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**CITIZENS LEAGUE REPORT**

**A SUBREGIONAL SOLUTION TO THE EAST METRO PARK QUESTION**

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## BACKGROUND

**The Regional Recreation Open Space System is one particular set of parks in the metropolitan Twin Cities area.**

One of the first things we had to learn when we began this study was that "regional" parks are only one kind of park in a region that is blessed with abundant recreation resources. We confined our review to those parks included in the regional system, but had to understand that they are just one part of what park planners now refer to as the Metropolitan Recreation Open Space System.

The Metropolitan Recreation Open Space System includes all publicly available open space in the metropolitan area. Some of the parks in the metropolitan system are classified as 'local,' some are classified as 'regional,' and some are classified as 'state or federal.'

Ownership is the basis for classifying a park as local, state, or federal. Ownership is not, however, the basis for classifying parkland as regional, because the region does not own any parkland. Instead the regional classification has been applied to those parklands that serve many people, regardless of what level of government owns the land. Today, regional parks are owned by cities, counties, and the State of Minnesota.

**"Regional Recreation Open Space" is defined as that which offers recreation opportunities that attract large numbers of people irrespective of political boundaries.**

The attraction of these sites may be a unique facility, such as a zoo, historical area, or arboretum. The attraction might be a unique natural resource, such as a waterfall, lake, or major river corridor. A site may also have regional significance because it is large enough in size to offer either a number of different recreation opportunities or simply provide a sense of nature that is uncompromised by any sort of urban development.

The Metropolitan Council has categorized the different kinds of regional recreation open space as: regional parks, park reserves, trail corridors, historic parks, and special use areas.

The definitions of these components are given in Table 1.

The main distinction between regional recreation open space, and local recreation facilities is that local facilities are intended to serve primarily residents who live within walking distance of the park, whereas regional facilities are intended to attract people from a wider area. In addition, local systems include facilities such as ball diamonds, swing sets, and jungle gyms, which are not found in the large, natural resource based regional facilities.

**Today, the regional system includes 27 parks, eight park reserves and five trail corridors, and covers about 42,000 acres open to the public.**

**Regional plans call for completing the system by the Year 2000. The system would then have 56,500 acres in 38 parks, fourteen park reserves, and substantially more trail corridors. Two special use sites are also planned. Acquisition activity is already underway at all but seven of the sites planned for the system. Table 2 indicates the amount of regional open space that has been acquired in each county.**

**During the late 1960s and early 1970s the metropolitan area debated how best to establish a metropolitan system of parks.**

**Some people thought the best approach was to form a metropolitan park commission under the Metropolitan Council, similar to commissions for transit, airports, and other metropolitan functions.**

The Citizens League was a leading proponent of this strategy. In its 1968 report entitled, 'Preserving Green Space in Metropolitan Development,' the League recommended that a metropolitan commission be established to acquire and own large tracts of open space in the region, and develop, operate and maintain them as parks when the need existed. The League further recommended that the commission negotiate with the counties to assume ownership of existing parks that qualified as regional facilities. The League suggested the commission could contract with counties to continue to operate the

parks. The commission was to be funded by a state cigarette tax revenue, federal grants, local property taxes, and metropolitan bond proceeds.

Support for the regional operating agency model was based partly upon the demonstrated success of the Hennepin County Park Reserve District. In fact, the League recommended that the district's staff be transferred to the new Metropolitan Park Reserve Board.

**Other people thought it would be better to let the seven metropolitan counties separately retain primary responsibility for metropolitan parks.**

The Metropolitan Inter-County Council, an association of metropolitan counties, was the prime proponent of this strategy. It wanted the seven counties to be responsible for planning, acquiring, owning, developing, maintaining and operating metropolitan parks within their borders. Neither the Hennepin County Park Reserve District nor the Citizens League felt that the counties could do the job without the creation of a metropolitan commission.

**The need for the metropolitan system was accepted.**

Prior to the debate over a metropolitan system, several governments were all working separately in the parks field. Counties, cities, the state, and even the federal government were acquiring land, developing and operating parks, with little coordination.

By the late 1960s it had become clear that the region's expanding suburban population required the preservation of land in outlying areas. Attempts had been made by some counties, most notably Hennepin, Anoka, and Ramsey, to preserve land for parks in growing communities, but there was concern over whether this approach would be satisfactory to meet the needs of the region as a whole. It was recognized that natural resources for parks are not available evenly across the metropolitan area, and that regional leadership was needed to make sure all people, regardless of where they lived would have access to park facilities. As support grew from taking a metropolitan approach to problems generally, interest grew in the idea of a metropolitan approach to parks as well.

**In 1974 a partnership approach was selected.**

**The Metropolitan Council was given responsibilities to designate generally, the areas to be included in the regional system, and to distribute money to local governments to acquire and develop these lands into parks.**

**By the end of 1974 the Council had designated 34 sites as the Regional Recreation Open Space System. Many of the sites were part of existing city, county, or state park systems. Plans were started and \$40 million in Council bonds were sold for acquisition and development of the remaining sites the Council had identified as important to the regional system needs.**

Since 1977 acquisition and development of regional parkland has been financed with state bond funds. The state has also taken over the responsibility of paying off most of the original metropolitan park bond obligations.

**The seven metropolitan counties, and the cities of Minneapolis, Saint Paul, Bloomington, and Eden Prairie were given responsibilities to acquire, own, develop, operate and maintain the parks, and to finance operating expenses of the parks under their jurisdiction.**

**Under the current partnership these local governments are required to submit to the Council 'park master plans' for the land within their borders designated for inclusion in the system. Once these rather general plans are approved by the Council, capital funds for acquisition can be appropriated to the local governments.**

Local governments are also obligated to develop specific 'development plans' for regional parks they have acquired. They are then eligible to receive state funds for development.

Once the parks are in place and opened for use, the local governments are free to operate and maintain them any way they wish.

Diversity characterizes the operations of the Regional Recreation Open Space System. Local governments have created different government structures, for example, to handle their park duties. Hennepin County has a special purpose government for parks with its own board and its own budgeting authority, separate from the County Board. Scott County has established a joint powers arrangement with the Hennepin County Park Reserve District, in which the District handles the operating responsibilities for parks in Scott County. Ramsey, Anoka, and Dakota Counties handle parks through county government departments. Washington County handles parks planning through its county planning department, with operations performed by the highway department. Carver County operates parks through its public works department.

Park services vary from one agency to another as well. For example, while nearly all the implementing agencies provide cross country ski trails, some agencies mechanically groom the trails while others do not. Similarly, while some agencies operate and maintain park reserves (the large tracts of land which remain 80 percent undeveloped) others perform no

programming or maintenance tasks on these lands. Finally, a park police force, separate from general government police, exists for some park agencies, while others do not have separate police forces.

**Since 1974 the state and metropolitan area have spent \$119 million to finance acquisition and development of the regional system.**

**In 1974 the Council issued \$40 million in regional park bonds, and allocated this money to local governments to acquire and develop regional parkland.**

In 1977 the state effectively took over the responsibility of financing the capital costs of the regional system. In that year it appropriated \$27.3 million in state bond revenue for continued acquisition and development. It issued another \$27 million in 1979 for these purposes. The 1981 Legislature authorized the sale of approximately \$12.5 million in bonds for regional parks.

The state had by 1975, also taken over payment of most of the debt service on the 1974 Council park bonds. Today less than half of this expense (\$1.05 million; less than 1/10 mills) is being financed by metropolitan property taxes. The rest of it is being paid by state cigarette tax revenue and revenue the Council received in 1974 from a \$20 million state bond issue for this purpose. Table 3 outlines the capital financing for the system.

