

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT**

**For Planning Commission Meeting of November 8, 2017**

**SUBJECT: City of Ann Arbor Master Plan Amendment: The Treeline Allen Creek Urban Trail Master Plan**

**PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION**

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby adopts The Treeline Allen Creek Urban Trail Plan Master Plan (2017) as an element of the City of Ann Arbor Master Plan.

**PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION**

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the City Council adopt The Treeline Allen Creek Urban Trail Master Plan as an element of the City of Ann Arbor Master Plan.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that The Treeline Allen Creek Urban Trail Master Plan, be **adopted** as an element of the City of Ann Arbor Master Plan. Staff also recommends that the draft of The Treeline Allen Creek Urban Trail Master Plan be forwarded to City Council for **approval**.

**STAFF REPORT**

Background – In 2011, City Council passed a Resolution in Support of the Allen Creek Greenway (The Treeline), recognizing its ability to address existing inadequacies in non-motorized connections within the community and specifically to the Huron River. In the Spring of 2015, City Council passed a resolution to adopt the FY2016 budget which included funding for a master plan for The Treeline. The project was identified as a City Council priority in 2016. The objective was to develop a master plan that describes a feasible approach for the future development of The Treeline urban trail that flows generally north–south along the western and southwestern edge of downtown and connects to the Huron River.

Public Engagement – The planning process for the Treeline Allen Creek Urban Trail Master Plan included the creation of a Project Management Team (PMT), Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). The PMT consisted of representatives of the City’s Public Services and Community Services teams, which provided direction on the master plan process. The TAC consisted of representatives from all City service areas; Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission;

Washtenaw County Water Resources Commission; and the Washtenaw Area Transportation Study, which provided input on technical and broader elements of the plan. The CAC included individuals who represented a broad spectrum of interests and provided feedback on the development of the plan including the scope, content, direction, and public engagement. Six CAC meetings were held between May 4, 2016 and September 7, 2017.

Members of the public were able to access all CAC information, documents, and correspondence through a project web page. The public was welcome to attend all CAC meetings, which followed the guidelines of the Open Meeting Act.

Stakeholders were also engaged to gather more information and ideas. Stakeholders included business organizations and residential and commercial neighborhood associations; boards; commissions; agencies; and public/non-profit groups; residential neighborhood associations; environmental organizations; Michigan Department of Transportation (road and rail offices); the Treeline Conservancy; University of Michigan; WATCO Companies (holding company of the Ann Arbor Railroad); and private property owners along the proposed route.

Three community-wide meetings were held to provide feedback through the course of the planning effort. Members of the public will also have an opportunity to provide comment at the Planning Commission and City Council public hearings.

Major Issues – A variety of issues were raised during the planning process including among others: tight physical constraints; large grade/elevation changes; difficult street crossings; property ownership; safety; and cost and funding of capital improvements in a complex urban environment. Additionally, WATCO Companies indicated that some options that were mostly within the rail corridor would be difficult due to concerns about safety and liability.

Process – The City hired Smith Group JJR to assist with the development of the master plan. The planning process included four phases:

- 1) Project Initiation – Issues & Opportunities: gathering and analyzing data; reviewing prior studies; engaging the public; and identifying opportunities.
- 2) Route Options & Evaluation: developing potential route alignment variations. Evaluation included greenway and user experience; land use and economics; hydrology and infrastructure; mobility and transportation; cost and implementation; and management and operations.
- 3) Plan Recommendations & Strategies: considering the results and feedback on the route alternatives and their evaluation, the project team developed a framework plan that identified a preferred trail alignment along with near-term improvements and project opportunities.
- 4) Master Plan Documentation & Actions: conceptual illustrations were developed, implementation phases were suggested, and the draft plan was presented to boards and commissions for their input.

Public Notice – City Council authorized distribution of the draft plan on September 5, 2017, consistent with State requirements of Public Act 285, which requested comments from adjoining jurisdictions and stakeholders. The 42-day comment period ended in

October 2017. Now that the comment period is over, the City Planning Commission is required to hold a public hearing. The Planning Commission may then adopt the plan as an element of the City of Ann Arbor Master Plan. Lastly, the plan element will be reviewed by City Council for adoption as part of the City of Ann Arbor Master Plan.

Resolutions of Support – A number of Boards and Commissions have adopted resolutions of support for The Treeline Allen Creek Urban Trail Master Plan including:

- Transportation Commission on September 13, 2017
- Environmental Commission on September 28, 2017
- Parks Advisory Commission on October 17, 2017
- Treeline Conservancy Board on October 24, 2017
- Downtown Development Authority Board on November 1, 2017

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MG 11/2/17