

Master Plan Requirements

As defined under *Application Process/Evaluation Protocol for Park and Trail Projects Seeking Regional Designation* (page 55), **a master plan is required for a park or trail to receive formal regional designation.** A master plan expands upon the information provided by cities, townships, and counties in Greater Minnesota in the *Application for Regional Designation*. **The Commission’s review and acceptance of a master plan is vital to affirming that a park or trail is well-vetted, regionally significant and merits formal regional designation.** *Master plans are required prior to any park or trail project becoming eligible for funding through the Commission.*

The master planning process is also seen as the best means to ensure that the initiator understands its own obligations and responsibilities as the local implementing agency, especially as it relates to funding, ongoing operations, maintenance and programming.

Note that any plans that are inconsistent or incomplete relative to the stated requirements will be returned with comments to the implementing agency – which will have a chance to revise and resubmit the plan for further consideration and reevaluation.

Master Plan Point of Focus

The main focus of a master plan should be on clearly describing the *regional-level purpose and compelling features* of the park or trail, along with what makes it a place that people will want to go to time and again. Specifically describing *unique features* and how the park or trail will provide a high quality outdoor experience not otherwise available in the area is especially encouraged.

Master Plan Minimal Requirements – General

At a minimum, the master plan content must include:

- **Introduction/overview** – general overview of the park or trail, including which classification it falls under
- **Proposer/implementing agency(s)** – clearly defines implementing agency(s), including regional partnerships supporting the project, such as cities, townships, and counties within a given region; where operations, management, maintenance, programming, etc. is a shared responsibility, details of that partnership should be provided; include any joint power or other forms of agreement spelling out relationships
- **Setting/regional context** – describe the location of the site, whether it is part of a city, township, or county system; also define proximity to, and interface with, other regional and state-level parks and trails, including how the park or trail would complement (not duplicate) facilities provided at those sites
- **Site information** – such as boundaries for existing and proposed parcels; natural land forms and other site resources; site limitations; and other conditions affecting acquisition or development
- **Vision, trends, and public values** – including a vision statement and statements related to: 1) demographic information influencing demand, 2) recreational trends information, 3) public health values, and 4) economic development/tourism opportunities

Master Plan References!
The Commission’s website has a variety of master plans available for review.

- **Regional Significance Statement:** define the classification that the park or trail falls under, and describe how it conforms to/addresses the evaluation criteria established for its classification
- **Public input/participation** – *local citizen participation in the process is required*; provide a summary of findings from general public outreach and interest group input; define any areas of conflict, and how that is resolved
- **Development master plan** – describe proposed features/development program, and support with site maps, site plans (detailed design and construction-levels drawings are not required), aerial images, site photos, graphics, and written text; address accessibility
- **Ecological/land resources plan** – describe the natural and land resources found across the site, and strategy for protecting and managing land and water resource (at master plan level); as available, include mapping and other documentation about key natural, cultural and historic features (e.g., Minnesota Land Cover Classification System, Minnesota County Biological Survey, Natural Heritage Information System)
- **Programming plan** – describe the type of programs that are envisioned, along with responsible agency
- **Research plan** – provide a statement that implementing agencies will participate in Commission research initiatives (visitation counts, use profiles, recreation demands and trends surveys, etc.) as these programs are developed and implemented over time; describe any research initiatives and data management initiatives that the implementing agency is planning to use for its own purposes
- **Implementation, management, and sustainability plan** – describes the implementation strategy and development priorities; include implementation cost projections (acquisition, development, operations, and maintenance) and any phasing being considered; cost estimating should be based on a master plan-level evaluation (detailed construction-level cost estimates are not required); operations and management plan should include rules, regulations or ordinances affecting the site; local sources of funding and revenue to develop, operate and maintain facilities should be outlined

Master Plan Requirements – Smaller Projects

On occasion, smaller-scale projects may warrant some flexibility on the extent to which the various elements of a master plan will be required to be addressed. *If requested, the Commission will make a determination regarding any flexibility on meeting master plan requirements.*

Note that even though the requirements for smaller-scale projects may be more limited, *all* projects are required to complete a master plan to ensure reasonable consistency in the evaluation process and ability to fully vet a project.