

CITY OF BLOOMINGTON
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMUNITY PROJECT POLICY

I. INTRODUCTION

The City of Bloomington (“City”), through its Parks and Recreation Department (“Parks”), owns, operates, and maintains parks, open space, and natural areas within the city. Parks, with direction from the City Council, has spent a substantial amount of public funds and staff and consultant time in developing a Parks System Master Plan, Natural Resources Prioritization and Management Strategies Plan, and Minnesota River Valley Strategic Plan, as well as other management and maintenance plans for City parks and natural areas in order that these areas be preserved and maintained for future City residents.

For many years, the City of Bloomington has allowed private individuals and organizations to donate physical improvements in City parks and park facilities. This Natural Resources Community Project Policy (“Policy”) is informed by the City’s Donation and Memorials Policy, which governs memorials and other physical improvement donations for City parks and park facilities. This intent of this Policy is to provide a process for resident participation in projects that involve a natural, rather than physical or structural, improvement to a City park or natural area. Examples of natural improvements could be routine activities such as litter pickup, invasive plant removal, weeding and maintenance of planted areas, or more substantial habitat or restoration projects as agreed upon by the City.

II. PURPOSE

This Policy provides an equitable opportunity and approval process for residents and resident organizations to connect with the City’s parks and natural areas by providing their time, labor, and expertise to ongoing park maintenance tasks or to propose park and natural area resource stewardship projects that align with the City’s long-term park management plans and goals.

By enhancing resident connection to City parks and natural areas, this policy furthers the mission, values, and vision of the Forward 2040 Comprehensive Plan and Bloomington. Tomorrow. Together Strategic Plan. Community members will feel connected to the City’s parks and natural areas, contributing to the City’s mission to cultivate an enduring and remarkable community where people want to be.

III. OVERALL POLICY GUIDELINES

This Policy is guided by the following principles:

- The City, as land owner, manages parks and natural areas for the benefit of all City residents.

- The City has spent significant time and effort developing a Parks Master Plan and other operational and management plans for its parks and natural areas.
- City staff time is a finite resource and is most efficiently spent in ways that further the priorities and goals of adopted management and maintenance plans for City parks and natural areas.
- Residents and resident groups often express a desire to participate in beautification, maintenance, or stewardship projects in City parks or natural spaces.
- Resident groups should have the opportunity to suggest and participate in such projects if they are consistent with the City's parks and natural resources operation and management plans.

The Policy balances these policy guidelines by creating guidelines and a process to allow for resident participation in parks maintenance and natural resources projects.

IV. RESIDENT PARTICIPATION PROGRAMS

The City maintains two resident participation programs for its parks and natural areas – (1) the Adopt-A-Park Program and (2) Natural Resources Participation Program.

A. ADOPT-A-PARK PROGRAM

Intent

The Adopt-A-Park Program is intended allow for residents and resident groups to participate in seasonal park beautification and maintenance projects in City parks or natural areas. Tasks are pre-approved by Parks staff and consist of:

- Litter cleanup and removal
- Invasive plant species removal (e.g. buckthorn, garlic mustard)
- Small-scale plantings and plant bed maintenance
- Other tasks consistent with the intent of the Adopt-A-Park Program, as pre-approved by Parks Maintenance staff.

Application and Approval

A resident or resident group may apply to the City Parks and Recreation Department to adopt a park or natural area for one season. Each resident group is required to have a group organizer, who will have responsibility for the group's activities. Upon application, Parks staff will contact the group organizer to discuss the location, specific tasks the individual or group will perform, and Adopt-A-Park Program requirements.

Following discussion with the group organizer as to location and specific tasks, Parks Staff will prepare a written agreement that must be signed by the City and group organizer prior to the start of any Adopt-A-Program tasks. Individuals or groups are required to follow Adopt-A-Park Program guidelines at all times they are performing Program tasks.

Parks staff will make the final decision on Adopt-A-Park Program participation and reserve the right to reject suggested tasks inconsistent with the intent of the Adopt-A-Park Program or to limit participation in the Adopt-A-Park Program.

B. NATURAL RESOURCES PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

Intent

The City often undertakes larger natural resources projects in its parks, open spaces, and natural areas. These projects generally include native habitat or tree restoration....., and do not constitute general ongoing beautification or maintenance tasks.

Over the years, residents and resident groups have sought to both propose and participate in these natural resources projects in the City. This Policy seeks to allow such activity, while preserving the City's ability to manage its parks, open spaces, and natural areas consistent with long-term management plans and to effectively manage City time and resources spent on such projects.

Application and Approval

A legally organized entity registered and active with the Minnesota Secretary of State ("Resident Group") may propose a natural resources project located within a City park, open space, or natural area. The proposal must include a participation component from the Resident Group. In order to be considered for approval, the natural resources project proposal must:

- In the sole discretion of City staff, be consistent with all applicable City management and operational plans for the proposed location.
- Not create an undue burden on City resources, including staff time, equipment, supplies, and ongoing maintenance.

For approved projects, the City retains final decision-making authority for all aspects of the project, including design, installation, and maintenance. Post-installation, the City reserves the right to remove or alter the project or components of the project if the location is needed for another City priority.

Application

A Resident Group may propose a natural resources project by applying to the City's Parks and Recreation Department. The application must include the following.

- Group name with evidence of active registration with Minnesota Secretary of State.
- Name and contact information for Resident Group organizer.
- Complete description of proposed natural resources project, include the specific tasks to be completed by the Resident Group.
- Estimated financial, staff time, and physical resources needed from the City.

- A description of long-term maintenance requirements and any long-term maintenance obligations requested to be undertaken by the City.
- A description of the Resident Group’s financial and labor commitment to the project.
- A description of any grant funding proposed to fund the project, as applicable.

Review and Approval

All proposed projects require City Council approval. Parks staff will review and evaluate applications and work with applicants to address any issues for further discussion. Parks staff will make a recommendation to the City Parks, Arts, and Recreation Commission (“PARC”). PARC will review the proposal during one of its regular meetings and make a recommendation to the City Council, who has final approval. The City Council’s decision on an application is final.

If grant funding is proposed, regardless of the identity of the applicant or recipient, the proposal requires a vote of five (5) City Council members.

Parks staff will evaluate applications, taking into consideration the following:

- Consistency with approved park or natural resources management and priority plans.
- Burden on City resources – financial, staff time, ongoing maintenance.
- Resident Group’s financial and operational ability to execute the project, and risk that aspects of the project become a City responsibility or liability.
- Long-term maintenance requirements and responsibilities.
- The Resident Group and its participants’ performance on past City projects, whether before or after the adoption of this Policy.

For approved projects, Resident Groups are required to execute a written agreement with the City. The City reserves the right to include any terms necessary to ensure adequate execution of the project, including property and liability insurance.

V. MODIFICATIONS AND AMENDMENTS

The Parks and Recreation Director is responsible for implementation of this Policy and creation of all forms and documents necessary to effectuate its purpose. The Parks and Recreation director may amend or modify this Policy at any time such amendment or modification is consistent with the overall purpose and guidelines of this Policy. This Policy will be reviewed every five (5) years by the City Council.

Adopted by City Council – Oct. 16, 2023