**The primary justification for having the state take over the capital costs of the regional system is that metropolitan regional parks are said to serve the same function in the Twin Cities area that state parks serve in the outstate areas. Since the state finances state parks it was thought justifiable that it also finance regional parks.**

**Operating expenses of the system continue to be financed by local governments primarily through property taxes.**

The most recent estimates of local costs to operate and maintain the regional system, made in 1978 by the Metropolitan Council, set the amount at just over \$14 million per year. Approximately 70 percent of this is financed out of local property tax sources. The remainder is financed from state and federal categorical grants (CETA and Shade Tree Disease Control funds) and earned income.

**The survey of implementing agency expenses also indicated that they spent considerably different amounts. Some agencies spent about \$11 per capita per year. Others spent as little as \$1 per capita.**

**Table 4 indicates the tax levies by local governments for parks purposes generally including regional parks. The mill rates indicate substantial differences among the agencies in terms of local taxing effort. It is also noteworthy that parks levies do not constitute, in any community, more than 5 percent of the total county tax levy.**

## THE ISSUES WE IDENTIFIED

**Whether Washington and Ramsey Counties and all other local governments should be relieved of some or all of the responsibility for financing the operation and maintenance of regional parks.**

The Metropolitan Inter-County Association (MICA) made proposal to relieve local governments of this financing responsibility part of its original 1981 legislative priorities. Members of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission also have supported this kind of change.

The Metropolitan Council has formed a task force to review the current method of financing regional parks operations. The task force is to report to the Council by September 1981 on how this method can be changed to provide for the long term financing of the operations of the regional system. The task force has been asked to identify appropriate sources of revenue for the parks, and devise a method for distributing these revenues to the governmental units managing the parks.

The MICA has already made a specific proposal for how to raise money: they would increase by one penny the state tax on cigarette sales, which would then be divided among the Department of Natural Resources for the operation of state parks; and among local governments, for the operation of regional parks. MICA has not proposed a way to distribute the money among local governments.

Proponents of non-local funding for regional system operations suggest that Washington and Ramsey Counties, once relieved of some of their financing burden, would agree to acquire or develop parkland designated by the Metropolitan Council for inclusion of the regional open space system.

Some people also feel that a change in financing would eliminate alleged inequities which exist under the current method of finance whenever users cross county or city boundaries to use parks in areas where they do not pay taxes.

**The Parks and Open Space Commission is also concerned that the current arrangement has lead to inequities in terms of service levels throughout the system.**

The autonomy of the local governments in terms of operations has lead to different kinds of services around the region. Some communities have what could be considered a higher

level of service than other communities.

**Some people think other local governments, besides Washington and Ramsey Counties are, or will be, unable to finance the operation and maintenance of regional parks.**

**The pace at which more parkland should be acquired in Washington County and the pace at which existing parkland in Ramsey County should be developed.**

**Washington County and the Metropolitan Council have reached an impasse over whether more parkland should be acquired in Washington County.**

**The Council sees three main reasons for more acquisition:**

- To satisfy deficiencies in recreation opportunities.

In particular, the Council feels that the people in northern Washington County do not have sufficient opportunities for power boating, camping, and swimming. The people in southern Washington County do not have, according to the Council, sufficient opportunities for boating and trail use.

Some people are also concerned that the people in Ramsey County do not have sufficient park area in their county, and need parks in Washington County. Ramsey County is seen as a relatively small urbanized county, with lots of people but little parkland. In contrast, Washington County is a large, rural county. Some people have suggested that Washington County is to Ramsey County and Saint Paul, what suburban Hennepin County is to Minneapolis.

- To preserve unique natural resources.
- To obtain a representative landscape type for the regional recreation open space system.

Specifically, the Council sees a need for acquisition at three sites in Washington County. These are: Grey Cloud Island, in the southern part of the county; and Square Lake and Big Marine Lake in northern Washington County. Grey Cloud Island and Square Lake are seen by the Council as unique

natural resources. The Big Marine Lake area includes a topography designated as the St. Croix ground moraine. This type of landscape is not now represented in the regional system. All three sites would provide water based recreation opportunities, another primary objective of the Council.

**The Washington County Board, and several other people in the county, oppose further acquisition on the following grounds:**

- They think Washington County already has enough parkland.
- They think Washington County should develop the parkland it has now, before acquiring any more.
- They think Washington County cannot afford to operate any more parkland.
- They say Washington County citizens should not be taxed to pay operating expenses associated with use by non-Washington County residents.

**Ramsey County says it cannot afford to finance the operation of additional regional parkland in that county.**

Robert Orth, the Chairman of the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners, told us the county is facing increasing difficulties meeting its budgetary demands. Orth said that the county will probably be able to continue to maintain the parks under its jurisdiction at the present level, but that the county will not be able to afford to operate and maintain the parks system if it is developed as currently planned. The additional development will increase operating expenses beyond the county's ability to finance.

The magnitude of the problem depends in large part upon state actions in other areas, besides parks, according to Orth. If the state cuts its aids to local governments, or reduces the percentage of welfare expenses it is willing to pay, and thereby

**asks the counties to finance a larger share of these costs, then parks will go further down on the list of priorities for local funds, and may not be adequately maintained, Orth said.**

Faced with the prospect of higher expenses for all local services, Orth and the Ramsey County Board are calling upon the Metropolitan Council to provide local governments with money to maintain the regional parks.

**Whether the structure of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission (MPOSC) should be changed to give representatives of local governments voting membership on the Commission.**

**The Metropolitan Inter-County Association is also responsible for a proposal to make this change.**

Some people suggest that if local governments had voting membership on the Commission they would feel a stronger sense of ownership in the system than they feel today, and more responsibility for its implementation. It is assumed that acquisition and development of the designated parkland would proceed once these conditions were reached.

Those opposed to changing the MPOSC membership structure, including the Metropolitan Council, express concern that a Commission of that membership would have conflicts of interest whenever decisions came up where the interests of their local constituents differed from the interests of the region. At such times the regional interest might be jeopardized and no strong leadership for the regional park system as a whole would be exercised.

**The Council's task force on regional system financing has been asked to also decide whether changes in the governmental structure for planning and operating the system are advisable.**



they would rather have a park or continued mining in the area, Stiefel claims that 85 percent of the people support the park.

Grey Cloud Island also has value for its mineral resources, however. Intense controversy exists now over how to balance the park and mining interests in the Island. The J. L. Shiely Company, which mines sand and gravel on the island, is not opposed to having a park there, but it would like to preserve the option of having the park after mining activity is completed. The company estimates that mining could continue on parts of the island for approximately fifty years. After it completes its mining operations the company feels it could restore the area adequately for park purposes.

**Regional or state funding might reduce local control over park operations, for all counties and cities in the regional park business today.**

Today acquisition and development of regional parks are financed by the state and the region. If the operation and maintenance is also financed by the state and region these levels of government are likely to want some control over how the parks are operated. Some people have even suggested that support would grow for establishing a regional park operating agency similar to the one proposed in the early 1970s.

**Regional or state funding might lead to more spending for parks than is really needed.**

Assuming that regional funding is distributed based on some standards, there is likely to be pressure to set the standards so that all counties receive some funds, regardless of whether the regional or state funds are needed. In such cases the region would be spending money on its parks that might be better spent on transit, sewers, or some other regional service.

**Despite these potential problems with regional or state funding, it might have the advantage of reinforcing the notion of a regional park system.**

The Council's demand-user studies indicated that there is little public awareness of the regional park system. Some officials claim this is because the system is under the control of so many separate governments. Also, the fragmentation of control has led to differences in the kinds of services and levels of services provided at the parks in the system. Some people think non-local funding would contribute toward overcoming some of these differences, and make it easier for people to recognize the elements of the regional system they helped finance.

**The evidence does not suggest regional or state funding, either for the eastern counties, or for the region as a whole is needed or justified.**

**Washington County is not poor compared to the rest of the region. Furthermore, the county does not now have, nor does it expect to have, substantially higher park expenses than other metropolitan counties.**

In 1978 Washington County had, according to the Metropolitan Council, the highest median household income among the seven metropolitan counties. In 1979 Washington County had the highest median 'effective household buying power' of the seven metropolitan counties. This according to *Sales, Marketing, and Management*, a magazine used by planners at the Council.

