

COUNCIL COMMUNICATION



Number: **26-022** Meeting: **January 26, 2026**

Agenda Item: **9b** Roll Call: **26-0097**

Submitted by: **Benjamin R. Page, Park and Recreation Director, and Steven L. Naber, P.E., City Engineer**

AGENDA HEADING:

Approving and authorizing the execution of the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) agreement for the reconstruction of Neal Smith Trail as part of the Birdland Park Phase 1A Improvements project.

SYNOPSIS:

Recommend approval of IDOT agreement No. 2026-RT-001 between the City of Des Moines and IDOT for State Recreational Trail (SRT) funding in the amount of \$200,000, for the reconstruction of Neal Smith Trail as part of the Birdland Park Phase 1A Improvements project.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount: \$3,700,000 in estimated costs

Funding Source: Various Funding sources, as follows:

- **\$200,000 - State Recreational Trail (SRT) Grant**
- \$108,000 - Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) Water Quality Initiative (WQI) Cost-Share Grant
- \$300,000 - Land Water Conservation Funding (LWCF) Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) Grant
- \$150,000 - Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) Grant
- \$300,000 - Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Grant
- \$1,566,005 - Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-2026 Adopted Capital Improvement Program (CIP), Page 90, Birdland Park and Marina, PK189, Local Option Sales and Service Tax (LOSST)
- \$1,075,995 - Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-2026 Adopted Capital Improvement Program (CIP), Page 90, Birdland Park and Marina, PK189, General Obligation Bonds

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

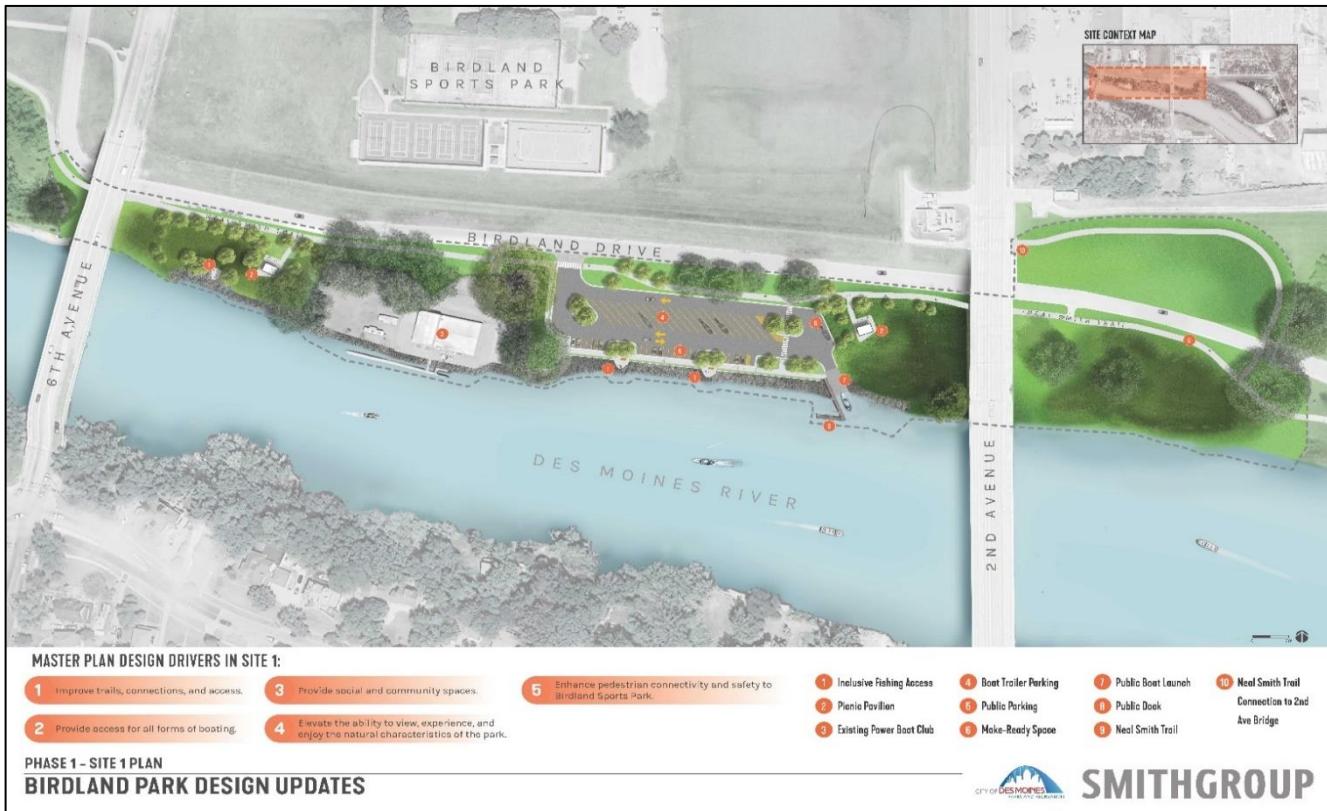
- A master plan for Birdland Park and Marina was developed in 2021 and was approved by the Parks and Recreation Board and adopted by the City Council. The master plan outlines a logical, highest value approach to implementing multiple phases of proposed improvements. In total, the project was estimated to cost \$54.4 million in 2021 and implementation is planned to spread across five (5) recommended phases.

