



Department Source: Parks and Recreation
To: City Council
From: City Manager & Staff
Council Meeting Date: February 20, 2017
Re: MKT Trail Sewer Project Restoration Plan

Executive Summary

In cooperation with the Sewer Utility, the Parks and Recreation Department is providing this report to the City Council to outline the restoration plan of the disturbed areas along the MKT Trail as a result of the Flat Branch Sewer Project. The restoration area parallels a one-half mile trail section east of the Stadium Blvd. access and continues along the MKT Trail to the Grasslands Park bridge. After a series of community public input meetings and an online survey, park staff feels the attached conceptual plans detailing the restoration of the areas along the MKT Trail provide consensus for all represented parties. The attached documents outline a restoration and maintenance plan that includes planting approximately 180 native trees and shrubs in addition to native grasses and forbs. The Sewer Utility Department will provide \$14,000 to \$16,000 for the purchase of plant materials, and park staff will be responsible for all plantings and ongoing maintenance, including watering, trimming and mowing. Recognizing the additional workload this project entails, park staff will work with volunteers and explore grants to help offset the labor and financial resources this project created. The University of Missouri is responsible for all restoration work on MU property as identified in Project #1 (Stadium to Elm) and Project #3 (Elm Street and 6th Street), utilizing approximately \$76,000 in Sewer Utility project funds.

Discussion

The City of Columbia Sewer Utility initiated public input for the Flat Branch Sewer Projects #1 and #3 on December 11, 2014. Parks and Recreation staff monitored the project status due to the project timelines and impact of the project on MKT Trail users. Upon completion of the public input process, the Sewer Utility initiated tree removal from the sewer easement areas beginning in January 2016.

In May 2016, Councilman Ian Thomas initiated a joint meeting between concerned citizens and representatives from the Parks and Recreation Department and the Sewer Utility Department. At a meeting on May 19, 2016, citizen attendees expressed concern about the ecological remediation plan along the MKT Trail corridor. Discussion included construction timelines, community outreach efforts, and the availability of funds and plans for restoration of the impacted areas. Attendees also requested an ongoing communication plan for sewer utility and restoration updates. Park staff offered to create a restoration plan to include proposed tree species, quantity of trees, and a planting site plan. Parks and Recreation Forestry staff agreed to provide labor for planting and year-round maintenance. Following the meeting, the Sewer Utility agreed to provide \$14,000 to \$16,000 in funding for the restoration plan. This amount of funding is above and beyond the normal turf restoration typically provided for sewer restoration work.



Construction for the Flat Branch Sewer Project #1 started on July 6, 2016. A marked street detour provided a pedestrian-friendly street connection to the MKT Trail between Lakeshore Dr. and Lathrop Rd. Sewer project updates were provided by the Parks and Recreation Department to citizens via an opt-in Google list serve.

The MKT Trail reopened on October 26, 2016. Park planners and forestry staff reviewed disturbed areas and created a remediation conceptual plan. On November 1, 2016, the plans were posted online with a corresponding citizen survey and presented to citizens during the Westmount Homeowners Association meeting. A subsequent group trail walk was hosted by park staff on November 17, 2016. Prior to the walk, flags were placed along the sewer easement indicating tree and shrub species and placement. In addition to native grasses and forbs, proposed tree species included the following varieties: sugar maple, sycamore, white oak, swamp white oak, pin oak, red oak, silver maple, catalpa, walnut, Kentucky coffeetree, redbud, pawpaw, buckeye sassafras, blackhaw viburnum and persimmon trees.

Based on citizen feedback received prior to the end of November 2016, staff revised plans to include mowed paths (to allow for creek access and a “solitary” trail experience), edible landscaping options and maintenance strategy details. The revised plans were made available online and presented at a community-wide public input meeting at the Daniel Boone Regional Library on January 25, 2017. Approximately 20 citizens were in attendance at the meeting. Additional input was solicited via social media venues. A transcript of written comments from the January 25, 2017 meeting and social media comments are included with this report.

MKT Trail Restoration Plan Details

Plan C2.01 – *Trail section from Stadium Blvd. (near mile marker 7.75) to areas just east of bridge #3.* The proposed plan for this section includes planting native grasses and forbs, including a pollinator and butterfly mix, and approximately 40 native trees and shrubs as indicated on the plan. The area will be mowed by P&R staff annually to promote flowers and prairie plants.

Plan C2.02 – *Trail section from the east side of bridge #3 to west side of bridge #2.* The proposed plan includes planting native grasses and forbs, including a pollinator and butterfly mix. Each time the edge of the trail is mowed, staff will also mow an 8' path on the north side of the trail to allow access to the creek and prairie plantings. A potential edible landscaping area has been identified for future Adopt-a-Trail Program participants. Staff will plant approximately 40 native trees and shrubs as indicated on the plan.

Plan C2.03 – *Trail section just west of bridge #2 near the 8.0 mile marker.* The proposed plan includes planting native grasses and forbs, including a pollinator and butterfly mix, and approximately 50 native trees and shrubs as indicated on the plan. The area will be mowed by P&R staff annually to promote flowers and prairie plants. Each time the edge of the trail is



mowed, staff will also mow an 8' wide turf path on the south side of the trail to maintain a path through prairie plantings.

Plan C2.04 – *Trail section near the Hinkson Creek low-water bridge.* The proposed plan includes planting native grasses and forbs, including a pollinator and butterfly mix, and approximately 35 native trees and shrubs, as indicated on the plan. The area will be mowed by P&R staff annually to promote flowers and prairie plants. Each time the edge of the trail is mowed, staff will also mow an 8' wide turf path on the south side of the trail (west of the low-water bridge), to allow access to the creek and prairie plantings.

Plan C2.05 – *Trail section near the bridge connecting Grasslands Park to the parking lot on MU property.* The proposed plan includes planting native grasses and forbs, including a pollinator and butterfly mix, and approximately 15 native trees and shrubs as indicated on the plan. The area will be mowed by P&R staff annually to promote flowers and prairie plants.

The restoration plan presented by the Parks and Recreation Department are anticipated to be completed by late fall 2017. Tree plantings and native grass establishment will occur throughout the year to optimize establishment in different growing seasons. All restoration work will be completed by park staff and any volunteer labor that may become available through various work days, TreeKeeper projects, our new trail adopt-a-spot program. Staff is also looking for various grants to help fund the ongoing maintenance of natural areas through either materials and supplies or labor resources.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: The total cost of the restoration plan will not exceed \$16,000 and funding is provided by the City of Columbia Sewer Utility.

Long-Term Impact: Park staff anticipates minimal financial impact, as staff already maintains this section of the MKT Trail, and volunteers from adjacent neighborhoods have volunteered to assist with long-term maintenance, including site cleanup, invasive species removal, and watering of new trees.

Vision & Strategic Plan Impact

Vision Impacts:

Primary Impact: Parks, Recreation & Greenways, Secondary Impact: Environment, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Not Applicable, Secondary Impact: Not Applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Environmental Management, Secondary Impact: Infrastructure, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

Date	Action
08/03/2015	Public Hearing: (PW) Flat Branch Watershed Relief Sewer Project No. 1
12/21/2015	Ordinance #22688; (PW) Determining it is in the public interest to construct the Flat Branch Watershed Relief Sewer Project No. 1

Suggested Council Action

Parks and Recreation will proceed with this plan unless otherwise directed by City Council.