



Resolution 2023-153

SECOND AND FINAL READING OF RESOLUTION AMENDING CHAPTER 17 OF THE MINNEAPOLIS PARK AND RECREATION BOARD CODE OF ORDINANCES, THE CRITERIA-BASED SYSTEM FOR CAPITAL AND REHABILITATION NEIGHBORHOOD PARK PROJECT SCHEDULING.

Whereas, The Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board (MPRB) is the steward of Minneapolis parks;

Whereas, Chapter 17 of the MPRB Code of Ordinances establishes a methodology for prioritizing projects through the use of empirical, data-driven, equity metrics;

Whereas, Regular annual reviews and updates of the equity metrics by MPRB staff have revealed several unintended consequences that staff believe should be corrected;

Whereas, Current nomenclature around areas of concentrated poverty has changed since the Ordinance was written, and MPRB staff have begun calculating these areas themselves;

Whereas, The way the ordinance directs scoring of parks within the same neighborhood is misaligned with how some metrics are functionally calculated;

Whereas, The density metric as currently written is a static numerical scoring that does not take into account the potential for city-wide density changes;

Whereas, Parks without major assets (undeveloped parks) are challenging to score because they cannot receive asset scores, and this leads to an inequitable distribution of these parks in the rankings and the MPRB Capital Improvement Program;

Whereas, Language directing staff how to use the metrics cannot be operationalized as currently written;

Whereas, MPRB staff have developed solutions and Ordinance revisions to address these issues, and presented them to the Board of Commissioners during the 2023 Board budget retreats;

Whereas, This resolution is supported by Parks for All, the MPRB Comprehensive Plan 2021-2036, under Goal 1: "Foster belonging and equity;"

RESOLVED, That the Board of Commissioners amends Chapter 17 of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Code of Ordinances, the Criteria-Based System for Capital and Rehabilitation Neighborhood Park Project Scheduling; and



RESOLVED, That the President of the Board and Secretary to the Board are authorized to take all necessary administrative actions to implement this resolution.



TO: **Administration & Finance Committee**

FROM: Michael Schroeder, Assistant Superintendent, Planning

DATE: 16 August 2023

SUBJECT: RESOLUTION AMENDING CHAPTER 17 OF THE MINNEAPOLIS PARK AND RECREATION BOARD CODE OF ORDINANCES, THE CRITERIA-BASED SYSTEM FOR CAPITAL AND REHABILITATION NEIGHBORHOOD PARK PROJECT SCHEDULING.

BACKGROUND

This action would amend Chapter 17 of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Code of Ordinances. This chapter, adopted on the heels of the NPP20 funding agreement, describes what are commonly called the “equity metrics for neighborhood parks.” As a first-of-its-kind system of using empirical, data-driven, equity-based metrics for prioritizing capital investment, the equity metrics have led directly to many millions of public dollars flowing to parks in historically underserved parts of Minneapolis. Chapter 17 is not a concurrent ordinance with the City of Minneapolis (as Chapter 16 is) and can therefore be amended by MPRB alone.

Each year, as directed by Chapter 17, MPRB staff update the underlying data that leads to the scoring of each neighborhood park in the Minneapolis system. During this process, staff have also made a practice of evaluating the metrics themselves and reporting to the Board any concerns, issues, challenges, or unintended consequences. Since its initial adoption in 2016, changes to Chapter 17 have been extremely limited. However, staff have identified several potential unintended consequences and needed text updates and are proposing a suite of modifications to the Ordinance. These proposed modifications were presented to the Board of Commissioners during the 2023 budget retreats—and have been presented in previous years dating back to 2019.

The proposed changes (*Attachment A*) address the following issues, which are later described in additional detail:

- Outdated language related to Areas of Concentrated Poverty (ACP/ACP50);
- A discrepancy in the way parks are scored under the Community Characteristics metrics;
- A static methodology behind the density metric;
- Inequitable scoring associated with undeveloped parks, which leads to unbalanced and ill-timed investment; and
- Language in the direction to staff that cannot be operationalized as written.



ACP/ACP50 Language

When Chapter 17 was written, the Metropolitan Council and Federal agencies referred to a measure called Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty (RCAP). Since that time, this term has fallen out of favor, largely because community members within these areas feel that the language puts blame on them, rather than on decades of government policy that has led to this phenomenon. Staff proposes to modify **PB 17-4 A.3** to reference Areas of Concentrated Poverty of two types (ACPs and ACP50s). This does not modify the scoring system in any way.

Community Characteristics Metrics

Conversations during the city's CLIC process revealed a discrepancy between the letter of the Ordinance and the functional way some metrics must be calculated. **PB 17-4 A.2** states that parks in the same neighborhood must receive the same community characteristic score. However, ACP/ACP50 scores have always been and must be calculated by census tract. The calculation and scoring has been done this way since the inception of the Ordinance. Staff proposes to modify **PB 17-4 A.2** and **PB 17-4 A.3.c** to allow for parks in the same neighborhood to be scored on their own, not linked to other parks in the neighborhood. This is important because some neighborhoods can have significant geographic diversity in economic and racial demographics. Because this is a prioritization system for capital investment, staff believes it is most equitable to evaluate each park independently on each metric.

However, it is possible that current practices out-of-sync with the Ordinance have caused parks to be left out of the CIP in years when they should have been funded. The Data Insights Team is currently examining recent CIP years and ACP/ACP50 mapping, looking for neighborhoods with differing metric scores, and for parks with too-low scores compared to other ranked parks. Any recommended historic corrections will be brought forward in the next CIP.

