

 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Council Communication</b> Office of the City Manager</p>	<b>Date:</b> January 27, 2014
	<b>Agenda Item No.</b> 31 <b>Roll Call No.</b> <u>14-0149</u> <b>Communication No.</b> <u>14-035</u> <b>Submitted by:</b> Benjamin R. Page, <b>Park and Recreation  Director</b>

**AGENDA HEADING:**

Approve a contract between the City of Des Moines and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) for acceptance of a \$300,000 Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) grant award for MacRae Park Improvements.

**SYNOPSIS:**

Recommend approving a contract with the IDNR for the acceptance of a \$300,000 REAP grant award for improvements to MacRae Park.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Amount: \$300,000 REAP grant revenue toward an overall \$380,000 project, the remainder of which will be paid through G.O Bonds.

Funding Source: FY 2013-2014 Capital Improvement Program, Page – Park Improvements – 19, PK167 - Urban Conservation, \$300,000 REAP Grant, \$80,000 G.O. Bonds Issued.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

MacRae Park is one of the City’s oldest parks and sits on a beautiful site overlooking downtown Des Moines and the Raccoon River. At just over 50 acres, it sits at the gateway to downtown Des Moines and the south side of the city and anchors the north end of the SW 9<sup>th</sup> Street corridor.

Many different native Iowa ecosystems are showcased in this urban setting; the most common found in the park are significant oak savanna and woodlands. The City’s natural resource inventory of the park and open space system found some of the best examples of these two (2) ecosystems in the City of Des Moines are located within MacRae Park; however, they are in a degraded state. The Park and Recreation Department has plans to restore the estimated 35 acres of savanna and woodland in the park as well as construct a nature trail including educational and interpretive signage throughout the restored areas. The plan includes construction of a paved recreational trail connection between the park and the Meredith Trail located north of the park across Thomas Beck Road, which will effectively create a new trail link from the south side of the City to the Central Iowa Trail System.

The City has received a REAP grant award from the IDNR that will provide for 100 percent of development costs, up to the award amount of \$300,000, for this project. The City’s contribution is

estimated to be \$80,000 for planning, engineering and design by Park and Recreation and Engineering staff.

As is stated in the required IDNR grant acceptance contract between the state of Iowa and the City, the purpose of the grant is to enable the IDNR, acting for the State of Iowa, to assist the City in accomplishing two (2) major areas of REAP's focus - the development of land and the enhancement and protection of open space areas, in this case MacRae Park Improvement. The contract outlines the project components, which include:

- Land Restoration –
  - Creating a restoration and management plan based on the City's natural resource inventory. This will include working to determine the best land restoration techniques and maintenance to bring back this historic landscape and protect it for future generations;
  - Treating and removing invasive and dead plant species along the creeks and throughout the woodlands, including, but not limited to honeysuckle, buck thorn and Japanese knotweed; and
  - Seeding areas of bare soil with a low species mix of native species to stabilize soil, but not threaten to overtake any potential historic seed banks that may still be viable.
- Central Iowa Trail System Connection –
  - Constructing a 10-foot-wide asphalt or concrete trail between the Meredith Trail and MacRae Park;
  - Implementing uniform trail signage at both ends to direct people from the park to the trail system and from the Meredith Trail to MacRae Park; and
  - Placing REAP signage along with the trail signage.
- Nature Trail Construction –
  - Constructing a soft-surface nature trail that will create a winding loop through the restored oak savanna and woodland areas;
  - Implementing educational, interpretive and informative signage along the nature trail; and
  - Placing REAP signage along with educational and interpretive signage.

Also, upon completion of the project improvements, ongoing management is to include monitoring and treating invasive plant populations and preventing erosion while native plants are becoming established. Proper stewardship includes selective herbicide application, seed collection and supplemental seeding/planting, prescribed fire, mowing and monitoring. Volunteers will be involved in a stewardship process; this will be a community-strengthening and educational exercise that supplements a permanent and structured stewardship program.

All work specified in the project proposal must be completed by December 31, 2014.

The MacRae Savanna and Woodland Restoration Project received the highest 2013 REAP grant application score among the eight (8) applications received in the category of Iowa Cities with Populations Over 25,000.

This project advances the following City goals:

**Pride in Community Assets:** The City will set the standard for constructing and maintaining attractive buildings, parks, and infrastructure that represent our world-class city and generates civic pride.

**Public Safety:** Residents and visitors will experience a sense of safety in all neighborhoods and in all activities.

Sustainable Green Community: Des Moines will be a leader in setting policies and practicing service delivery innovations that promote environmental sustainability. Des Moines will offer safe, reliable, and convenient transportation alternatives that reduce reliance on automobiles and parking facilities.

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S): NONE**

**BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S): NONE**

**ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS:**

Approve contracts associated with the project.

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