



LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES  
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Preservation, Restoration, Education and Recreation

**DATE:** March 5, 2018

**MEMO TO:** Carol Calabresa, Chair  
Planning Committee

**FROM:** Randall L. Seebach  
Director of Planning and Land Preservation

**RECOMMENDATION:** Provide policy direction regarding a potential amendment to the Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Highland Park and the Park District of Highland Park regarding three conservation easements related to the Skokie River Woods.

**STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS SUPPORTED:** Public Access and Connections; Leadership; Conservation

**FINANCIAL DATA:** There is no financial impact at this time.

**BACKGROUND:** In April 2002, the Lake County Forest Preserve District (District) entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the Park District of Highland Park (Park District) and the City of Highland Park (City) regarding the permanent preservation of approximately 150 acres of property located at the southeast corner of Half Day Road and U.S. Route 41 known as the Skokie River Woods (Subject Property). The permanent preservation of the Subject Property was accomplished with three conservation easements granted to the District by the City across three parcels, known as the Lushing Combined Parcel, the Highland Park Country Club Parcel and the Highland Park Woods Parcel, which are shown on the attached map. The District contributed \$950,000.00 toward the purchase of the Lushing Combined Parcel.

In addition to permanently preserving the property, the IGA also identified future greenway and trail connections between the property and several of the District's preserves including Fort Sheridan, Prairie Wolf and Berkley Prairie and several local schools and parks. The IGA and Lushing Combined Parcel Conservation Easement contemplated that the Park District would improve the parcel with pedestrian and bicycle trails, bridges as well as associated directional and information signage, an overlook and a parking lot. These trails were to be linked to existing hiking and biking trails including future connections to the District property mentioned above. A proposed Hiking and Biking Trail Improvement Plan for the Lushing Combined Parcel was included as an exhibit to the IGA.

The Park District staff notified District staff that it desires to amend the IGA so that it is no longer obligated to construct certain trails and trail locations, shown on the original Plan, within the Lushing Combined Parcel. District staff is supportive of this request because the trails, as originally planned, could cause environmental impacts to this area, which has been restored since the IGA was approved, that are greater than the impacts originally envisioned. Consequently, the Park District has prepared an alternate plan, titled "Gateway Path Conceptual Master Plan", for which they would like the District's approval. Any approval will require an amendment to the IGA and, possibly, the conservation easements.

At their February 5, 2018 meeting, the Planning Committee reviewed a policy direction regarding this request, including the Park District's proposed new trail connections, and asked the Park District staff and consultants (who were present at the meeting) whether they could provide a more direct trail connection from the southern portion of the Highland Park Country Club property to Half Day Road.

District staff has conferred with the Park District staff and is satisfied that the Park District's proposed trail connection will provide the desired connection to District forest preserves, as stipulated in the original IGA. District staff is seeking approval direction to continue negotiations with the Park District on a mutually acceptable amendment to the IGA that would, among other matters, provide for the new trail connections at the locations proposed by the Park District. The amendment would be effective only if and when it is approved by the corporate authorities of the District, the Park District and the City.

**REVIEW BY OTHERS:** Executive Director, Chief Operations Officer, Director of Finance, Corporate Counsel.