In 1980 Washington County had the lowest mill rate for park purposes among the seven metropolitan counties. The county's levy for parks amounted to one percent of its total mill levy.

Washington County has not increased its mill rate for parks in five years, and there have been no special assessments for regional parks during this time. Table 5 shows how Washington County residents in several communities will enjoy reductions in their tax bills for all services between 1980 and 1981.

Currently, Washington County does not charge user fees at its parks.

Washington County has projected, based upon its Capital Improvement Program for parks, that its expenses for park operating and maintenance will more than double between now and 1985, moving from about \$187,000 to approximately \$400,000 per year. Even if this occurs, and all other counties continue to spend the same amount for park services they spend now (something not likely to occur), Washington County would still be spending less for parks than four counties in the region.

It has been argued that Washington County has too small a population to finance the expected park budgets. The county's current population (113,571) is expected to grow by 58 percent (to about 179,000) between now and the Year 2000.

It has also been argued that Washington County cannot afford to have more land taken off the tax rolls for park purposes. Washington County has not, however, calculated the impact on tax revenues of parkland in the county. According to Robert Lockyear, Director of Planning for Washington County, any net loss in tax revenues due to parks would be insignificant. His opinion is based on conversations with the Washington County assessor and his past experience. We have not calculated the net effect on taxes of acquiring more parks in Washington County, but we do know that there is only one county in the region (Scott) for which the value of tax exempt property in 1980 was lower as a percent of total taxable property than it was in Washington County.

**Currently Washington County is a net 'exporter' of park users, according to the Council's user surveys.**

There is concern about whether Washington County parks will attract large numbers of users from other parts of the metropolitan area, for if they do, Washington County residents would end up paying for the park use of non-residents.

The limitations of the current available data on user patterns, are great, but because these are the only numbers available they have been used to get a rough idea of park use. According to the data, currently Washington County entertains about 45,000 nonresidents in its parks. In contrast, about 105,000 Washington County residents go outside the county to use parks elsewhere.

**This trend may change in the future, although the dimension of such change is impossible to predict.**

It is not possible to predict with any accuracy the extent to which, if at all, the balance of park use will reverse itself. Some people suspect that when parks open in Washington County, Ramsey County residents will use them. One reason is that although Ramsey County has three parks with more than 1,000 acres each, similar to those planned for Washington County, Ramsey has none of the 2,000+ acre parks found in Hennepin County's park system. People looking for this kind of open space might go to Washington County.

**Ramsey County expects to have considerably higher expenses for park operations in the future.**

The county has projected, based upon its capital improvement plans, that its expenses for regional park operation and maintenance will quadruple by 1985, going from \$469,771 to \$1.97 million. County officials estimate that in 1985 the owner of a \$50,000 house in the county will be assessed about \$7.04 per year to finance these expenses.

Ramsey County, and all local governments will have higher expenses in the future for all services if state and federal aids are reduced.

**Ramsey County property taxes have, however, been declining in recent years. The tax burden in the County now is not significantly higher than the burden elsewhere in the region.**

Table 6 includes the decrease in property taxes between 1980 and 1981. Table 7 indicates the comparative tax burden among the seven metropolitan counties.

**Ramsey County does not charge user fees in its regional parks today.**

Other counties, most notably Hennepin, charge users of regional parks a fee. Fee revenues cover about 10 percent of the county's operating expenses. Ramsey County does not charge user fees at its parks. It does, however, charge fees at facilities such as ice arenas and golf courses, where fees are easily collectable.

**Nearly one-third of the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department's budget is spent to finance ice arenas.**

Ice arenas are not included in the regional park system and are not part of Ramsey County's expenses for regional parks. Still, arenas are administered by the same county department that operates the regional parks and to some extent the two compete for funding.

The county is able to recover part of the cost of operating the arenas (\$890,269 in 1979) through fees and charges assessed on arena users. Still, taxes levied to pay for arenas (\$326,516 in 1979) amount to about 21.3 percent of the county's parks and recreation levy. This levy, in dollars, constitutes three times what Washington County levies to run its entire park system. No other county has taken on the obligation of arenas to the extent Ramsey County has.

**Since 1978 Ramsey County's spending for parks purposes (excluding personnel expenditures) has declined.**

Since 1978 Ramsey County's spending for parks purposes has increased 7.5 percent. Salaries for parks employees have, however, increased at a higher rate than this. Consequently, spending for non-personnel park functions has actually declined by approximately \$230,927.

**The state has already given local governments some relief from their financing burdens through very generous property tax relief measures enacted in recent years.**

For example, the Governor and the Legislature in 1979 and 1980 increased the homestead credit maximum (the amount of a homeowner's property tax bill paid by the state) from \$325, first to \$550 in 1980, and then to \$650 in 1981. Today the state pays fully 58 percent of a homeowner's property tax bill until a total of \$650 has been paid for each homeowner. The Governor and Legislature also substantially increased the special state payment that goes to reduce farmers' school taxes. A third major type of relief voted in 1979 was to reduce

the mandatory school mill rate from 28 mills down to 21 mills. (The 1981 Legislature increased this levy to 23 mills.) Whenever the mill rate for schools drop the state uses state non-property tax revenues to make up the difference.

The effect of this relief is that most homeowners in moderate and medium priced homes have been enjoying large drops in their property tax statements over the last few years. Between 1968 and 1980 the median net property tax dropped from approximately two to one percent of the selling price on homes in the metropolitan area. These decreases have been in absolute dollars, even as the market value of homes has been rising rapidly, and as the costs of local government services have been rising.

In 1981 some homeowners may find themselves at the bottom, facing steep increases in 1982 and beyond. These increases may bring people back to levels where they were a few years ago.

**While some counties, besides Ramsey and Washington, claim a need for additional money for parks, they do not appear to be facing severe problems.**

Ramsey County Board Chairman Robert Orth told us that the county will not accept additional regional funds for development until a policy is established for funding the operation and maintenance of the parks. Orth said the county cannot afford to complete development of the parks system in the county.

In contrast, Hennepin County does not expect to have significant difficulty financing operation and maintenance of parks under its jurisdiction. John Christian, Director of Administration for the District, said the current arrangements for financing operating expenses, which permit the county to levy up to one mill for parks operations, will be sufficient to finance the Hennepin County Parks Reserve District's needs through 1985 and maybe 1986.

We were also told that although Anoka, Dakota, and Carver counties expect increases in park operating expenses as more parks are opened for use, the counties are continuing to acquire and develop regional parks under their jurisdiction.

**Still, park operating expenses are expected to increase in the long term future.**

Increases will be partly a function of the fact that more parks are opened for use. Gradually the regional system is moving out of the stages of acquisition and development, and into a usage stage. It is not until the final stage that major expenses for operations and maintenance are incurred. Hennepin

County, for example, is just now starting to move into a stage where it feels its primary job is serving park users. Up until now, it has been heavily involved in buying land and building parks.

Increases are also expected due to forces outside the control of park agencies. Several people have told us, as gas prices go up and it becomes more expensive for Twin Citians to 'go up north for the weekend,' use at the regional parks will increase. People here will gradually become aware of the recreational opportunities at the regional parks, and thus use will go up. This will mean increased expenses for local operations.

**But expenses for all local government services, not just parks, are likely to go up as local governments are asked by state and federal governments to do more. This brings up the question of whether parks should be treated separately from other services in local budget-making.**

Recent proposals to reduce state and federal budgets are expected to increase financial burdens for local governments. Increases in local taxes are expected. Some people suggest that this year is the start of a trend toward several years of greater reliance on local funding for local services.

The proposal by the MICA to finance park operating expenses from cigarette taxes represents a philosophy that parks be financed independently from other services. Some people favor this policy because they fear parks will get a low priority in the future as budgets are constrained.

