

# Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

## Designation Application

### General Section

Designation Application #: 14-017D      Date Submitted: 08/07/2015

Park or Trail Name: Gamehaven Park

District #: 6      Map Coordinates (Latitude and Longitude): Latitude: 43.9491 Longitude: -92.4381

#### Location Description:

\*Gamehaven Sports and Recreation Park is a premier property of 364 acres in Southeast Minnesota. It has the potential to provide residents of Southeast Minnesota and visitors to the area a top-tier environment to participate in outdoor activities and to pursue healthy lifestyles. The property has several important features related to development potential, including its large size, its vicinity to significant local populations, and its many natural and untapped features. If developed, this park has the potential to enhance thousands of lives through outdoor recreation and enjoyment of the outdoors in general. Located just east of the southern boundary of Rochester's city limits, this park was created in the 1980's to mitigate flooding through construction of a 40-acre retention reservoir. Access is available from both 45th Street SE to the North and from Gamehaven Scout Reservation (an abutting 265 acre, wooded Boy Scout camp neighboring the Park's east). The Park is largely undeveloped except for limited fishing, an archery range, hiking, and recent construction of mountain bike trails. An initiative to build mountain bike trails was supported by the Rochester Park and Recreation Board as well as the South Zumbro Watershed Joint Powers Board who oversees management of the reservoir and associated dam. Trail construction began in July 2012 and is ongoing. The effort has been a cooperative project between the all-volunteer Rochester Active Sports Club (501c3 non-profit) and the Gamehaven Boy Scouts, who benefit from the trails for their planned programs. Approximately 3.5 miles of mountain bike trails have been built to date with 4 more miles in the design/build phase.

Lead Applicant Organization: Rochester Park and Recreation Department

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Joint Applicant #1 Organization: Olmsted County

Joint Applicant #2 Organization: Rochester Township

Joint Applicant #3 Organization: Marion Township

Joint Applicant #4 Organization: South Zumbro Watershed Joint Powers Board

Describe other project supporters:

Partnership collaborations between the Rochester Active Sports Club, Rochester Park and Recreation

Department, Olmsted County Parks, DNR, and Gamehaven Boy Scouts have been outstanding. As more detailed planning for the Park progresses, other organizations will join. Excellent synergy among local government entities is of significance in developing Gamehaven's potential.

### Description Section

Classification: Natural Resource Based Regional Park

Total proposed acreage:

#### Overview/Description of Park or Trail:

Like many Minnesota communities, Rochester experiences large variations in winter conditions. When warmer, low-snow conditions prevail, outside sports and activities are highly disrupted due to the inability to plan, promote and participate. This is a deterrent to developing the needed skills to enjoy and participate in winter sports. To improve and provide a consistent venue for winter activities, many communities have implemented snow making as a solution. Examples include Elm Creek, Maple Grove; Hyland Park, Bloomington; and Theodore Wirth Park, Minneapolis. Extensive thought and planning has taken place in determining activities for the park. Driven from the demand for a place where sustainable winter sports could take place, parks in Rochester and nearby Rochester in Olmsted County were studied. Attributes, like openness, vertical elevation change, and water source (for snow making) were key criteria. From these studies the Gamehaven site emerged as the best location. Regional significance - the Park will be designed for the pleasure of all ages and offer a broad range of activities appealing to the general population. Being the only park in southern Minnesota having snow making capability for winter activities will be a major attraction for residents across the region. Rochester, the third largest City in Minnesota, naturally attracts people from Districts 5 and 6 for shopping as well as other pleasures. An attractive park will be another reason for a visit. The Mayo Clinic attracts 2.5 million visitors from all over the United States as well other countries. Gamehaven Facilities Winter - Lighted 3 - 5 Kilometer Nordic Ski Trail - for citizen skiers and high and middle school teams. - Ten lane tubing Hill and a magic carpet to transport kids and families of all ages. tubes provided - Terrain Park for introductory snow boarding and Alpine skiers for new and skilled skiers - Mountain Bike Trails for winter mountain biking - Fat Bikes - Snow shoeing in beautiful forested areas Spring, Summer, Fall - Mountain Biking on 7 miles of trails - Pump Park - to improve riding skills - Hiking on trails surrounding the lake - Paddle boarding, kayaking on the 39 acre reservoir - Disc Golf -18 hole course has the potential to be the longest and most challenging in the state, a destination for players around the mid west - Trail running to get a good workout in a pleasant setting - Fishing in the reservoir for pan fish and bass - managed by DNR - Multi-purpose paved trail around the lake for hiking, biking and walking - A nature based outdoor play area bringing kids closer to nature The Park will be available to all. The programming plans recognize the need to supplement park activities with programs to help people get started in a sport or activity. Programs will be offered at appropriate times for ability levels and genders to attract and encourage people to become more active. Rental equipment will make it easy for the general public to take the first step to get involved in an activity.

