CHAPTER 5

Vision and Guiding Principles

Overview and Purpose
The Vision Statement and Guiding Principles set the stage for planning concepts and park improvements. The Community Advisory Committee (CAC), with input from MPRB staff, community stakeholders, and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), agreed upon an overall vision statement and guiding principles for the Mississippi Gorge Regional Park. The vision is a statement that is broad reaching and captures the community’s aspirations for the park over the next two or three decades. The guiding principles are a set of goals that are aligned with the vision and are realized with the recommendations in the next chapter.

Vision Statement
Nestled within the only true gorge along the Mississippi River, the Mississippi Gorge Regional Park is a wild, welcoming space that is actively managed and mindfully stewarded to balance and preserve its unique natural, historic and recreational amenities for the wellness and enjoyment of all park visitors.
Guiding Principles

1. Natural Resources and Ecology: Water, Land and Life

Protect, restore, and preserve the park’s unique natural resources, and recognize the river’s sensitive ecological systems
A. Preserve the parks’ existing character as a much-cherished natural space in the middle of the city
B. Preserve and enhance habitat for fish, wildlife, and pollinators
C. Improve and sustain water quality and hydrological function
D. Improve soil quality and stability, including stabilizing riverbanks and better managing erosion on steep slopes and drainage ways
E. Preserve and enhance the tree canopy
F. Continue invasive species removal
G. Plant only native plant species

2. Resiliency and Sustainability

Ensure long-term adaptability in the face of change and provide recreational opportunities that will not compromise environmental quality over time
A. Adapt to periodic environmental, economic, or social change—including potential changes in river infrastructure—through careful consideration and application of other guiding principles
B. Promote and support environmental stewardship
C. Use durable, low-maintenance, and natural/native materials
D. Create high quality, timeless design
3. Equity and Inclusion
Provide park facilities, programs, and events that reflect evolving community demographics and park user needs and are welcoming to all
A. Provide multi-generational opportunities that reflect community aspirations, values, and needs—explore policy changes if necessary
B. Implement ongoing community outreach and participation to ensure appropriate multi-cultural opportunities
C. Ensure equitable access to park facilities, programs, and events
D. Install multi-lingual, accessible wayfinding throughout the park

4. Facilities and Programs
Provide high quality park and recreation facilities and programs suitable to the park’s regional designation and unique setting
A. Encourage year round passive and active uses
B. Focus on river-oriented recreation
C. Provide facilities for individuals, families, and communities
D. Provide opportunities for informal, unprogrammed activities
E. Provide flexible, multi-use park spaces and facilities that are built to last
F. Provide opportunities for revenue generation, where appropriate

5. Safety
Provide a safe, secure and welcoming park experience.
A. Ensure adequate and appropriate lighting
B. Provide trail wayfinding and trail length and character information, through on-site signage, on-line platforms, or other means
C. Apply Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles in planning and design

6. Access and Connectivity
Strengthen and enhance accessibility and connectivity to the park and the river
A. Provide multi-modal connections—foot, bike, transit, automobile, and watercraft
B. Strive for universal access beyond ADA requirements
C. Create physical, visual, and social connections between neighborhoods, neighborhood parks, and the regional park
D. Enhance access from the park to the river and from the river to the park
7. Placemaking
Create an identifiable sense of place by employing principles and elements that yield a recognizable and unique park identity and visual character
A. Create and enhance community gathering spaces
B. Install public art, signage, and other elements that tell the story of the gorge
C. Install indigenous / native plantings

8. History, Heritage, Arts and Culture
Reflect and interpret the history, heritage, and cultural attributes of the Mississippi River and the regional park
A. Interpret the cultural history of the area focusing on the stories and lives of Indigenous Peoples
B. Tell the stories of how the park was formed and the protection of it from urban development
C. Protect the historic resources within the park, including WPA structures and unfound resources
D. Use public art to tell the stories of people and the landscape

9. Health and Wellness
Promote and support health and wellness opportunities through park programs and facilities
A. Provide opportunities for people of all abilities
B. Create year-round active and passive activities
C. Provide educational opportunities
D. Promote the park as a healing space for mind, body, and spirit