Other people feel park needs should be evaluated along side needs for education, highway maintenance, public safety, and other services during budget-making times. They would finance parks out of general funds. If local governments have general financial problems these should be relieved through general tax relief, not through special levies for certain services.

It is not at all certain that parks will receive a lower priority than other services. If, as some project, more people start using the regional parks, their value may increase and this will be reflected in budgeting decisions.

**Facts available do not indicate the magnitude of alleged inequities due to the current methods of financing operation and maintenance expenses.**

The data available on user patterns indicates that some users do cross into counties where they do not pay taxes to use parks. Some non-resident use occurs. The data also suggests, however, that the bulk of non-resident use occurs at the Como Zoo and Como Conservatory. These two sites, and the Como

Zoo picnic area account for a combined total of 900,000 non-resident users, according to the Metropolitan Council's surveys in 1978. Non-resident use also was relatively high at Lake Nokomis (100,000) and Minnehaha Park (100,000) in Minneapolis.

No other park has more than 100,000 non-resident users, and some parks in the regional system had no measurable non-resident use.

Of the total number of regional park users calculated in 1978 by the council (6 million), 35 percent represented people using parks outside their home county. The percentage of non-resident use system-wide drops to 27 percent if Como Zoo is not considered in the calculation.

No attempt has been made to calculate the costs associated with non-resident use. The Council does have data indicating total park expenditures by park agency. All agencies do not, however, have data indicating expenditures on a park-by-park basis, something that would be needed to start trying to estimate the impact of non-resident use. Also, any attempt to calculate costs of park use must take into consideration the fact that different forms of use cost different amounts of money. A 20 minute bike ride around Lake Harriet may not cost the City of Minneapolis as much as an overnight camp costs the Hennepin County Park Reserve District. Yet in current user studies all use is and valued equally.

**Concerning whether more parkland in Washington County should be acquired, we found the following to be true:**

**No definitive standard exists for how much parkland people need.**

When the Metropolitan Council first started to plan the regional park system they adopted as a guideline for need a national standard of 25 acres per thousand people. This standard, endorsed by the National Park and Recreation Association, was seen as a useful planning tool even though it has no reasoned justification.

In recent years the Council has attempted to refine the 25 acres per thousand goal through results it has obtained from demand-user studies it has conducted. The studies were intended to tell the Council, among other things, who uses the regional parks, what their attitudes are about the parks, how they compare parks in the system, and how knowledgeable they are about parks in the system.

There are shortcomings in both ways of measuring need for parkland. With regard to the 25 acres per thousand standard,

it is obvious that not all acres have the same value in terms of recreation opportunities. For example 25 acres of marshland have a different value than 25 acres of picnicing grounds. Also, not all people have the same need for recreation space or opportunity. The Council admits these shortcomings, but still sees the standard as a useful planning tool.

The demand-user surveys cannot be used as an absolute measure of need for parkland either. Existing data gathered between 1976 and 1978 provide a fairly accurate description of the people surveyed, but the sample sizes used in those surveys are so small as to make it impossible to make accurate generalizations about the non-survey population. The surveys were designed to count users on five weekend days and five week days each year. Poor weather and other factors made it possible to actually obtain data on fewer days. Even if data had been collected as intended the confidence intervals regarding park users would be 'hardly calculatable' being very, very large, according to Charlie Smith, the Metropolitan Council staff person in charge of the studies.

In summary, and as the council staff member who conducted these user studies told us, recreation needs have never been well defined. Need is still a subjective judgment. The need for leisure activity has been documented. But it is not possible to extrapolate that documentation in terms of kinds of facilities, types of land, amounts of open space, or location of facilities.

**According to the standards that have been used, there are substantial acres of large open space parkland today on the eastern side of the metropolitan area.**

Using the Council's standards we calculated that there are approximately 42 acres of parkland in the state and regional park systems combined per thousand people in Washington County. In addition, there are considerable acres and resources in the area, including the St. Croix River, protected from non-park development by the federal and state law. There are also at least 1,300 acres of parkland in large tracts under private ownership in Washington County.

In Ramsey County, there are approximately 17 acres of parkland in the state and regional systems per thousand people. If the populations and park acres of Ramsey and Washington Counties are combined there are about 25 acres per thousand people in the counties now.

**These numbers might lead one to conclude that the region has enough parkland already.**

Council officials pointed out, however, that they are planning for the Year 2000, when the population and presumably the

park needs of the area will be greater than they are today. If the population of Washington County grows between now and Year 2000 at the rate projected by the Council (58 percent) and no additional acreage of land is acquired, the state and regional system acres will amount to about 25 acres per thousand people in the county. If the population of Ramsey County grows during that time as the Council projects (13 percent) there will be about 15 acres of state and regional parkland per thousand people, assuming no additional acquisition. Combining the acres and populations of the two counties, and assuming no additional park acquisition, there will be about 18 acres per thousand people in the Year 2000, about 2/3 the amount the Council says are needed.

**At least one of the three sites identified by the Council for acquisition is a unique natural resource, but it may also be a unique commercial resource.**

Grey Cloud Island is located in the Mississippi River approximately 12 miles from downtown Saint Paul. It must be considered unique to find a large tract of open space located so close to the built-up portion of the region and also with access to a water resource like the river.

The island is also unique because it contains limestone bluffs and vegetation not found elsewhere in the Twin Cities area.

The island may, however, also be unique as a commercial mining site. According to the J.L. Shiely Company, the key feature of the site is its proximity to the river, which provides the company with relatively inexpensive transportation. Currently, the company plans to continue mining on the island for at least another 50 years. An inventory of the Twin Cities' mineral resources, which is now being made, should help determine the relative value of the island for mining purposes compared to other mining sites in the region.

The 'Park vs. Mining' controversy pertains mostly to the upper part of the Grey Cloud Island. The lower half of the island is also unique though, for it contains archeological materials dating from about 500 to 1000 B.C. It is, according to Elden Johnson, chairman of the anthropology department at the University of Minnesota, the only site in the River Valley where several time periods are represented at the same site. This makes it very important from an archeological standpoint, according to Johnson.

The Shiely Company also has mining operations on the lower Island, but it is aware of the archeological sites there, and has decided not to mine in these areas.

At this time the Metropolitan Council's interest in Grey Cloud Island for park purposes pertains mostly to its natural features, not to its historical and archeological value. Although

no park boundaries have been proposed yet, the Council's interest is mostly in the upper island. While this part of Grey Cloud may also have archeological value, the Council may be missing an opportunity to preserve this special recreation resource on the lower island by not considering its unique features.

**The Square Lake site is unusual among lakes in the region for its cleanliness.**

A small (27 acre) park exists at Square Lake now, and is heavily used, especially by skin diving enthusiasts. The Council would like to expand the site by about 500 acres to protect the resource from over use.

**The third site, Big Marine Lake, represents a landscape type not now included in the Regional Recreation Open Space System, but one which is represented in private parklands in the area.**

Metropolitan Council staff told us that the Wilder Foundation Park in northern Washington County is a better example of the St. Croix topography than the Big Marine Lake site. The Council feels that, because the Wilder Park is private and not open for use at the public's discretion, it is not an adequate substitute for the Big Marine Lake site. Furthermore, the water resources at Big Marine Lake make it a desirable park site, according to the Council.

**The issue over whether to develop existing parkland before more is acquired is one all communities in the park business face. In the past, acquisition has usually received higher priority than development.**

Hennepin County has gone through the debate about the priorities of acquisition and development in the past, for its park system is more advanced than the one in Washington County. John Christian, the Director of Administration for the Park Reserve District, explained to us that the district has always put acquisition ahead of development as a priority. The Metropolitan Council has done the same with respect to the regional system.

The primary reason for the high priority given to acquisition is that it is commonly felt that land should be acquired when it becomes available for an affordable price. To wait on acquisition might mean losing valuable property to non-park development or having to purchase property for a higher price later.

