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Jill Sicheneder

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Bob Vande Kamp
Ben Montzka
Thomas Delaney III
Mike Robinson
Bob Gustafson

Comprehensive Park and Trails Plan Task Force

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County Administrator
Jim Thoreen

Parks Department Staff
Laird Mork, Director
Wendy Kowalke

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

Throughout the history of parks in this country, people have expressed concern about the need, cost, benefit, amount, and location of parks, trails, and open space. Over a century ago, when the City of Minneapolis struggled with the same concerns, W.H.S. Cleveland told the Park Commission the following:

“Look forward for a century...wealth cannot purchase a lost opportunity, or restore natural features of grandeur and beauty which you can preserve if you but say the word...”

W.H.S. Cleveland

“Look forward for a century to the time when the city has a population of a million, and think what will be their wants. They will have wealth enough to purchase all that money can buy, but all that wealth cannot purchase a lost opportunity, or restore natural features of grandeur and beauty, which would then possess priceless value, and which you (the Park Commissioners) can preserve if you but say the word and save them from destruction which certainly awaits them if you fail to utter it.”¹

Today, Minneapolis is known for its outstanding park system. But many of the City’s exceptional parks would have been lost to private development, had it not been for the wisdom and forethought of the Park Commission, government officials, and the residents of Minneapolis.

Now is the time for Chisago County to look forward. Not only is there a need for additional recreation opportunities to meet the demands of the county’s growing population, but there is also a need to identify those special areas of the county that should be preserved for future generations. There is an old adage that says, “You don’t know what you have until it’s gone.” This Comprehensive Parks and Trails Plan will help ensure that the County knows what it has and that it has a plan for preserving, enhancing, and

¹ Dan Armitage, “The Curling Water: A West Bank History”, The Minnesota Daily (September 27, 1973), p. 19

developing parks, trails, and open space so present and future generations may enjoy the beauty of Chisago County.

More specifically, this plan serves several purposes including the following:

1. It continues the process of updating recreation and planning efforts as the county grows and matures.
2. It provides background information, policies, rationale, and planning guides for those who plan and make decisions regarding recreation and open space affecting the county.
3. It charts a course for future acquisition and development of recreation and open space.
4. It clarifies the role of the County in providing recreation and open space as it relates to other recreation providers at the federal, state, local, and private levels.
5. It communicates the County's vision for parks with residents, property owners, other recreation and open space providers, and other units of government.

USE OF THE PLAN

Several parties will find this plan useful:

1. County staff and elected officials will use the plan to assist them with a variety of tasks including acquisition, use, and maintenance of County parks, trails, and open space.
2. Other governments (federal, state, surrounding counties, cities and towns) will refer to this plan to help determine how their parks, trails, and open space may relate to the County's system.
3. Clubs, associations, and special interest groups can use this plan to determine how they might work with and complement the County's parks, trails, and open space.
4. Developers and private landowners can use this plan to develop an understanding of how existing and future development might relate to the County's parks, trails, and open space.

5. Residents can refer to this plan to learn about parks, trails, and open space in the county.

PLANNING PROCESS

In late 2000, Chisago County authorized the distribution of a Request for Proposals to solicit a professional planning consultant to assist with the development of a Comprehensive Parks and Trails Plan. Following a thorough review process, the County selected the Saint Paul firm of Sanders Wacker Bergly, Inc., Landscape Architects and Planners. The County also organized a planning task force that included representatives from the County Park Board, the Parks and Trails Foundation, and the Bicycle Trails Task Force (a subcommittee of the Parks and Trails Foundation).

This Comprehensive Parks and Trails Plan guides Chisago County in the development of a park system that will meet the needs and desires of its current and future residents. To help accomplish this goal, the plan has the following objectives:

1. Analyze existing park and recreation facilities, natural and cultural resources, and existing and future land use. Determine existing park and recreation limitations and opportunities (see Chapter 2).
2. Research demographic data to determine how existing and future population characteristics may affect Chisago County's park system (see Chapter 3).
3. Analyze recreation trends and standards and assist residents in defining their vision for Chisago County's park system. Determine Chisago County's park and recreation needs (see Chapter 4).
4. Prepare recommendations for the County's parks, trails, and natural areas (see Chapters 5).
5. Prepare implementation recommendations to help the County prioritize and fund recommendations (see Chapter 6).