

Maplewood Park & Recreation System Master Plan

Summary of June 11th Focus Group Meetings

Maplewood City Staff and Consultants: *DuWayne Konewko, Parks and Recreation Director; Jim Taylor, Parks Manager; Ginny Gaynor, Natural Resources Coordinator; Audra Robbins, Recreation Manager; Ann Hutchinsin, Lead Naturalist; Shann Finwall, Environmental Planner; Steve Love, Assistant City Engineer, Rita Trapp, HKGi, and Jack Becker, Forecast Public Art)*

Environment and Natural Resources

Attendees: Char Brooker, Mark Gernes, Tara Koons, Lisa Pearson, Christa Rittberg, and Karen Wold

- Encourage the City to continue to look forward and seize opportunities for natural resource preservation, restoration, and management.
- Classification of preserves/open spaces should be on natural resource quality and potential rather than whether it was acquired through the referendum.
- Recognize that maintaining relatively intact ecological communities easier than restoration.
- Active use of preserves based on graduated scale based on defined criteria such as natural resource quality, etc. Generally activities such as hiking, birdwatching, cross country skiing felt acceptable. Some areas should be left completely inaccessible for the benefit of wildlife.
- Accessibility improvements include signage, identification of parking areas, and maintenance so trails inviting.
- Trail construction material (mowed, wood chip, paved) should vary based on preserve intent, quality of resources, and concerns for transport of invasive materials.
- Recommend continued marketing through electronic mediums and city newsletters.
- Emphasize the need for active natural resource management including monitoring and neighborhood involvement.
- Follow up with watershed on their survey results.
- Need to continue and strengthen partnerships with educational institutions (colleges, high schools, middle schools), nonprofits (Great River Greening, Friends of the Mississippi), and businesses (green teams).
- Beneficial to clarify and educate on the sustainable turf program. Also explore whether more areas can be turned over to natural areas including rain gardens and butterfly gardens.
- Consider use of “popular” insects like dragonflies and butterflies to help education and tell sustainability story.
- Trash/recycling education and availability reevaluated at major events and tournaments.
- Habitat protection a priority concern.
- Concerned for trees – ensure not to have decimation from disease as in the past.
- Education important within context of natural resource conservation.
- Language barrier to accessibility that should be addressed.
- Outreach into the community should be expanded – go where the people are – library, mall, etc.

- Signage at active places to let folks know that natural resources exist – tie the active and passive systems together.
- Nature Center is a priority – a site is needed and its mission of education important to the community. Need to help people see the connection between their actions and the environment. Site components important include nature play area, pond, and boardwalk. In addition to having a physical place for people to go, programming needs to come out into the community.
- Continue to try and reach out to adults with natural resources programming.

Athletic Associations

Attendees: Erv Carlson, Jon Halko, Andy Hobbs, Tim Molohon, Rich Schell, Kim Shawbold, Kris Smith, Gus Tarr representing baseball, football, soccer, slow-pitch softball, and fast-pitch softball

- Associations' participation rates fluctuating up and down from year to year – overall, the associations are concerned about declining participation
- Participation is being impacted by cost; kids working more to pay for college; year-round, single-sport focus; lack of awareness of opportunities by families; and politics (high school coaches influencing what association the kids play in).
- Overall positive feedback of City and Staff – when needs arise the City has been responding.
- More restroom facilities and restrooms closer to activities are needed.
- Nets or other ways of keeping balls out of water, weeds, and forested areas would be appreciated for soccer, baseball, and soccer.
- Issue with non-permitted use of fields – of concern particularly for field conditions. Cited Hazelwood, Harvest Park in particular.
- No request for additional field space – generally like to keep field use clustered for ease of families.
- Explore additional partnerships with City to get the word out about their programs – links to websites. Information about associations at end of recreational programs offered by City.
- Many have been challenged in getting the word out through the school district – some associations feel they have better luck than others.
- Drainage on baseball fields difficult – particularly at edge of the infield.
- Request opportunity for input when fields redesigned (cited example of baseball backstop that is designed poorly and a safety concern).
- Suggest benefit of hard surfacing hockey rinks so get more use. Add lights (maybe with turn timer and cut-off switch).
- If space was available a multi-sport complex with concessions and shared parking would be beneficial.

Public Art and Culture

Attendees: Denise Mogren, Clifton Aichinger, John Gaspar, Frank Gilbertson, Bob Jensen, Caroline Melhop Rob Sutherland, Ceciliar Schiller

- Notable Resources – Bruentrup Farm, Fish Creek, Battle Creek, Gladstone, Nature Center, Chain of Lakes, Frost Ave Bridge, Maplewood Mall, Gateway/Vento Trails, Ramsey County Heritage Park/Fairgrounds (Fair, Fright Farm, Parade), Priory, 3M Christmas Tree, MCC – Ashland Productions, Farmers Market at Aldrich Arena, Wakefield (community gathering spot pre-1970), Joy Park (farm, kennel club), Trout Brook, Ski jump
- Organizations – Ashland Productions, Historical Society, Historic Preservation Commission. Note that 3M has Photography Club, Arts Council, and Orchestra
- Existing Historic Markers – Frost Ave bridge, intersection of Vento/Gateway trails, intersection of Vento trail at Highway 36, Ramsey County Cemetery. Ramsey County Barn on the National Registry.
- Suggestion of McKnight as a corridor that could be used to showcase a theme as it runs north-south through the community.
- Themes – rural/agricultural, first ring suburb, railroad, dairy & truck farming, along streetcar to WBL, Maplewood mall, lack of downtown, tourist cabins, water.
- Maplewood Mall – built in 1974. Receives 10 million visitors a year (same as Chain of Lakes, Yellowstone)
- Historic settlement – French Canadians originally but then not one particular nationality (Germans, Polish, etc.)
- Recommend exploration of a more modern way of identifying history
- Ashland – partners with 13 local schools with rehearsals at schools. Then students come on site for tech prep and three performances. 5 summer camps on site at MCC each have a production. Produce 3 main stage productions. Have explored outdoor but haven't not identified a site. Currently they have lots of programs but not a lot of infrastructure to support it. In Arts Lab currently.
- Community needs a gathering spot
- Unified identity throughout city would help – something that same in each park but that can be modified to reflect surrounding area
- MCC/Civic Campus has potential to be a gathering spot – placemaking on campus would be needed.
- Concern that overall becoming a society of events. Community needs to be careful not to overwhelm any one place with too many activities/events. Need to be sure not to overlook benefit of small gatherings.
- Priority locations include MCC, Gladstone, Mall, Fish Creek, Bruentrup Farm, Ramsey County Campus, Nature Center, Joy Park, Keller Lake,

- Along McKnight south of 94 could benefit from beautification. Has a large Somali population in the area so it would be good to involve community in development.
- Opportunity for public art along fencing in dog park.
- Note that the newer cultural groups in community likely don't identify with historical pieces, such as the railroad, like existing groups would.
- Watershed is currently working with consultant to conduct cultural outreach. Will be identifying the groups/organizations that may be strong links to the community.
- Bruentrup is looking at bringing folks into the site – for example churches, day camps, etc.
- Recommend further outreach into community for artists – discussed placing notice in city newsletter and reaching out to participants in North St. Paul art fair or White Bear Art Center. It was also noted that artists in surrounding cities would be a good resource.