Despite these benefits to early acquisition there are concerns about holding land vacant and failing to develop it. Some

people feel that once land is purchased for a park the public has a right to use it, and that it should be opened. Others do not like to incur costs for police surveillance or stewardship for land that is vacant.

While acquisition still takes top priority in the minds of most regional park officials, differences of opinion exist. Some people, at least some in Washington County, feel development of existing land should come before more acquisition occurs.

**Concerning whether more parkland should be developed in Ramsey County considering the growth in operating expenses this will cause, we found:**

**At least one municipality in Ramsey County has indicated formally that it would be willing to take over responsibilities for financing the operation of a regional park, if that would lead to its development.**

The City of New Brighton, in northern Ramsey County, petitioned the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission in early 1981 to designate the city as an implementing agency, authorizing it to operate and maintain the Long Lake-Rush Lake regional park. The reason for this request was that New Brighton wanted to see development of the park and was frustrated by the fact that Ramsey County had refused to accept regional funds for this development. The county, for its purposes, contended it was unable to finance the cost of operation and maintenance that would go along with development. New Brighton agreed to take over these expenses in order to get the park developed.

**Concerning the proposal to change the structure of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, we found:**

**This proposal raises broader issues pertaining to the structure of metropolitan government generally.**

The issue of the relationship between the Metropolitan Council and its subordinate boards is one of many that may be studied by a legislative commission during the interim between the 1981 and 1982 legislative sessions.

When the Metropolitan Council was first established the Legislature made a conscious decision to separate the Council itself from the day-to-day decisions related to metropolitan functions about which it was to make general policy. Also, the Metropolitan Council was given responsibility to appoint the members of the subordinate boards. These boards were intended to advise the Council as to the regional interest in the

policy areas that fell under the Council jurisdiction, the boards were not intended to be associations of local governments that would communicate local needs to the Council.

The Citizens League has continued to support the concept of the Council as a policymaking body representing people, not governments.

**Regardless of its broader implications, changing the structure of the MPOSC is not necessary to give Washington County more control over decisions that affect operations and maintenance expenses.**

Local governments incur costs anytime they acquire land. Consequently, were Washington County to acquire the land designated for parks purposes by the Council, the county would need to pay for police and fire protection of the land, even if it was not developed as a park. The Council would pay costs for planning the acquisition.

Operation and maintenance expenses are a function primarily of development policies much more than acquisition, however, and local governments control development specifications to a large degree now.

Once a park is developed many expenses are incurred for such things as street maintenance, parking lot care, trail maintenance, building care, and staff time. The way in which the development is designed and implemented can affect the costs of operating significantly. According to Bernard Edmonds, the Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation for Ramsey County, the highest expenses for operations are associated with staff. Local governments determine development plans however, not the Metropolitan Council.

**As we discussed issues on the eastern side of the region we found that several strategies to resolve them have received little attention.**

**Other strategies to promote funding for operations and maintenance, besides state or regional funding, are available which have not received adequate attention.**

**As an alternative to state or regional funding for operations and maintenance, the Council could, for example, continue relying upon counties and cities to fund these expenses, but encourage formation of a joint powers arrangement between Washington and Ramsey Counties or a special purpose district on the eastern side of the region.**

The joint powers arrangement that now exists between Scott

and Hennepin County provides a model that could be followed on the eastern side of the metropolitan area. The Scott-Hennepin agreement was established for several reasons. The primary consideration was that Scott County wanted to play a role in the regional park system but did not want to make a major investment involved in establishing a parks department, hiring employees, buying equipment, and making operating policies. Part of the reason the county wanted to get involved in regional park operations was to avoid having the Metropolitan Council take on an operating role in their county. The Hennepin County Park Reserve District agreed to operate the parks in Scott County and an arrangement was worked out to share financing and policy-making responsibilities.

Some people think this kind of arrangement might also work in Washington County. Some have said that Ramsey County has the money and people, and Washington County has the land. The challenge is to get these two counties together.

A special park district on the eastern side of the region would probably be similar to the Hennepin County Park Reserve District on the western side of the region. Such a government would probably have its own board, separate from the county boards and it would be responsible for delivering only park services. It might have its own budget-making authority too.

**Another strategy would involve relying on new ways of financing and delivering regional park services, which put more responsibility in the hands of people directly involved in using the parks.**

This strategy might involve expanding the use of fees and charges. There are a number of parks in the regional system in both Ramsey and Washington Counties where fees could be reasonably charged. Some people would undoubtedly be willing to pay fees to enjoy the unique attractions such as skin diving facilities at Square Lake, the zoo at Como Park, and the unique geological formations at Grey Cloud Island (should it ever become a park). Today fees are not charged at regional parks in Ramsey or Washington County.

This strategy might also involve expanding the number of agencies involved in operating the system. Counties or the Council might try letting private companies, volunteer groups or municipal park departments operate certain regional park facilities, for example. This is the basic strategy that made possible development of the Long Lake-Rush Lake regional park recently. New Brighton agreed to finance and deliver police and fire protection in the park, and to provide services at the park beach. Ramsey County will provide other maintenance services. This could relieve counties of the responsibility to tax for operating revenue and it might lead to creative ways of attracting users to the regional parks. Today the Council has a policy of limiting to the existing agencies the responsibility

of operating the regional parks.

**One final strategy, that would apply to acquisition, development, and operations, would be to go back to the original idea of having a regional park operating commission.**

Under such a plan the region would own and operate the parks through a commission similar to the regional commissions for transit, airports, sewers and other services.

**With regard to encouraging additional acquisition and development the Council has at least four strategies, besides providing regional or state money for operations and maintenance.**

**One strategy would be for the Metropolitan Council to use its 'back-up' powers to accomplish additional acquisition or development.**

The 1974 Metropolitan Parks Act gives the Metropolitan Council power that enables it to override the kind of local opposition to acquisition which it now faces in Washington County. The act stipulates that the Council must first offer a grant for acquisition to the county in which the designated parkland exists. If, after a specified period of time, this county does not accept the grant, the Council can offer it to another implementing agency. If no other agency is willing to acquire the land, then the Council can itself move in to acquire it, although the Council must do so on a willing seller/willing buyer basis. The Council does not have the power of eminent domain.

The same kind of strategy might also be used with development grant money.

The Council has never used its authority to offer a grant to counties for acquisition or development of land outside their borders. The Council has never acquired land itself, and would like to avoid doing so. There has been some discussion about using this power to overcome the delays in Washington and Ramsey Counties.

**Another strategy would be for the Council to simply continue trying to convince Washington and Ramsey Counties to change their minds about acquiring and developing additional parkland. There is some indication that this strategy might just work.**

The Washington County Board recently rescinded the moratorium on park acquisition, which it passed two years ago. Their decision was precipitated by formation of citizens task force that is generating support for parks in the county.

Also, a survey of Washington County residents recently conducted by the County Board indicated substantial support for more park services.

As we noted earlier in this report, there is strong local support for a park at the Grey Cloud Island site. Also, discussions have occurred over a potential compromise site for acquisition in the northern part of Washington County. A landowner in the area of Big Marine Lake may be willing to sell his land for park purposes. A park at this site would provide public access to Big Marine Lake and would also preserve the landscape features the Metropolitan Council is looking for.

In Ramsey County a plan was worked out in June to go ahead with development of the Long Lake-Rush Lake Regional Park once the Council began considering ways to accomplish this without Ramsey County involvement.

**A third strategy would be for the Council to simply forget about trying to buy more parkland in Washington County, and concentrate on improving the existing parks there or buying more parkland in other counties.**

Ramsey County residents can use parks in Anoka and Dakota counties, and in Ramsey County, just as easily as they can use parks in Washington County. Perhaps the need for parks in Washington County is not worth the effort to get them, and the objectives of the Council, (at least those associated with satisfying recreational opportunities) could be solved other ways.

