



## Como Master Plan Design Advisory Committee Meeting #1- Meeting Notes

Meeting Date: March 7, 2023

Meeting Time: 5:00-6:30pm

Location: Como Streetcar Station, 1224 Lexington Pkwy N, St. Paul, MN 55117

**Committee Members Present:** Britta Belden (CRWD), Dillon Clements (resident), Allison Cole (resident), Grant Cooper (MnDOT), James Cowles (resident), Amy Gage (Friends of the Parks and Trails), Sasha Mackin (former president, Hamline-Midway Coalition), Dave Montgomery (resident), Greg Williams (chair, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Commission), Han Zhang (resident)

**St Paul Parks and Recreation Staff:** David Ronzani (Project Manager), Anne Gardner & Max Sell

*Presentation was conducted with questions interjected throughout. Presentation topics are numbered while discussion items are shown using bullet points. Discussion points are grouped by topic for simplicity.*

### 1. Meeting Agenda, Framework, Guiding Principles and Committee

#### Introductions

- a. Meeting length will likely increase from 1 ½ to 2 hours moving forward
- b. Future Meeting Dates are tentative. Final dates and times to be determined by DAC member poll
- c. DAC members represent interests of their communities, not just their own
- d. Members are encouraged and expected to hold conversations within their Communities between DAC meetings and share added community input with City staff

### 2. Project Overview and Goals

- a. Met Council requests updating every 20 years. The current Como Regional Master plan was adopted 36 years ago
- b. \$150,000 available funding
- c. Improve connections between Park trails to Saint Paul Grand Round
- d. Update Master Plan with changes for adoption by Met Council





### 3. Master Plan Process

- a. Critical to defining specifics of acquisition, development, and operation of regional facilities
- b. Adherence to Met-council approved master plan process necessary to secure grant funding
- c. Equity component – enabling people of all ages, races, ethnicities, incomes, abilities, and communities to share in the opportunities and challenges of growth and change

#### • Master Plan

- Authority – boundaries of existing plans. Work to determine which plan takes priority in areas of overlap
- Research additional available grants and funding sources
- Potential to develop Park branding & Identity (possibly based on areas within the park)
- strengthen identity of park at entry points. Currently each entry point is a different experience and conveys a different identity

### 4. Regional Connections

- a. Grand Round – Como regional park is a part of the grand round with direct connections on the east and west side of the park
  - 27.0 miles of Scenic Parkways
  - Connects outdoor landmarks (Lake Phalen, Lake Como, Mississippi River, over a dozen parks)
  - First envisioned 125 years ago by Horace Cleveland
- b. Como Regional Park pathways and visitor counts
  - 2.3 miles of paved walking and cycling paths around lake area.
  - 4.6 million visits in 2021- per Met Council
  - 2nd most in Twin Cities Regional Parks System. (Behind Minneapolis Chain of Lakes)
- c. Reference to City Bike Plan ([Saint Paul Bicycle Plan.pdf \(stpaul.gov\)](#))



- **Access**

- Improve trail hierarchy for easier orientation within park
- Additional trail section(s) around golf course are needed- extend path that crosses Lexington to clubhouse
- Wayfinding sign hierarchy
  - Trail speed limits
  - Identify landmarks for orientation within park
- Walkability – preserve appeal and usability for all ages
  - Diversify 55+ demographic group into 10-year ranges (55-64, 65-74, etc.) on surveys and other materials for more accurate input
  - Prioritize pedestrians
  - Expand single track trails for runners
- Reach out to nearby public housing and Senior Living Centers to understand current use and needs
- How will we address needs of public transit users?
  - Are current park users arriving by public transit satisfied with their experience?
  - Could more be done to encourage additional users to access Como Park using public transit?

- **Winter Activation Suggested**

- Loppet Organization Precedent
- Plowing paved paths - pedestrians and cyclists sharing one path in winter
  - What are the costs to plow both paths in winter?
  - How can bike/ped traffic get separated?
- Single track trails (snowshoeing, fat tire biking)
- Add Ice rink on lake- historic precedent
- Luminary events- winter celebration to activate the park space and improve community connection



## 5. Previous Studies

- a. Over one dozen plans and studies conducted since previous master plan adoption, covering:
  - Comprehensive Campus Planning
  - Shoreline Restoration and Stormwater Management
  - Enhancements to Existing Paths and Trails Vehicle Transportation Plans
  - Specialty Area Plans (Golf Course, Zoo & Conservatory, McMurray Fields)

## 6. Notable Studies of Last 5 Years

- a. District 10 Como Park Campus Analysis: Recommendations for signage, trails, and other park amenities. Significant building block for current Como Master Plan process: [D10 Como Community Plan | Saint Paul \(stpaul.gov\)](#) | [Como pathways report-short version \(district10comopark.org\)](#)
- b. East Como Lake Drive Study: Underutilized and redundant traffic route. Closure to vehicle traffic, expanded pedestrian and bicycle use could be better use of space by also affording additional green space to intercept stormwater runoff before reaching lake
- c. Park Changes since 2020: Parking Area improvements, McMurray Field reconfiguration projects concentrated work on areas West of Lexington with clear activities (McMurray Fields, Golf and Pavilion Lot Improvements). Lakeside most frequently visited part of Como (excluding Zoo and Golf Course) and warrants attention for improvements to user experience

