

**City of Woodbury, Minnesota  
Office of City Administrator**

**Council Letter 22-172**

**May 25, 2022**

**To: The Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council**

**From: Clinton P. Gridley, City Administrator**

**Subject: Parks and Natural Resources Commission Recommendation to Elevate Environmental Stewardship as a Strategic Initiative**

**Summary**

Greta Bjerckness, chair of the Parks and Natural Resources Commission, will present the Commission's recommendation to elevate Environmental Stewardship to a 2023 – 2025 Strategic Initiative.

**Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the City Council receive and review the letter from the Parks and Natural Resources Commission.

**Public Process**

An Environmental Stewardship Timeline and Report was presented at a City Council Workshop in January 2022. The Timeline and Report was also presented at the February 2022 Parks and Natural Resources Commission meeting followed by three months of discussion at Commission meetings, leading to the Commission's decision to recommend this course of action to City Council. Commissioners also discussed this topic in October and December 2021.

**Background**

At the January 2022, Council Workshop, staff presented a report on the past twenty years of Environmental Stewardship. Council directed staff to present this information to the Parks and Natural Resources Commission and ask Commissioners to provide direction, reflective of their advisory role to Council, on next steps for this critical focus area.

Written By: Sarah Alig, Senior Management Analyst  
Approved Through: Michelle Okada, Parks and Recreation Director  
Attachment: Letter to City Council from Parks and Natural Resources Commission re: Environmental Stewardship Strategic Initiative



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Dear Mayor, City Council Members, and Neighbors:

As members of the Parks and Natural Resources Commission, we urge the City to elevate Environmental Stewardship to a 2023 – 2025 Strategic Initiative.

We are experiencing an environmental state of emergency. The longer we wait to take action, the more we fall behind. In the years ahead, residents will watch Woodbury's unique Tamarack stand struggle to survive the warming climate; algae blooms will proliferate in increasingly warm and dry summer seasons; and residents will stay indoors to avoid smoky air during wildfire season. Woodbury's most vulnerable citizens, such as seniors and those with chronic health conditions, will bear the brunt of extreme weather events like severe storms and heat waves. The city will continue to spend time and money reacting to emerging threats like EAB and water contamination. Other cities will surpass our leadership and out-compete us for funding, grants and awards.

By prioritizing Environmental Stewardship as a Strategic Initiative, we can better understand the situation as it develops, and establish strategies to ensure sustainability and resilience into the future. We recognize this is an urgent, massive, complex, and challenging issue to tackle and our city needs additional expertise and resources to identify local solutions and strategies that fit our community. We have lots of questions and uncertainty, but with the clarity and direction afforded by a specific, measurable, and achievable plan, we can focus on high-impact opportunities and execute them well, rather than skimming the surface of many smaller initiatives.

We recommend two parts to the Environmental Stewardship Strategic Initiative. First, we must allocate resources to developing an Action Plan that includes a robust community engagement process and provides a scientific approach to city-level action on Environmental Stewardship. Second, residents want guidance on how they can take meaningful action at the individual, household, or business level. This Commission is ready to serve as champions and communicators of this message. We look forward to working closely with staff and community members to further this initiative.

When we look at the criteria, established by Council in 2019, to determine a Strategic Initiative, we observe that each one applies perfectly to the topic of Environmental Stewardship:

- ✓ Environmental Stewardship is an urgent and emerging issue;

- ✓ The work to research and establish an Action Plan and engage residents can be accomplished in the short term (2 years);
- ✓ Phases of an Environmental Stewardship Strategic Initiative will include examining and learning, then implementing and operationalizing;
- ✓ Environmental Stewardship is consistent with city values, being a long-time Critical Success Factor and a featured element of the Comprehensive Plan – which even includes a Resilience Action Plan as an implementation item;
- ✓ This work needs resources beyond what we already have in place;
- ✓ It will be essential to develop SMART goals; and
- ✓ It may lead to new ways of doing things.

We chose to serve on this Commission out of love for our environment and our community, and we are proud of the work this city has done to preserve and protect the environment over the past twenty years. Council's decision to approve an ordinance requiring that developers replace 2 inches to every 1 inch of specimen trees, demonstrates the city's ability to adapt and change as needed. We lead the way on municipal fleet electrification, solar energy, and preserving beautiful open spaces.

We believe that parks and trails bring neighbors together, that residents deserve clean water, clean air, and safe green space in which to play. Connecting with nature makes people healthier and happier. To protect the environment and community we love, and to meet the needs of future generations, the city must commit resources and establish the Environmental Stewardship Strategic Initiative. Time is running short. We see overwhelming support from our fellow residents. It is in our community's interest to act now. In the next two years, we urge the city to prioritize the urgent environmental risks and opportunities at hand.

Sincerely,

Parks and Natural Resources Commission



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**City Administrator's Report  
May 25, 2022**

**Neighborhood Meetings:**

No Items Scheduled.

**Preliminary Items Scheduled for the Planning Commission Meeting of June 6, 2022:**

1. Gateway Office Building, Site and Building Plan, Project No. 05-2022-00490
2. Woodlane Drive Station Park and Ride, Planned Unit Development, Conditional Use Permit, Preliminary Plat, Site and Building Plan, Project No. 08-2022-00483

**Preliminary Items Scheduled for the Council Workshop Meeting of June 8, 2022 (Eagle Valley Banquet Room):**

1. Council Strategic Planning Retreat

**Preliminary Public Hearings Scheduled for June 15, 2022:**

1. Woodlane Drive Station Park and Ride, Planned Unit Development, Conditional Use Permit, Preliminary Plat, Site and Building Plan, Project No. 08-2022-00483

**Preliminary Items Scheduled for the Planning Commission Meeting of June 20, 2022:**

No Items Scheduled

**Preliminary Items Scheduled for the Council Workshop Meeting of June 29, 2022 (Central Park Valley Creek Room):**

1. Central Park Project Update (4)
2. Post 2022 Legislative Session Review
3. Community Engagement Strategy (1)

**Other Meetings:**

1. Parks and Natural Resources Commission, June 7, 7 p.m., Ash North and South Conference Rooms
2. Audit and Investment Commission, June 24, 7:30 a.m., Ash North and South Conference Rooms

Respectfully submitted,

Clinton P. Gridley  
City Administrator