



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** MCWD Board of Managers

**From:** James Wisker

**Date:** December 18, 2017

**Re:** December 21, 2017 Planning and Policy Committee Meeting

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### **Purpose:**

To frame the discussion scheduled for the December 21, 2017 Planning and Policy Committee Meeting, which will:

1. Introduce a draft process and schedule for completing the MCWD Strategic Action Plan
2. Introduction the purpose and scope of MCWD's Land Use – Water Policy Plan
3. Summarize two working examples of goals of the MCWD Land Use – Water Policy Plan

### **Background:**

#### Organizational Strategy:

On February 9, 2017 pursuant to Resolution 17-007, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) Board of Managers adopted the 2017 Strategic Alignment Plan, which details an organizational strategy to achieve the District's mission of protecting and improving the watershed's land and water. This strategy, the success of which will be measured by changes in water quality, water quantity and ecological integrity, is focused on:

1. Developing high impact capital improvement projects that make positive change within the watershed.
  - o These projects may be led by MCWD or by other public/private partners. The District believes these projects are most successful when operating at the nexus of natural systems and the built environment, and guided by multi-jurisdictional partnerships.
2. Changing the policy environment that governs and guides planning and investment in built and natural systems (land use and water).
  - o The District believes that modifications can be made to the operating environment of watershed organizations and their public/private partners that create positive feedback loops on Strategic Priority #1, by promoting early value added partnership between those involved in planning and implementing private development, public infrastructure, and parks and open space.

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## **December 21 PPC Meeting:**

### Strategic Action Plan:

This organizational strategy was connected to a series of cascading strategic directives for each of MCWD's program areas (Attachment A). Staff and the Board of Managers have discussed the need to now develop a strategic action plan, translating program directives into discrete actionable steps with defined timelines and outputs, thereby creating defined action and accountability for the strategic plan.

At the December 21, 2017 PPC Meeting, staff will introduce a draft process and timeline for developing the strategic action plan.

### Land Use – Water Policy Plan:

Guiding the implementation of the two pronged organizational strategy is a vision, established by the MCWD Board of Managers, which describes a landscape of vibrant communities within the watershed, where natural and built environments harmonize to create economic, social and environmental value.

This vision, predicated on the 2014 *Balanced Urban Ecology* policy, recognizes that, “*land use activities continue to be primarily the focus of private enterprise as well as the various planning, zoning, public works and job creation agencies in several layers of government. Meanwhile, other interests, mainly non-profits and other government agencies, are focused on conserving natural assets and protecting them from the damage that land use change can inflict.*” As important, “*no single entity has the authority or the resources to cope with all of these questions, or to strike a reasonable balance.*”

Therefore, the integration of planning and investment for built and natural systems lies at the heart of MCWD's approach to its achieving its mission. The principle of integration rests on the knowledge that, “*successful, sustainable, livable communities are built on a foundation of integrated planning – planning that recognizes communities as living organisms and takes into consideration all components of the urban ecology.*”

Consequently, one critical component in the MCWD's strategic action plan will be the development of a Land Use – Water Policy Plan that identifies and prioritizes areas of policy and procedural change within MCWD's operating environment, which further enhance the integration of built and natural systems. These changes are anticipated to create positive feedback loops on the planning and implementation of high impact capital improvements, whether led by the District or its partners.

For example, the earlier MCWD is involved in municipal comprehensive plans, small area plans, capital improvement planning for municipal infrastructure, individual developments, parks and open space plans, etc., the more effectively the District and its partners can identify opportunities to achieve natural resource benefit outside of a regulatory paradigm. Past examples have already proven this to be a more efficient way of identifying and filtering opportunities, increasing the implementation success rate for natural resource improvements, while decreasing MCWD's direct costs and the net costs to taxpayers.

A primary goal of the Land Use – Water Policy Plan will be to create planning integration that is systemic, rather than relational. While interagency relationships will always play a critical role in facilitating the integration of plans and investments through informal processes, systemic policy change is

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needed to create a stable long-term framework for collaboration. This may require changes at both the local and regional/state level.

Project Examples:

Two emerging examples of changes at the local level will be specifically presented Thursday:

- Comprehensive Plan coordination in Victoria – The District has been coordinating with the City of Victoria to create a water and natural resources framework to inform their land use planning in future growth areas so that environmental constraints and opportunities are represented in the City’s Comprehensive Plan.
- Capital improvement plan (CIP) coordination in Shorewood – The District is coordinating with the City of Shorewood on the development of their five-year road CIP to incorporate environmental considerations and identify partnership opportunities.

**Next Steps:**

Following the December 21 meeting, staff will prepare a scope and process to develop and implement this policy plan in coordination with the PPC in 2018.

If there are questions in advance of the meeting, please contact James Wisker at [Jwisker@minnehahacreek.org](mailto:Jwisker@minnehahacreek.org) or 952-641-4509.

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