## 7. Community Engagement

- a. Tools used for engagement include in-person events, surveys, Website platform: Engage St. Paul [Como Regional Park Trail Master Plan | Engage Saint Paul \(engagestpaul.org\)](#)
- b. Survey Responses
  - Walking and Cycling: Most users access the park by either foot or bike, though most use the park for walking once there – Demographics and Areas:
  - Como serves visitors from beyond its immediate surroundings



- Como appeals to all age demographics, with a majority identifying as 55+ (based on survey responses)
- c. Key Takeaways
  - Navigation and safety enhancements are needed for all users (walk, bike, vehicle)
  - Improving pavement condition at crossings and transitions are key for bicycle safety
  - Pedestrian and bike paths must be kept free of vehicles (signage, bollards may be needed at locations near parking areas)

## 8. Existing Conditions

- a. Map analysis- work will exclude golf course, zoo+ conservatory areas though connection to key entry points at golf course and zoo can be included
- b. Existing condition photos showing pavement condition, current wayfinding markings and signage, and moments of uncertainty along trails

### • Private Vendor Operations

- Lakeside Pavilion- study for improvements within existing building structure
  - Public/private space delineation could improve experience
  - Additional activities suggested: chess tables, rentals
  - Current study is just beginning to examine possible building improvements
- Golf Course
  - Trail connection to club house

### • Bicycling

- Two-way traffic areas, south of lake at least, around entire lake if possible (space is constrained on east side of lake) are needed to facilitate commuters, Grand Round users
  - When traveling east to west the shortest route is along south side of lake, but current one-way circulation dictates going around to the north
  - Southern trails could be widened in existing park space. Current trail configuration east of lake could not facilitate additional trail width without sacrificing green space or repurposing East Como Lake Drive





- Fat tire winter biking – expanding trails
  - Golf Course – groomed trails similar to cross-country skiing currently provided in this area of the park
  - Lakeside – grooming unplowed paths for snow use
- Skills Park – possible location within Como
- Curb cuts and crosswalks matching trail widths
  - Recent trail improvements have made paths wider than existing curb cuts (trail north of pavilion cited as example)
- Parking and storage – Examine Universities, European cities as precedents for innovative bike facilities
  - Requiring temporary events to feature additional bike storage options
  - Offering discounts to event attendees who arrive by bicycle
  - Permanent secure facilities (lockers, cages, cameras)
  - Electric Bike charging stations
  - Move away from typical round bike parking rack- accommodate larger cargo bikes and burleys

## 9. Group Discussion

- a. Priorities identified to date:
  - Improve path and trail wayfinding
  - 2-way bike and pedestrian circulation for Grand Round connecting pathways
  - Improve Lakeside Pavilion circulation
  - Add safe trail crossings (appropriate widths and signage)
  - Selectively locating additional trail connections while not over-paving park
  - Creating shade on east side of lake
- b. Targeted Outreach
  - District 10 Community Council
  - Lower Phalen Creek Project
  - Major Taylor Bikes
  - Karen Organization of Minnesota
  - Como Park Senior High
  - Hmong College Prep Academy



- Youth Commission
  - Saint Paul Parks Commission
  - Public Works
  - Area Events Coordinators
- c. Next steps
- Meeting schedule discussion: Next meetings May, 2023, July 2023
  - Staff to send out Microsoft Form for meeting schedule
  - Project schedule discussion
  - Goal for adoption of Master Plan by June 2024
  - Members to reach out to representatives (neighbors, friends, colleagues, etc.) to generate ideas for further discussion

• **Miscellaneous**

- East Como Lake Drive Study: Road Closure potential per previous studies
  - Creates additional area for stormwater treatment
  - Creates additional space for walking and bicycle trails
  - Traffic route – where is traffic rerouted if street is closed?
- Dog Park – size and location, area need
  - If included, size of dog park must be adequate for dogs and humans to move sufficiently (park at Uñčí Makhá identified as too small)
  - Location ideas within Como included Ballfield space near West picnic grounds, area south of Woodland Outdoor Classroom
    - ❖ Local wildlife in these areas require special consideration (ex. coyotes have denned around Woodland Classroom site). Signage, other means of wildlife awareness needed.
  - Nearby Off-Leash Dog Parks areas and distances from Como:
    - ❖ Arlington/Arkwright – 4.5 Acres | 3.5 Miles
    - ❖ High Bridge – 4.5 Acres | 4.3 Miles
    - ❖ Lowertown – 0.3 Acres | 4.4 Miles
    - ❖ Meeker Island – 5.1 Acres | 4.7 Miles
    - ❖ Uñčí Makhá – 0.3 Acres | 7.1 Miles
- Include On-site amenities such as restrooms, drinking fountain on south side of lake





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**Meeting End: 6:40 PM**

Notes:

1. Meeting minutes are intended to capture overall participation and summarize comments from City Staff and Advisory Member participants.
2. Visit ([www.stpaul.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/design-construction/current-projects/como-regional-park-trail](http://www.stpaul.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/design-construction/current-projects/como-regional-park-trail)) for more information and presentation graphics.

***This document shall serve as the official record of the community meeting and information shared. If there are additions or modifications that are required, please contact Max Sell via email [max.sell@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:max.sell@ci.stpaul.mn.us) by 3/15/2023***