



Legislation Text

File #: 18-0164R, **Version:** 1

RESOLUTION GRANTING APPROVAL AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LOWER SPIRIT MOUNTAIN RIVERFRONT PARK SITE PLAN; DEDICATING THE PROPERTY AS A PARK AND NAMING THE SITE SPIRIT LANDING.

CITY PROPOSAL:

RESOLVED, the city council hereby approves the Lower Spirit Mountain Riverfront Park Site Plan, a copy of which is attached hereto as exhibit A, and authorizes implementation of the plan as funding becomes available.

FURTHER RESOLVED, the Duluth city council hereby permanently dedicates this property as a city park and names this site "Spirit Landing".

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: This resolution approves the Lower Spirit Mountain Riverfront Park Site Plan and implementation thereof.

The plan calls for purchase, restoration, permanent protection, and very limited public access on 32 acres of sensitive but degraded and unprotected riverfront property below Spirit Mountain. Two of the 32 acres will be minimally developed for universal bike/pedestrian trail access, universal canoe/kayak access to an anticipated National Water Trail, and limited parking.

The Parks and Recreation mission, the Comprehensive Land Use Plan, the Riverside Small Area Plan, and the principles of the St. Louis River Corridor initiative all call for a careful and complementary balance of outdoor recreation, environmental protection, and economic development. The present plan strikes that balance by acquiring, restoring, and permanently protecting at-risk properties that are designated for Preservation in the future land use plan, providing universal recreational access to the small portion of the property that is least valuable ecologically and already partially hardened, and stimulating up to \$40 million of private investment in housing and services on adjacent private properties further away from the river.

City Council has previously approved three measures that provide for a water access at the currently proposed site. In early 2015, City Council unanimously gave preliminary approval to a slate of St. Louis River Corridor projects that included a significantly more extensive lower Spirit water access. In late 2015, City Council approved a Riverside Small Area Plan that provides for limited improvements for passive recreational use of which the plan gave three specific examples: trail access, canoe/kayak water access, and limited parking. The current site plan includes these three elements and nothing more. In March 2017, Parks Commission and the City Council approved a St. Louis River Estuary National Water Trail Plan that recommended location of a series of unusually close-together beginner-friendly canoe/kayak accesses in the unique protected bays from Indian Point to lower Spirit to Munger Landing and specifically called for construction of a new water access at lower Spirit within 1-to-2 years.

The cost of the integrated road, trail, and water access project is estimated to be \$3.2 million of which the City will provide \$750,000 in ½ and ½ funds for the water access and associated improvements. The \$750,000 will go toward acquisition of the BN-owned riverfront, realignment of an adjacent portion of the Western Waterfront Trail that is now dangerously close to a BN rail line, ecological restoration of degraded portions of the line, a

drop off road loop, parking, and two natural surface canoe-kayak accesses, one of which will be universally accessible.

The Parks Commission voted 6/4 against the plan at their February meeting citing concerns about environmental impacts and aesthetic impacts and preference to improve other sites to support canoe/kayak access.