**A fourth strategy would be for the Council to support the efforts of the Metropolitan Park Foundation or other private groups interested in preserving land for parks purposes.**

Much of the land in the existing Hennepin County Park System was originally acquired through the generosity and work of private persons. Perhaps this ought to be the way land in Washington County is preserved as well.

**There are pros and cons to each of these strategies.**

*Forming a joint powers arrangement between Ramsey and Washington County* might overcome the inequities people are concerned about related to non-resident use. It might also enable the counties to achieve efficiencies in administering parks programs. Finally, it would maintain local control over park services.

Practically speaking, however, a joint powers arrangement may be unlikely. Conditions on the eastern side of the metropolitan area now are different than were conditions on the western side of the region when Hennepin and Scott Counties made their joint powers agreement. In the Scott-Hennepin case there

were two counties committed to building a park system and willing to spend the money to operate the parks. Washington and Ramsey Counties are more reluctant to make major parks initiatives now. This is undoubtedly due partly to the financial conditions they face but it may also be due to a philosophy about parks that is different than that held by Hennepin and Scott County people.

*Creating a special purpose park district on the east side of the region* is more likely to assure an adequate source of revenue to operate regional parks than is a joint powers arrangement or the current method of financing. This is especially true if a district were created with independent levy or budget authority. Even without this authority though, a district would represent a formal advocate for parks on the east side of the region.

There are serious questions to be asked, however, about whether it is good public policy to insulate parks from other public services by creating a separate government for parks. Also, it is questionable whether the county governments of Ramsey and Washington would create such a special purpose district or give it independent levy or budgeting authority.

*Relying upon new ways of financing and delivering regional park services* may have several advantages. It might generate new ways of marketing park services and thereby expand the constituency for the regional system (something everyone in the parks business agrees is necessary).

Greater reliance on user fees and charges would help overcome at least some of the concern about inequities due to non-resident use. Some people argue that this strategy would insure that parks spending reflects the value the public places on parks relative to other services, this being a worthwhile objective they say. Greater reliance on fees might also help resolve the controversy over how much parkland is needed.

This strategy might lead to more diversity in the regional open space system and less government control over its operations. Some people would probably object to such a development.

*Finally, creating a metropolitan park operating board* would be a major change in current policy, and any proposal to do so is likely to generate considerable political controversy. It might, in fact, raise discussion about the relative powers of the Metropolitan Council and local governments in all service areas, not just parks. This would undoubtedly occur if a proposal for a Metropolitan Park Board were accompanied by a proposal for additional Council taxing authority.

The creation of such a commission, with operating responsibilities would, however, give the Council control over the regional park system. It would enable the Council to overcome the concern about inequities in financing and service, and to develop the system at whatever pace it determined appro-



priate. It would probably also provide a more stable source of revenue for financing the operations of the regional system than does the current method of financing. (Assuming parks were funded from a dedicated revenue fund rather than a general purpose regional fund.)

*Using the Council's 'back-up' powers to acquire land* would be politically very controversial, unless the Council had the support of the local governments most affected by the acquisition. Also, Council acquisition in Washington County would not do anything to overcome the alleged problems in Ramsey County.

*Trying to get the counties to change their minds* might be possible, but acquisition and development would probably have to be delayed until public support for parks could be

developed further. In the case of Washington County, this delay might mean purchasing the land for a higher price than it could be purchased today.

*Dropping the interest in acquisition in Washington County* might be justifiable, but it would mean forfeiting what some people consider unique park sites in the county. Furthermore, it would not do anything for Ramsey County's problems. These problems might even get worse if the population of Washington County continues to grow to the point where more of its residents travel to Ramsey County to use parks.

*Relying upon and supporting the Metropolitan Park Foundation* might be an effective way to protect land from non-park development. It might also mean side-stepping the wishes of the Washington County Board.

## CONCLUSIONS

**The case for financing the operation of metropolitan parks on a regional or state basis is not a compelling one.**

The facts do not indicate that Washington County is being asked to finance relatively high park expenses compared to other counties in the region. Nor is there evidence that Washington County cannot afford the expenses it has now. Indeed, it seems to us that if the people of Washington County wanted to spend more on parks they could. Washington County is not providing substantial numbers of non-residents with free park use. In fact, the information available indicates that the county is a net exporter of park users.

Providing regional or state funding for park operations will not insure acquisition of more parkland in Washington County. There is strong local opposition to acquisition at some locations, regardless of how the operating expenses are financed. The support for parks in other parts of the county suggests that regional or state financing for operations may not be the key issue in accomplishing acquisition.

Ramsey County may be feeling budgetary constraints today, but we think the county could, and should be expected to do more to finance regional park operations. Today no user fees are charged in any of Ramsey County's regional parks. Also, a major source of the county's park budget problems are its ice arenas. We think the county should be expected to find ways to reduce this burden and thereby reduce the constraints it faces with regard to financing regional parks.

Regardless of whether regional or state funding for all operating expenses is justifiable, we think there are several potential problems with it that ought to discourage its use. These disadvantages include the loss of local control over park operations and the potential overspending that would result from regional or state funding.

State funding for regional park operating expenses cannot be expected. The state is facing budget constraints of its own. It is unlikely that the Legislature will allocate money for regional park operations when it can barely balance the state budget.

**The pace of remaining acquisition and development of parks on the eastern side of the metropolitan area is best determined by what agreements can be negotiated.**

The pace at which acquisition and development should proceed is very difficult to determine. A significant amount of parkland has already been acquired and developed. Judgments about whether the existing supply is adequate to satisfy needs for recreation are based largely upon personal values rather than factual information.

Preservation of rare natural resources and landscape types is a reasonable objective, but we were not persuaded that it warranted immediate further acquisition.

We think the final decisions about when and where to proceed with acquisition and development should be worked out through negotiations. This seems especially appropriate considering the concerns about the future cost of operation and maintenance.

**Ramsey County and Washington County have mutual long term interests in parks.**

Ramsey County has a clear long term interest in the acquisition and development of parks in Washington County. Ramsey County has no more large tracts of land available for park use. If Ramsey County residents want more park facilities than they have now, especially if they want large open space parks, they will have to find them in Washington County. Ramsey County also has an immediate interest in working with Washington County in order to get Washington County to share in financing the operations of parks in Ramsey County that Washington County residents use.

Washington County should also be interested in working with Ramsey County in the future on parks matters. Washington County is in the very early stages of starting a parks program. It could benefit from the expertise Ramsey County has developed over the years in developing and operating parks. Washington County may be able to achieve operating efficiencies in the long term future by sharing equipment, personnel, as well as planning, with Ramsey County. Washington County should also be interested in working out an arrangement with Ramsey County to share in the financing of parks in Washington County which will be used by Ramsey County residents.

**A central problem in parks policy analysis is in the lack of**

**adequate data on park user patterns.**

Existing data is of marginal utility for policy purposes. In the studies conducted between 1976 and 1978, for example, the sample sizes of park users were so small as to make it impossible to make valuable generalizations about park user patterns. According to the official in charge of these studies, "sample sizes two or three times as large would be needed to make reliable judgments about park user patterns," also, the data available are out of date now.

**The Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission should continue to concentrate on planning. No need exists to make the Commission a park operating agency.**

The primary responsibility for implementing the Regional Recreation Open Space System should rest with the counties and cities now performing this task. The Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission should focus its efforts on improving the data base that describes the system and its users, on expanding public awareness of the system, and on generally planning its implementation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Washington County and Ramsey County should enter into an agreement through which they can pool their revenues for park operations and negotiate the pace of further acquisition and development.**

A number of possible arrangements for this partnership exist. The agreement might be constituted through a joint powers agreement, similar to those which exist between the Hennepin County Park Reserve District and other counties on the western side of the region. The eastern counties might form a bi-county park commission, a less formal advisory board, or simply agree to meet on a regular basis as county boards to discuss park matters. We do not recommend, however, that the Counties establish a separate level of government on the eastern side of the region with independent taxing authority. We think the Counties should retain primary responsibility as implementing agencies for the Regional Recreation Open Space System.

