address the effects of climate change. • Engage and support volunteers to expand capabilities and environmental stewardship. • Balance the preservation of Minnetonka's natural resources with recreational opportunities that build stewardship for users to preserve, restore, and educate. • Foster environmental, social, and economic sustainability that protects Minnetonka's water and natural resources. • Support and uphold the goals, practices, and policies of the City of Minnetonka's Natural Resources Master Plan. <p>FoMP's Comments: Replace protect with restore as protection to some people means limiting access to our parks. Resilience is a more dynamic term than sustainability. Funding and biodiversity are missing from the statements. Using the term balance is vague and confusing. The current balance in dollars spent, programs offered and staff perspective is heavily skewed toward active recreational activities. It is balanced but inappropriately so. A priority should be distinguishing high and lower quality areas and using them more judiciously. There should be no net loss of high valued areas. In addition, providing on-going research should be a part of our principles so that we can demonstrate that preservation and restoration efforts are successful. The NRMP is mentioned but has not been shared with the public.</p>	<p>1. PRESERVE AND RESTORE NATURAL RESOURCES BY FUNDING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP, SUPPORTING CONSERVATION AND BUILDING LONG-TERM RESILIENCY AND BIODIVERSITY OF THE PARK SYSTEM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve environmental resilience throughout the park system to address and help mitigate the effects of climate change. • Engage and support volunteers to expand capabilities and environmental stewardship by building a robust and collaborative volunteer program. • Build an equitable share of resources and a balance between the preservation of Minnetonka's natural resources with recreational opportunities resulting in no net loss of the natural resources in our parks, prioritizing recreation in developed areas of parks or low quality natural areas that allows for opportunities for users to preserve, restore, and educate. • Foster environmental, social, and economic resiliency that restores Minnetonka's water and natural resources. • Support and fund the goals and recommendations of the City of Minnetonka's Natural Resources Master Plan. <p>Preservation, restoration and education should be guided by science and results should be measured to ensure that the efforts have been worthwhile and cost effective.</p>

2. CONNECT USERS TO PARKS AND PROGRAMS

- Service youth and adult athletics by providing high quality facilities strategically located throughout the city.
- Expand opportunities for social gathering through park facilities and programming.
- Improve accessibility to park facilities and programs by reducing physical and financial barriers.
- Link the community together through quality parks, trails, recreation facilities and programs.
- Promote and advertise park programs and events within neighborhoods and diverse communities.
- Ensure parks and open spaces are safe, accessible, bike and pedestrian friendly for both active and passive recreation.
- Provide safe connections to parks, open spaces, and trails.
- Increase connectivity to neighboring communities of Minnetonka.

FoMP's Comments: Active and passive recreation needs to be clearly defined somewhere in the plan. Activities based in nature are a critical connection. Provide specific examples for each category. Biking to school, work, etc. should be emphasized as they were in the Imagine Minnetonka study.

2. CONNECT USERS TO PARKS AND PROGRAMS

- Service youth and adult athletics by providing high quality facilities strategically located throughout the city **to encourage wellness, community building and enjoying activities and programs based in nature.**
- Expand opportunities for social gathering through park facilities and programming.
- Improve accessibility to park facilities and programs by reducing physical and financial barriers.
- Link the community together through quality parks, trails, recreation facilities and programs.
- Promote and advertise park programs and events within neighborhoods and diverse communities.
- Ensure parks and open spaces are safe, accessible, bike and pedestrian friendly for both active and passive recreation.
- Provide safe connections to parks, open spaces, and trails.
- Increase connectivity to neighboring communities of Minnetonka **including biking to school, work, markets, and so forth. Park connections should include both active and more passive (non-invasive and nature based) opportunities for connection such as walking, observing, educating and researching nature.**

3. PROMOTE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING FOR ALL PARK USERS

- Support mental health and well-being by providing a diversity of quality facilities and parks, open spaces, and trails to support life-long activity and meet the social needs of the community.
- Support healthy living by providing a well-connected pedestrian and bicycling network throughout the community.
- Offer facilities, programming, and education to support healthy lifestyle choices.
- Support the desire and ability to stay healthy, active, and engaged in the community.