What is the Acquisition and Development Status?

- New Park or Trail (no land acquired or developed)
- Existing Park or Trail
  - Land Acquisition

Status: Because the park is not large enough to accommodate all of the planned uses, growth of the park boundary is necessary. As part of the expansion of recreational activities the City is looking to acquire between 70 and 150 acres. The preferred parcels lay northwesterly of the original reservoir property, however, other parcels in the immediate area may also meet the park needs. The preferred property is under the control of two different property owners. The final parcels which may be considered for inclusion in the project will depend on site characteristics and property availability.

Percentage of Land Acquired: this would increase the park size by 20 to 40 percent

- Development Status
  - No Development
  - Some Development, but more Proposed
    - New Facilities Proposed
    - Existing Facilities to be Upgraded
  - Fully Development

Facility Listing Section

Classification: Natural Resource Based Regional Park	
Existing Facility List	Proposed Facility List
Mountain Biking Trails (natural), Archery/Shooting ranges, Roads and Parking Areas, The Park is largely undeveloped except for a small parking lot, limited fishing, an archery range, hiking, and recent construction of mountain bike trails.	Picknicking and picnic shelters, Walking Trails (paved), Hiking Trails (natural), Biking trails (paved), Mountain Biking Trails (natural), Cross-country Skiing Trails, Canoeing Facilities, Fishing Piers, Visitor Center, Play Areas, with an outdoor theme, Archery/Shooting ranges, Restrooms/sanitation building, Roads and Parking Areas, Snow making capability for Nordic skiing, Tubing hill, and Terrain Park

Master Plan Status Section

Master Plan Status: Master Plan meeting requirements of strategic plan is available

Describe Other Supportive Information:  
no additional documents

Classification Details Section

Classification: Natural Resource Based Regional Park

Criteria #1 Provides a High-Quality Outdoor Recreation Experience: With addition of snowmaking capability, Gamehaven Park will offer dependable and quality outdoor sports and activities year round. No similar facility exists in the southern Greater Minnesota Districts, especially those offering a broad range of appealing activities. Nordic Skiing, Snow Cross, Tubing, Snow Boarding and snow-shoeing are just some of the winter activities benefiting from snow making. An example of "build it and they will come" is our experience with our high and middle schools Nordic ski team. The program started in 2001 with 3 students. It has grown to 200 students - the largest in the State. Unlike many sports, Nordic skiing is one that a person can do throughout their life. Describing the value of learning life time skills is High School senior Angela Patel - please see appendix. Other growing aerobic sports are mountain biking, fat bikes, and trail running. Rochester also has a high school mountain bike team This team is part of the rapidly growing Minnesota High School Cycling League with over 500 riders. Fat Bikes have become very popular for winter riding on the snow covered trails. Trail running is also a growing sport. The Gamehaven trails will provide runners with inviting, diverse terrain. In the winter, an attractive chalet facility will provide food and beverages, a place to warm up as well as rental of classical and skate ski equipment will invite visitors to "give it a try". Beginning or more intense instruction will quickly help new visitors become comfortable with their new experience. Lights on the Nordic ski trails, tubing hill and Terrain Park will allow participants to enjoy activities during early morning and evening hours. The chalet will serve a broad set of uses throughout the year and provide a focal point to attract visitors.