By establishing a working partnership the two Counties can begin to view parks as an area-wide service involving the interests of both Counties. Through the partnership they should

negotiate the pace and location of acquisition and development, develop policies for operating parks and for sharing in the financing of operations. The Metropolitan Council should provide technical support to the counties and facilitate their joint efforts in any way that seems appropriate. The scope of work for the partnership, or its relations with other counties could evolve as park needs change.

The specific structural arrangements for the partnership are less important now than its creation. What is needed most now is to get Washington and Ramsey Counties talking to one another, in a formal setting, about their mutual park interests and obligations.

We think the Counties should establish this partnership voluntarily. The Metropolitan Council should, however, monitor progress toward the creation of the partnership including this effort in its report to the Legislature. If, by 1983, the partnership has not been created, legislation should be sought to accomplish this. We would not recommend, however, creation of a separate level of government with independent taxing authority.

## DISCUSSION OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**What incentives do Ramsey County, Washington County, and the Metropolitan Council have to form the partnership recommended?**

Ramsey County has obvious long term interest in the acquisition and development of parkland in Washington County. Ramsey County also has an interest in getting Washington County to share in financing the operations of parks in Ramsey County.

Washington County has an interest in the expertise Ramsey County has developed over the years for building and operating parks. Washington County also has an interest in getting Ramsey County to share in financing the operations of parks in Washington County that will someday be opened.

The Metropolitan Council needs a way to encourage cooperation toward the completion of the Regional Parks and Open Space System.

**Do the conclusions and recommendations of the committee, which pertain principally to the eastern side of the metropolitan area have significance for the rest of the region?**

They may. The sub-regional solution the committee recommended for the eastern half of the metropolitan area may have useful application on the western side of the region as well, specifically for Minneapolis and Hennepin County.

Minneapolis officials are becoming increasingly concerned about the use of parks in the city by non-residents, for these non-residents do not pay taxes to support the financing of city parks. It appears that most of these non-residents are coming from suburban Hennepin County. It is possible that a partnership arrangement could be established between Minneapolis and Hennepin County to resolve these concerns. The city and the county might find such a cooperative arrangement useful for providing services as well as for sharing financial obligations. Hennepin County might, under certain conditions, be interested in providing services in some of the larger natural resource base parks in the city, for example. The experience Hennepin County has had with cooperative arrangements with other counties, and the commitment to quality park service on the part of Minneapolis should make

**it possible to establish a working partnership between the city and the county.**

In a general way too, it appears to us that in the foreseeable future the best way to change the structure of the system to meet changing conditions will be to develop local and sub-regional cooperative arrangements. These cooperative arrangements enable local governments to retain the local control they desire. They keep the responsibilities for financing park operating expenses close to the people using the parks. This is especially important when budget constraints exist. Cooperative arrangements also are a good way to overcome the concerns people have about non-resident use of parks. They provide a way to keep the parks open for everyone and to insure that all users share in park financing.

Considering these advantages, the improbability of raising money at the state or regional level, and the potential disadvantages of doing so, local and sub-regional cooperative arrangements look attractive. The arrangements established so far, have worked well. We hope the same success can be experienced by Washington County and Ramsey County.

**Does the committee think that regional or state funding for metropolitan park operations will be needed?**

The committee does not think regional or state funding can be ruled out forever for two reasons.

**If there exists an overriding regional or state interest in providing a level of park service that local governments cannot afford, or if park user patterns indicate that parks in the system are being used by people from across the region, it may be appropriate for the state or region to participate in financing regional park operations.**

Today these conditions do not exist. We have not found an overriding regional or state interest in forcing local governments to provide park service far beyond the level provided now. Data on user habits appear to indicate a 'sub-regional' user pattern. The data are limited though, and more study is needed before a case can be made for regional or state involvement in financing parks can be justified.

## WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

### CHARGE TO THE COMMITTEE

The committee shall review the obstacles to financing the maintenance and operation of metropolitan level parks on the eastern side of the metropolitan area, from which much of the resistance to metropolitan parks has been coming in recent years. The committee shall develop conclusions and recommendations for the 1981 Legislature. It shall review the report of the Citizens League Metropolitan Parks Committee which was submitted to the Board of Directors in 1979, but not acted upon, and the recent recommendations of the Metropolitan Council's Parks and Open Space Commission.

### TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP

A total of 11 people participated actively in developing the report. These included:

**Lois Yellowthunder, Chairman**  
**Mary Rae Adamson**  
**Jan Anderson**  
**James Dinerstein**  
**W. D. Donaldson**  
**Ruth Hass**

**Eva Ingle**  
**Maxine Nelson**  
**Mark Nolan**  
**Betty Nowicki**  
**Patrick O'Leary**

The committee met 15 times. The first several meetings were held bi-weekly at lunch on Fridays. The task force moved to evening meetings during its final weeks of deliberations. The committee started meeting on November 14, 1980 and held its last meeting on June 19, 1981. All meetings were held in downtown Saint Paul.

### RESOURCE GUESTS

During the first stage of the committee's work it relied upon testimony from resource people in the community to develop background on issues related to metropolitan parks. The Citizens League and the committee members would like to thank the following people for assisting the committee's work in this way:

**Bill Campion**, supervisor, May Township  
**John Christian**, director, Hennepin County Park Reserve District  
**Bernard Edmonds**, assistant director, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department  
**Tom Kelley**, director, Community Services, Saint Paul  
**Ray Lappegaard**, representative, J.L. Shiely Company  
**Bob Lockyear**, director, Washington County Courthouse  
**Robert Orth**, commissioner, Ramsey County  
**Elliott Perovich**, chairman, Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission  
**Robert Pulscher**, president, Springsted Inc.  
**Wesley Scheel**, commissioner, Washington County  
**Charles Smith**, planner, Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission  
**Harvey Stiefel**, chairman, Grey Cloud Island Town Board  
**Frank Westermeier**, member, Washington County Park Commission

**Staff assistance to the committee was provided by Bradley Richards, Paula Ballenger, and Joann Latulippe.**

TABLE I

## THE COMPONENTS OF THE REGIONAL RECREATION OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

COMPONENT	SERVICE AREA	SITE	SITE ATTRIBUTES	SITE LOCATION
Regional Park	3-5 communities*	200-500 acres (100 acres minimum)	Complete natural setting contiguous to water bodies or water courses where possible	Where natural resource occurs—particularly water
Regional Park Reserve	County Multi-County	1000+ acres; sufficient area to encompass the resource envisioned for preservation	Diversity of unique resources, i.e., topography, lakes, streams, marshes, flora, fauna	Where resource occurs
Linear Park (trails, Corridors, Parkways)		Sufficient width to provide maximum protection of resource and maximum use: sufficient length to accomplish purpose	Utilize man-made and/or natural linear resources such as utility corridors, rights-of-way, drainage ways, bluff lines, vegetation patterns, and roads	Where linear resource occurs. Link components of recreation system. Link other community facilities such as schools, library, and commercial areas
Historic Park		Sufficient area to encompass facility or resource	Historically significant—represent the broad cultural, political, economic, military, or social history; associated with historical figure, architectural specimen, major archeological site. Large enough to protect all significant resources	Where resource occurs; where event occurred
Special Use		Specific standard applicable to desired use	Appropriate to particular special use	Within park reserve or regional park except for water access sites, steep slopes for skiing, and Noerenberg Floral Display Garden

Community in this context is a grouping of neighborhoods, as defined above, and not a unit of government.

SOURCE: Metropolitan Council, 1981.

