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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MASTER PLAN



FRAMEWORK

The intent of this master plan is to carry forward the original vision to grow and support Crow-Hassan Park Reserve's prairie landscape and habitat developed over 40 years ago, while integrating the current needs and interests of individuals, community groups and agency partners. Crow-Hassan is one of two park reserves that has been designated 'natural,' the most primitive category of parks with a primary focus on protecting beyond the required 80 percent and restoring large areas of significant and unique natural resources. To ensure that the master planning work was grounded in this intent and clearly communicates this context in outreach and engagement, three guiding principles were developed at the start of this master planning process and carried through all of the engagement activities and subsequent master planning efforts:

Guiding Principles

- Preserve the unique natural resources
- Celebrate the Crow River
- Introduce people to nature and outdoor recreation

ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement was focused in the initial phases of the project - visioning and early concept development. The park's rural location and diffused targeted user groups presented unique challenges for comprehensive community engagement. To reduce potential barriers of engagement participation and reach a wide range of potential participants within the project timeline, various engagement strategies were utilized to garner balanced feedback. These

included online tools, planned listening sessions and intercept interviews at park events. Personalized direct contact outreach and digital tools played particularly valuable roles in reaching individuals and municipal stakeholders from the surrounding rural communities.

The engagement process involved the general public, current park users, local communities, underrepresented populations, local clubs, advocacy groups and Park District volunteers. Eight themes emerged and were incorporated into the design recommendations for concept development:

Engagement Themes

- Protect the ecological features
- Maintain the rustic quality
- Reduce user conflicts
- Improve accessibility for families and those with disabilities
- Increase ecological educational opportunities
- Improve wayfinding
- Expand programming for children and families
- Diversify camping options

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

Engagement and stakeholder visioning supported the continued ecological focus of the park while thoughtfully integrating light-touch education opportunities, expanded accessibility, and improved wayfinding. This master plan identifies ways to improve park user supports and infrastructure that highlight the unique ecological park features while minimizing overall park development.

Park-Wide Development Concepts

A variety of park elements that create an intentional visitor experience and sense of belonging are proposed, including Crow River overlooks, gathering spaces, ecological touch-points, expanded camping options, curated trail loops, accessibility improvements and wayfinding suite. Park boundary expansion, to accommodate future urban expansion and regional recreational demand, has also explored and proposed.

Site Specific Development Concepts

Proposed park features have been centralized around six areas: Crow River Regional Trail, main trailhead, Riverbend, dog-off leash area, Bluestem and District nursery.

This plan establishes the Crow River Regional Trail route through the park that is respectful of exiting natural resources and park user groups. In conjunction with the regional trail, the main trailhead area has been enhanced to emphasize the park's 'front door.'

Modifications to the main trailhead include separate parking lots for general-use and equestrian users, picnic shelter, wayfinding signage, restrooms, seating, equestrian camping and gathering spaces.

The Riverbend area has been enhanced to include a small parking lot for northern access, relocated non-motorized boat launch, ADA improvements and enhanced camping options, including individual, reservable sites.

The popular dog off-leash area will be maintained in its current arrangement but includes provisions for parking lot lighting, erosion control measures along the Crow River and fencing near the future regional trail.

The Bluestem area also includes ADA improvements and individual, reservable sites. The Bluestem barn is recommended for removal.

The nursery will continue to lead by example in areas of energy and water consumption reduction, implementing natural resources techniques and technology and adapting its practices to address climate change.

PLAN SUPPORTS & IMPLEMENTATION

The rustic quality, minimal development and light-touch approach limits need for significant expansion of current park operations. Increased educational programming is planned with staff from Eastman and The Landing, in addition to expanded self-guided programming.

Existing Annual Operating Costs (2018)

\$385,500 (basic facilities, maintenance, natural resources)

Additional Proposed Annual Operating Costs

\$158,900 (maintenance)*

Capital Improvements

\$2.795 million*

(park-wide & site specific development concepts)

Park Boundary Acquisition

~\$2.84 million*

*2019 dollars