

Meeting Date: 08/15/24 Business Item: CURRENT BUSINESS

Item Number: **5D**

Division: Planning, Design & Technology

Originating Source: Jonathan Vlaming, Associate Superintendent

Agenda Item: Baker Park Acquisition Opportunity in Medina

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Superintendent's Recommendation:

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE SUPERINTENDENT TO:

- CONDUCT AN APPRAISAL AND NEGOTIATE A PURCHASE AGREEMENT FOR PARCELS 0711823120001 AND 0711823110002 IN MEDINA, HENNEPIN COUNTY, AND
- UPDATE THE DRAFT BAKER PARK RESERVE LONG-RANGE PLAN TO INCLUDE LANGUAGE INDICATING THREE RIVERS INTEREST IN ACQUIRING ADJACENT OR NEARBY LAND FROM WILLING SELLERS FOR NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION AND/OR ADDITIONAL RECREATION DEVELOPMENT AND TO MODIFY THE PARK LONG-RANGE PLAN BOUNDARY TO INCLUDE PARCELS 0711823120001 AND 0711823110002 IN MEDINA MN, HENNEPIN COUNTY SUBJECT TO SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION OF A PURCHASE AGREEMENT.

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Prepared By: Stephen Shurson, Landscape Architect, and Kelly Grissman, Director of Planning.

Background:

**Acquisition Opportunity**

A property owner near Baker Park Reserve is interested in selling their farmstead to Three Rivers **(See Attached: Location Map and Aerial Map)**. The property is located at the southeast quadrant of County Roads 19 and 11 in the City of Medina, just south of the City of Loretto, and about ¼ mile north of Baker Park Reserve. The property is 'connected' to Baker Park Reserve via the Lake Independence Regional Trail along County Road 19 as there is a cemetery, road, and privately held parcel between the park and subject property. If the private parcel in between this property and Baker Park becomes available for sale, and its acquisition is realized, the combined properties would be contiguous with current park boundary.

The property includes two parcels totaling 64.1 acres, a barn, and two large outbuildings, and is adjacent or nearby to the Lake Independence Regional Trail, Lake Sarah Regional Trail Search Corridor and the planned Diamond Lake Regional Trail.

The owners of the property approached Three Rivers with an interest to sell their family farm at a discounted price (2024 market value is \$1,472,000) to Three Rivers in order to preserve the land's natural resources and possibly become parkland. The property consists of 12.56 acres of a mature maple-basswood forest, which is included in the Hennepin County Ecologically Significant Areas, 4.07 acres of wetland with the remaining 47.47 acres currently agricultural land.

Acquisition of this property would provide the following opportunities for Baker Park Reserve and the regional trail system:

- Add recreational amenities which were requested during the long-range planning process (i.e. such as smaller trail loop options) but not currently feasible at Baker Reserve because the park already exceeds the Park District's 80/20 policy for developed areas.
- Serve as a major trailhead hub for three current and planned trails in the area: Lake Independence, Diamond Lake and Lake Sarah Regional Trails. Trailhead facilities could include a parking lot, restroom, water and wayfinding.
- Add more undeveloped upland natural areas to Baker Park, helping to bring the park reserve closer to compliance with the 80/20 policy.
- Restore farm fields to native prairie and/or forest, expanding the natural environments and habitats near Baker Park and connecting to other natural areas.

If supported by the Board, Staff will contract an appraisal to verify the value and negotiate a purchase agreement accordingly.

### **Suggested Draft Long-range Plan Revisions**

Staff recently completed the 30-day comment period for the Draft Baker Park Reserve Long-range Plan. Less than a dozen comments were submitted of which the majority of the comments were addressed with minor tweaks or additional explanation. However, as part of that process as well as earlier engagement efforts and recent conversations with a nearby property owner interested in selling their property to Three Rivers, it became more apparent that community members and representatives from the City of Medina generally support the expansion of Baker Park Reserve for natural resources protection and greater recreation opportunity.

If the Board supports a broader approach to acquisition adjacent to and nearby Baker Park Reserve, staff will amend the current draft long-range plan to include language expressing Three Rivers' support to explore additional willing-seller acquisitions for natural resource protection and/or recreation expansion. This language would allow greater flexibility to respond to future opportunities and be more consistent with the 2040 System Plan which calls for protection of natural resources around and between Three Rivers' park reserves. Inclusion of this language now is timely, as staff have not yet secured resolutions of support from local municipalities or submitted the long-range plan to the Metropolitan Council for review or approval.

Additionally, if supported by the Board, staff will amend the official long-range plan park boundaries and associated text to include the immediate acquisition opportunity outlined above. Inclusion in the park's long-range boundary makes the property eligible for Metropolitan Council acquisition, CIP, and operation and maintenance funding.

### Relationship to the System Plan:

The Request for Action supports the following goal(s) of the System Plan:

Goal 2: Parks Matter

### Attachments:

[Property location map.pdf](#)

[Property aerial map.pdf](#)