Criteria #2 Preserves a Regionally-Significant and Diverse Natural or Historic Landscape: The existing natural features and landscape of the Gamehaven Park site provide the framework for the layout of the park's activities. It will provide an array of active recreational facilities and programs set into the context of diverse native and enhanced landscapes, woodlands, wetlands, and prairies. The Park's planned activities will be appropriately located to coexist and foster appreciation for the natural environment. The Gamehaven reservoir is also a key attraction allowing many uses as well as providing the opportunity to absorb nature in compelling and meaningful ways. Easy access to the 40 acre reservoir will provide a relatively sheltered lake for the growing activity of paddle boarding and kayaking. A pier will be constructed to accommodate fishing for local bass and pan fish. Key overlook points on small bluffs within the park allow great views of downtown Rochester in the distance. These interesting and engaging points provide reference in both literal and figurative meanings. Two Dry Bedrock Bluff Prairies were identified. On one (adjacent to the dam structure) a native plant *Valeriana edulis* var. *ciliate*, a state listed threatened plant was identified in 1994. These areas are plan to be preserved and identified to park visitors. The City is also creating wetlands from existing farmland in the southerly +- 150 acres of the property to help with water quality of the reservoir. This area will serve as an example of managing and improving our environment to Park visitors. The large area on the discharge side of the dam (north) is appropriately used for activities like Nordic skiing and Disc golf since it cannot contain any permanent structures.

Criteria #3 Well-located and Connected to Serve Regional Population and/or Tourist Destination: The following population data is taken from the Rochester Area Economic Development, Inc. Data Book. These projections not only show the need for a Regional Park of this nature in Rochester but its location is situated to best serve the population of SE Minnesota and its strong visitor base. Not only is the

projected growth compelling but the ability to provide a special "taste of Minnesota" to its visitors is a special opportunity. Rochester's MSA's highly diverse economy is built around health care, high technology, and agriculture. Major employers include: IBM-Rochester, Mayo Clinic, McNeilus Companies and Seneca. The Mayo Clinic and IBM, combined, employ more than 35,500 people. The Rochester, Minnesota, MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area) comprises all of Olmsted, Dodge and Wabasha Counties. Rochester is one of the nations fastest growing MSAs. The Kiplinger Personal Finance Magazine listed Rochester in the top "10 Best Cities for the Next Decade" and as "A Great Place to Raise a Family" A chart of the historical and projected growth is attached. Rochester experienced a 34% growth from 1990-2010. This will continue at a 30% rate through 2020. With the new DMC initiative Mayo Clinic will add another 25,000 to 30,000 Minnesota jobs over the next 20 years. Mayo is not your typical clinic. It is a medical destination where people come to Rochester from all over the country and abroad for medical attention. As a result, nearly 2.75 million people visit Rochester each year. Two connecting bike trails are also being planned. One trail will join city bike routes from downtown Rochester southward to Gamehaven and one will connect Gamehaven with Stewartville - which also establishes a Rochester to Stewartville corridor. Currently a bike trail exists only a ½ mile from the park.

Criteria #4 Fills a Gap in Recreational Opportunity within the Region: Due to erratic winter weather patterns, outdoor activities in Rochester suffer from limited ability to plan, promote and participate. As recognized by the Twin Cities Metro area, snowmaking capability is necessary to have consistent, dependable outdoor activities such as Nordic Skiing and tubing. A key feature of Gamehaven Park to provide outdoor activities 12 months a year. No similar facility exists in the southern Greater Minnesota Districts 5 or 6, especially one offering a snowmaking capability as well as a broad range of appealing activities. The sports and activities proposed for Gamehaven clearly provide outstanding outdoor recreational opportunities. The closest facilities of a size to meet a similar regional demand are located in the Twin Cities metro area. The closest facility with a snowmaking capability is at St Mary's University in Winona. It is limited to Nordic skiing. Other Rochester area parks have varying primary focuses: Quarry Hill Park - year-round natural science and environmental educational programs Oxbow Park - Natural setting and Minnesota animal species (Zollman Zoo) Chester Woods Park - Outdoor activities - camping, equestrian trails, hiking Cascade Lake Park - Transformed mining area - Outdoor activities - swimming, walking trails, Amphitheater Root River Park - Highly scenic featuring 90 foot bluffs along a ¾ mile of the Root River

Attachment List Section (only lists up to 10 documents)

Type	Description
Master Plan	Master plan added from master plan tab
Other	Rochester Area Growth Statistics
Location Map	Location map added from general tab
Other	The Value of Nordic Skiing
Master Plan	Gamehaven Master Plan
Location Map	Location map added from general tab

Other	The Value of Nordic Skiing