

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Amy Kuras, Park Planner

DATE: May 10, 2016

SUBJECT: Update to the Parks and Recreation Open Space Plan

The Parks and Recreation Open Space (PROS) Plan, an element of the City of Ann Arbor Master Plan, is updated every 5 years. This planning document guides long range planning, identifies infrastructure needs and recreational trends, and helps staff to better understand how well the park system is meeting the needs and desires of the residents of Ann Arbor. It is a living document that staff and residents reference when advocating for projects, applying for grants, and prioritizing projects.

The plan content is determined by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), and the document must be current to be grant eligible. This is significant for Parks and Recreation, as in the past 6 years alone, the City has been awarded \$900,000 in Trust Fund grants from the MDNR for significant park projects including Universal Access improvements to the Gallup Park Canoe Livery, the development of the skatepark at Veterans Memorial Park, and the Universal Access playground at Gallup Park.

The chapters of the plan include a community description of Ann Arbor, the administrative structure of Parks and Recreation, a summary of budget and funding sources, an inventory of the park system land and amenities as well as recreational providers such as the County and University of Michigan, land use planning and acquisition, including information about the Greenbelt, the planning process for the PROS Plan, including the survey and other public input, over arching goals and objectives for the park system, infrastructure needs assessment, and the action plan, including tools staff use to prioritize projects.

Portions of the plan are simply updated to document the current state of the park system, including capital projects that have been completed, land acquisitions, and current and proposed funding levels . Other chapters, such as the Goals and Objectives section, are being more thoroughly revised to reflect other more recently completed plans, such as the Sustainability Framework Plan and the City's Strategic Plan. The Planning Process chapter documents all of the input staff received from the public, boards and commissions, and other staff from within the City.

Staff met with the Planning Commission in 2010 to solicit input for the plan. During that meeting, several subjects were discussed including downtown parks and open space planning efforts, developer contributions in the downtown area and what they might be applied to, the proposed Allen Creek Greenway, non-motorized path planning, zoning for parks, and a desire for parks to maintain assets already owned, rather than purchase more land, or acquire new amenities.

Several initiatives have been accomplished since the previous PROS Plan, including a report produced by a Park Advisory Commission task force to explore issues surrounding downtown open space; another

report from PAC to provide guidance for determining suitable locations for dog parks, clarification of the developer contribution request, and funding and approval by City Council to develop a master plan for the Allen Creek Greenway.

During the upcoming Planning Commission meeting to discuss the PROS Plan, there are several issues that would be worth exploring:

1. Given current initiatives for developments within the downtown, what role should Parks and Recreation play in the development, management and operations of potential new open space? Where should funding for these initiatives come from?
2. Developments outside of the downtown often contain space to provide recreational amenities on-site. The space may be high quality natural area that the City wishes to preserve, or green space for recreation, such as a playground or athletic field. What ideas/options do you think should be considered for these spaces in terms of ownership, development of site amenities, and maintenance?
3. The Allen Creek Master Planning effort is underway. Do you have opinions about ownership, funding, management and operation of a future greenway?