Density Metric

The current ordinance language in **PB 17-4 A.4** for the density metric has two functional issues:

- The scoring is static by density (10,000+ / sq. mi = 3 pts; 6,750 – 9,999 / sq. mi = 2 pt; <6,750 / sq. mi = 1 pt). These numbers are arbitrary relative to city density and will become less impactful as the city densifies, an expected outcome of the Minneapolis 2040 Plan. The long-term conservative outcome of this math is that all neighborhoods will eventually end up in the densest category, thereby limiting differentiation between park scoring. Because this is a prioritization methodology, it is critically important to preserve differentiation.
- The scoring ranges from 1-3, rather than starting at 0. No other community metric does this.

Staff proposes to modify **PB 17-4 A.4** to create a tiered system with four tiers. Scores would range from zero to three. This preserves the overall weighting of the metric system while expanding the scoring downward to align with other metrics. Furthermore, by creating tiers, parks will always fall equally into four density categories, regardless of what happens with overall city



population. At its core, this metric is designed to provide higher prioritization to parks in dense areas of the city, and the proposed changes will do this even more effectively over time.

Undeveloped Parks

Chapter 17 says that “all neighborhood parks” must be ranked. However, under the current neighborhood equity metrics, parks without major assets cannot be scored on their park characteristics (asset lifespan and asset condition). This creates two major issues:

- Some parks rank high and enter the CIP only because of their location in the city, not their actual usefulness to the public as recreational venues.
- Most rank very low, clustering together at the bottom of the rankings.

For several years, undeveloped parks were ranked by staff but held out of the CIP by the Board of Commissioners. This changed for the 2027 funding year, when 7 undeveloped parks came into the CIP in the same year. Some of these parks will not fill gaps or provide the same recreational benefit as others. They are there solely because of where in the city they are located. If this practice continues, dozens of undeveloped parks will occupy the 2032-2034 years of the CIP—right before the expiration of NPP20.

Instead, staff believe that undeveloped parks should be more strategically prioritized. MPRB should work to implement master plans for undeveloped parks concurrently with those for developed parks. Prioritization for improvements should focus development in areas with greatest community need, based on neighborhood demographic factors, and also focus development in areas that are otherwise underserved by park facilities.

Staff proposes two new sections in Chapter 17 that would outline a new methodology for better integrating undeveloped parks into the overall Capital Improvement Program. In essence, **PB 17-5** and **PB 17-6** would create two different neighborhood lists, for developed and undeveloped parks. Staff would use new (but similar) equity criteria to rank undeveloped parks, then move undeveloped parks onto the developed list (as invested parks) once they see improvements.

Ranking of undeveloped parks would use the same community characteristics as developed parks. Two new park characteristics would replace those used for developed parks:

- **Asset Proximity** considers how many of the 5 major assets (enclosed building, play area, aquatics, field, court) are within a 10-minute walk. Parks with no nearby assets would get the maximum score of 5, and each nearby asset type would result in a subtraction of one point. An undeveloped park very near a developed park with all five asset types would receive a score of zero.
- **Asset potential** considers whether a park will have recreational assets, according to its adopted park plan. In a simple binary calculation, a park will receive zero points if no recreational assets are planned and 5 points if any recreational asset is planned. For the



purposes of this definition, recreational assets include the five considered above for asset proximity, along with three others: off-leash dog parks, community gardens, and paved trails or gathering areas. These additional three are considered here because they constitute built recreational infrastructure that could receive an empirical analysis of longevity and condition.

Once an undeveloped park sees investment it would move to the developed list, but it would be considered “invested,” meaning it would NOT get another NPP20 investment until all parks are touched. Because these parks are already entering the CIP, albeit in a rather haphazard way, the impact to NPP20 funding is nonexistent. These undeveloped parks would have received investment during the course of NPP20. This change simply strategically re-prioritizes when that investment will happen.

Staff Direction Language

The final paragraph in **PB 17-4** directs staff on how to operationalize the equity metrics, in relationship to the MPRB annual budget and required reporting under Chapter 16. This section was previously amended, and the current language makes it impossible to operationalize under the letter of the Ordinance. Staff proposes minor modifications to the language in **PB 17-4**, and the inclusion of a parallel paragraph in **PB 17-6**. Under the new wording, the functional sequence is more logical:

1. Staff produces an ordered ranking of neighborhood parks,
2. The ordered ranking is used to create the “project schedule” (the CIP),
3. The ordered ranking is included in the Draft budget (for transparency and as justification for the CIP),
4. The approved projects (the CIP) are included in the NPP20 annual report.

TIMELINE AND PROCESS

All Ordinance amendments must be considered in Committee and then have two readings at the Full Board, one of which includes a public hearing. Committee consideration on August 16, 2023 followed by Full Board readings on September 6 (with public hearing) and September 20 will allow staff adequate time to update equity metrics and craft a 2024-2029 CIP that responds to these changes. That Draft CIP would be presented to the Board on October 18, as part of the Superintendent’s Recommended Budget.



RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board of Commissioners amend Chapter 17 of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Code of Ordinances, the Criteria-Based System for Capital and Rehabilitation Neighborhood Park Project Scheduling.

This Ordinance Revision has been reviewed and approved by legal counsel as to legality and form.

This action is supported by the following goals and strategies in Parks for All, the MPRB Comprehensive Plan 2021-2036.

Goal:

01. Foster belonging and equity

Strategy:

22. Strengthen racial equity as a funding approach across the agency.

Attachments:

1. Attachment A - Ordinance PB-17 Amended