- Informed by LiveDSM, the Parks and Recreation Department's comprehensive plan, the Birdland master planning project has been community and stakeholder driven. To facilitate project feedback and achieve community support from the neighborhood and everyday park users, three (3) public meetings were held at different phases of the project's development. The meetings garnered over 200 attendees and generated 350 plus follow-up survey responses. Additional public engagement for Phase 1 projects was ongoing throughout 2024 and 2025 with all master plan stakeholders and in-person presentations to Union Park, River Bend, Highland Park/Oak Park, and Capitol Park Neighborhood Associations. The overarching sentiment was appreciation that the approved and adopted master plan is being implemented and realized.
- Given the complexity and scale of the plan, intentional sequencing or phasing is recommended to support improvements functioning on their own and are not contingent upon a subsequent phase.
- Birdland Park and Marina Master Plan - Phase 1A Project by the Numbers:
 - Realign, elevate, and reconstruct the flood-prone segment of the Neal Smith Trail (approximately 0.4 miles)
 - Over 160,000 trail uses were recorded in 2024 by a nearby infrared counter
 - Develop a trail spur connection to 2nd Avenue Bridge and Central Place Trail (approximately 600 linear feet)
 - Develop two (2) open-air shelters with electrical service, bike racks, grill pits, and seating
 - Develop three (3) fishing locations (two (2) Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible, one (1) hike-in)
 - Develop a new powerboat ramp and associated parking area with:
 - Ideal ingress/egress launching and docking approach angle
 - ADA-accessible floating courtesy dock
 - Parking with tree plantings, stormwater best management practices, and Light-emitting Diode (LED) lighting
 - 23 standard stalls, two (2) ADA stalls, 20 standard trailer stalls, and one (1) ADA trailer stall
 - Planting over 100 native and diverse trees and shrubs, and approximately 3.5 acres of prairie and savanna vegetation to broadly support water quality and wildlife habitat
 - Install approximately 1,800 feet of shoreline improvements to limit erosion and enhance flood resilience
- A dedicated project [webpage](#) offers a repository of project information including links to digital public meetings, video recordings from prior meetings, downloadable exhibits such as the presentations slides from public meetings and the master plan concept, and updates on the plan adoption process. The project [webpage](#) can be found on the City's website under Parks and Recreation Department by navigating to current planning projects.
- Public engagement on the Phase 1 projects was ongoing throughout 2024 and 2025 with engagement being provided to all master plan stakeholders and in-person presentations to all surrounding area neighborhood associations including Union Park Neighborhood Association (NA), River Bend NA, Highland Park/Oak Park NA, and Capitol Park NA. The overarching

sentiment was appreciation that the approved and adopted master plan is being implemented and realized.

- In late 2022, a professional service agreement was completed with SmithGroup, Inc. to provide engineering design for two sites within Birdland Park, Phase 1A and Phase 1B. To date, Phase 1A is 100% complete with design and Phase 1B is approximately 95% complete with design.
- SRT grant funding is managed through the IDOT and supports cities of any population in seeking funding, with a minimum 25% funding match for the development and/or acquisition of land for multiuse trails in the state of Iowa.
- On June 30, 2025, by Roll Call No. 25-0887, City Council authorized the submittal of the IDOT SRT Grant application for \$200,000 for the Birdland Park Improvements Phase 1A-Reconstruction of the Neal Smith Trail project. The application required the City Council to provide certain authorizations and certifications when making the application including a maintenance and operation plan for a minimum of 20 years, guaranteed matching funds of at least 25% for the entire project cost, and Council Communication No. 25-253 Page 2 of 3 acknowledging the City's intent to provide all funds necessary to complete the project beyond any SRT funding award.
- The Parks and Recreation operating budget supports the on-going maintenance and operation of this trail section within the City of Des Moines by trail staff dedicated to these important tasks. The Parks and Recreation approved CIP budget specifically calls out this project and has funding dedicated in excess of the required 25% match.
- Pending City Council approval, both the Phase 1A and Phase 1B projects are expected to bid winter 2025/2026, or early spring 2026, for substantial construction in calendar year 2026 and final acceptance of the project in 2027 following the completion of all site restoration and landscaping.

Plan Rendering of the Birdland Park Improvements Phase 1A Site



PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S):

Date: September 8, 2025

Roll Call Number: [25-1224](#)

Action: [CAT](#) Grant Agreement with IEDA and ICON Water Trails for the Birdland Park Master Plan Improvements - Phase 1 Project in the amount of \$1,000,000. ([Council Communication No. 25-343](#)) Moved by Gatto to adopt. Second by Voss. Motion Carried 7-0.

Date: August 18, 2025

Roll Call Number: [25-1125](#)

Action: [Ratification](#) of Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) REAP grant funding application seeking \$300,000 for Birdland Park Master Plan Phase 1A Improvements. ([Council Communication No. 25-314](#)) Moved by Voss to adopt. Second by Simonson. Motion Carried 6-0. Absent: Gatto.

Date: June 30, 2025

Roll Call Number: [25-0887](#)

Action: [Approval](#) of IDOT SRT Grant Application for the Birdland Park Improvements Phase 1A-Reconstruction of the Neal Smith Trail Project, \$200,000. ([Council Communication No. 25-253](#))
Moved by Gatto to adopt. Second by Voss. Motion Carried 7-0.

BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S):

Board: Zoning Board of Adjustment

Date: November 20, 2024

Resolution Number: ZBOA-2024-000055

Action: Appeal for requested Conditional Use for a “Public Recreation Area” use in an “F” District. Decision and Order conditionally granting the appeal was adopted by a vote of 7-0 with all Board Members present voting in favor thereof.

Board: Parks and Recreation Board

Date: February 23, 2021

Resolution Number: 21-011

Action: Motion by Facto to approve the Birdland Park Master Plan. Second by Woodard. Motion carried.

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS:

- Anticipated actions include ordering construction, public hearing, receive and file bids, designate lowest bidder, and approve contract and bond; also partial payments to the contractor and final acceptance or work.

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