FoMP's Comments: We believe that an important aspect of wellbeing is active learning in high quality nature spaces in our parks, trails and open spaces.

3. PROMOTE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING FOR ALL PARK USERS

- Support mental health and well-being by providing a diversity of quality facilities and parks, open spaces, **high quality natural areas**, and trails to support life-long activity and **learning that** meet the social needs of the community.
- Support healthy living by providing a well-connected pedestrian and bicycling network throughout the community.
- Offer facilities, programming, **high quality natural areas** and education to support healthy lifestyle choices.
- Support the desire and ability to stay healthy, active, and engaged in the community.

4. MAKE THE PARK SYSTEM ACCESSIBLE TO ALL PARK USERS

- Ensure adequate distribution of parks, facilities, and open spaces throughout the community.
- Prioritize equity throughout the parks, open space and trail system to support all users, celebrate diversity, and embrace inclusiveness.
- Expand community engagement in future park planning to traditionally underrepresented groups including seniors, youth, BIPOC, and people with disabilities to ensure the park system will be an asset for the whole community.
- Create a multi-generational park system that builds community, attracts young families, and supports aging in place.
- Prioritize and address accessibility issues throughout the park system to minimize physical, financial, and social barriers.

FoMP's Comments: Different groups in our communities seek different park, open space and trail options based on their interest, health, etc. Thus a variety of park and open space options need to be identified, maintained and restored. Supporting equity is important but people must feel welcomed and a part of the community.

4. MAKE THE PARK SYSTEM ACCESSIBLE TO ALL PARK USERS

- Ensure adequate distribution of parks, facilities, and open spaces throughout the community.
- Prioritize equity throughout the parks, open space and trail system to support all users, celebrate diversity, and embrace inclusiveness, so that all feel welcomed and a part of the community.
- Ensure that community parks, multi-use park complexes and nature preserves are clearly identified, maintained and promoted to **guarantee** that our parks welcome all residents and visitors, and **visitors clearly understand the purpose and use of each of these types of amenities.**
- Expand community engagement in future park planning to traditionally underrepresented groups including seniors, youth, BIPOC, and people with disabilities to ensure the park system will be an asset for the whole community.
- Create a multi-generational park system that builds community, attracts young families, and supports aging in place.
- Prioritize and address accessibility issues throughout the park system to minimize physical, financial, and social barriers.

5. MEET THE RANGE OF RECREATIONAL NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL PARK USERS

- Provide a variety of new or improved active and passive parks and programs that are accessible to all park users.
- Create parks with amenities and programming for all seasons.
- Meet increasing demand for informal and passive recreation opportunities.
- Maintain park system quality, condition, and safety.
- Strengthen collaboration with neighborhoods, associations, agencies, schools, and volunteers.
- Explore opportunities for partnerships for funding and maintaining park, open space, and trail facilities, programs, and events.
- Maintain flexibility to re-purpose parks facilities to address changing trends and park user needs.

FoMP's Comments: We believe that many residents do not fully understand the difference between informal and passive recreation. To build on this idea we recommend the following addition. We also believe that excellence and innovation in park, open space and trail actions requires leadership in one or more areas. We suggest adding nature based activities phrase to help readers distinguish between active and passive.

5. MEET THE RANGE OF RECREATIONAL NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL PARK USERS

- Provide a variety of new or improved active and passive parks and programs that are accessible to all park users.
- Create parks with amenities and programming for all seasons.
- Meet increasing demand for informal and passive (nature based) recreation and learning opportunities.
- Adequately fund and maintain park system quality, condition, and safety.
- Strengthen collaboration with neighborhoods, associations, agencies, schools, nonprofits, and volunteers.
- Explore opportunities for partnerships to help fund and restore park, open space, and trail, and high quality natural areas, in addition to maintaining facilities, programs, and events.
- Maintain flexibility to re-purpose park physical facilities to address changing trends and park user needs.
- Create innovative approaches to parks, open spaces and trails that demonstrate how to provide both active and nature based activities while ensuring that nature spaces are enhanced not compromised in the process.