TABLE 2

## SELECTED DATA BY PARK IMPLEMENTING AGENCY

	ANOKA	CARVER	DAKOTA	HENNEPIN	RAMSEY	SCOTT	WASHINGTON	MINNEAPOLIS	SAINT PAUL	METRO AREA
<b>I. PARK ACREAGE</b>										
<b>Regional system acres<sup>1</sup></b>										
—Proposed	6,860	790	6,060	21,290	5,930	4,750	7,400	2,350	1,100	56,530
—Acquired	6,190	601	3,320	18,975	5,860	4,270	2,290	2,260	1,060	44,785
State parks—Proposed							2,971			5,391
—Acquired			800	800	800		2,422			4,822
Private parks							1,330			
State and federal riverway, parks and refuge acres—Proposed										18,000
—Acquired										12,179
Minnesota Zoo			480							480
Carlos Avery Wild Life Management Area	14,403									14,403
Acquired regional and state system per 1,000 people	30.9	16.6	23.0	21.3	14.7	94.0	42.0			
<b>II. POPULATION</b>										
Total population 1980 <sup>2</sup>	200,140	36,510	196,990	928,932	452,036	45,560	113,510			
Percent change 1970-1980	+29	+29	+29	-3	-5	+41	+35			
Projected population for Year 2000	251,350	64,930	312,510	1,065,500	510,800	67,400	179,510			
Percent change 1980-2000	+25	+78	+59	+15	+13	+48	+58			
<b>III. TAX AND FINANCE</b>										
1978 median household income <sup>3</sup>	\$15,612	\$12,437	\$14,914	\$11,447	\$11,591	\$13,549	\$16,074			
1979 median effective house- hold buying power <sup>4</sup>	\$21,324	\$21,823	\$21,071	\$21,933	\$21,967	\$20,422	\$22,377			
Mill rate for parks 1979 payable 1980	.969	.756	.865	.775	.789	.273	.256			
Mill levy for regional parks				.775	.236	.256				

<sup>1</sup>Metropolitan Regional Open Space Development Guide Policy Plan, November 6, 1980.<sup>2</sup>Metropolitan Council, preliminary 1980 population estimates, and unofficial census for 1980.<sup>3</sup>Minnesota State Planning, based on 1978 State Income Tax Returns.<sup>4</sup>Metropolitan Council, from *Sales, Marketing, and Management* magazine (published by Bill Publications, New York). "Effective Buying Power" includes salaries and wages, proprietor income, dividends, transfer payments, employee contributions to pension funds.



TABLE 3

## CAPITAL FINANCING OF THE REGIONAL PARK SYSTEM

YEAR	AMOUNT (in millions)	PURPOSE	FUNDING AGENT	REVENUE SOURCE
1974	\$40.0	Acquisition and development	Metropolitan Council	Regional bonds
1974	2.0	Debt service on regional bonds	State government	State cigarette revenue
1975	20.0	Debt service on regional bonds	State government	State bonds
1975	2.0	Debt service on regional bonds	State government	State cigarette taxes
1977	27.3	Acquisition and development	State government	State bonds
1977	2.0	Debt service on regional bonds	State government	State cigarette taxes
1979	27.0	Acquisition and development	State government	State bonds
1979	2.3	Redevelopment of Como Zoo	Metropolitan Council	Regional bonds
1981	12.5	Acquisition and development	State government	State bonds

SOURCE: Metropolitan Council, 1981.

TABLE 6

## PROPERTY TAX BURDEN IN RAMSEY COUNTY

Community	1981 Total Mill Rate Non. Agricultural	Total Mill Rate Non. Agricultural	Estimated Tax	Percent Decrease in Total Tax 1980-1981
Arden Hills	85.707	92.044	\$407	12.1
Falcon Heights	87.193	100.071	500	10.9
Little Canada	96.680	108.736	267	11.8
Maplewood	87.990	102.814	494	13.9
Moundsvie	91.993	99.002	549	.2
New Brighton	87.459	94.380	460	9.6
North Oaks	84.414	90.148	484	2.6
North St. Paul	87.962	99.683	440	14.8
Roseville	84.328	97.947	382	10.0
St. Paul	94.826	115.081	496	202.0
Shoreview	87.351	95.664	409	12.4
Vadnais Heights	91.259	105.637	503	14.8
White Bear Lake	89.618	103.248	501	10.0
White Bear Twp.	82.128	95.880	384	12.2

Homestead with selling price of \$68,000.

SOURCE: CL annual survey of property taxes in the metropolitan area.

TABLE 7

## COMPARATIVE TAX BURDENS PER COUNTY

County	1981 Average County Mill Rates	Average Property Tax on a \$68,000 Home
Anoka	89.5	\$423
Dakota	97.3	376
Hennepin	90.5	439
Ramsey	88.5	441
Scott	101.4	496
Washington	92.8	411

SOURCE: CL Staff

## WHAT THE CITIZENS LEAGUE IS

Formed in 1952, the Citizens League is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit, educational corporation dedicated to understanding and helping to solve complex public problems of our metropolitan area.

Volunteer research committees of the Citizens League develop recommendations for solutions after months of intensive work.

Over the years, the League's research reports have been among the most helpful and reliable sources of information for governmental and civic leaders, and others concerned with the problems of our area.

The League is supported by membership dues of individual members and membership contributions from businesses, foundations and other organizations throughout the metropolitan area.

You are invited to join the League, or, if already a member, invite a friend to join. An application blank is provided for your convenience on the reverse side.

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## WHAT THE CITIZENS LEAGUE DOES

### RESEARCH PROGRAM

- Four major studies are in progress regularly.
- Each committee works 2½ hours per week, normally for 6-10 months.
- Annually over 250 resource persons made presentations to an average of 25 members per session.
- A fulltime professional staff of seven provides direct committee assistance.
- An average in excess of 100 persons follow committee hearings with summary minutes prepared by staff.
- Full reports (normally 40-75 pages) are distributed to 1,000-2,000 persons, in addition to 3,000 summaries provided through the CL NEWS.

### CL NEWS

- Four pages; published every other week; mailed to all members.
- Reports activities of the Citizens League, meetings, publications, studies in progress, pending appointments.
- Analysis, data and general background information on public affairs issues in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

### PUBLIC AFFAIRS ACTION PROGRAM

- Members of League study committees have been called on frequently to pursue the work further with governmental or nongovernmental agencies.
- The League routinely follows up on its reports to transfer, out to the larger group of persons involved in public life, an understanding of current community problems and League solutions.

### COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP MEETINGS

- Held from September through May.
- Minneapolis breakfasts are held each Tuesday at the Grain Exchange Cafeteria, 7:30 - 8:30 a.m.
- Saint Paul lunches are held every other Thursday at the Landmark Center, noon to 1 p.m.
- South Suburban breakfasts are held the last Friday of each month at the Lincoln Del, 4401 W. 80th Street, Bloomington, 7:30 - 8:45 a.m.
- An average of 35 persons attend each of the 64 meetings each year.
- The programs attract news coverage in the daily press, television and radio.

### QUESTION-AND-ANSWER LUNCHEONS

- Feature national or local authorities, who respond to questions from a panel on key public policy issues.
- Each year several Q & A luncheons are held throughout the metropolitan area.

### PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIRECTORY

- A directory is prepared following even-year general elections and distributed to the membership.

### INFORMATION ASSISTANCE

- The League responds to many requests for information and provides speakers to community groups on topics studied.

**Citizens League** non-partisan public affairs research and education in the St. Paul-Minneapolis metropolitan area. **84 S. 6th St., Minneapolis, Mn. 55402 (612) 338-0791**

### Application for Membership (C.L. Membership Contributions are tax deductible)

Please check one: ☐ Individual (\$20) ☐ Family (\$30) ☐ Contributing (\$35-\$99) ☐ Sustaining (\$100 and up)  
Send mail to: ☐ home ☐ office ☐ Fulltime Student (\$10)

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ADDRESS

CITY/STATE/ZIP

EMPLOYER/TELEPHONE

POSITION

EMPLOYER'S ADDRESS

CL Membership suggested by

(If family membership, please fill in the following.)

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