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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**TITLE:** Westwood Hills Nature Center Project

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** None at this time. This report is intended to provide a status update on this project.

**POLICY CONSIDERATION:** Is the direction staff is taking consistent with the Council's expectations?

**SUMMARY:** The Westwood Hills Nature Center staff have been meeting with the HGA design team to establish the general direction and review building and site design concepts for the project. Sustainability strategies and energy analysis are being developed, and sustainability rating systems have been reviewed by the group. Staff and the design team are working towards a "Net Zero" energy building as an underlay to the design. A Net Zero or Zero Energy building is one in which one hundred percent of the building's energy needs on a net annual basis are supplied by on-site renewable energy. This is generally accomplished through maximizing passive climatic opportunities, choosing efficient mechanical systems and continuing to fine tune the building's operation during occupancy to reduce energy loads dramatically. As we progress in the project design, we will weigh function versus zero energy and there may be compromises along with way. A zero energy certification is currently targeted for the project, in addition to meeting the St. Louis Park Green Building Policy. The exhibit design has also kicked off. Split Rock Studios is our consultant with the intent to integrate the building, site and exhibit design to support the nature center educational programming. Designing the exhibits appropriately is important as we consider working towards Net Zero since they can be one of the biggest energy users.

**FINANCIAL OR BUDGET CONSIDERATION:** The City's CIP has \$300,000 in 2017 to begin preliminary design for the construction of a new Nature Center building, and an additional \$700,000 in 2018 to finalize design. The current CIP estimates an \$11 million project in 2019.

**NEXT STEPS:** Next steps include analysis of survey results from a recent events, as well as development and deployment of a variety of additional methods to collect feedback, foster engagement, and inform interested publics and the community as the design phase progresses.

A wetland delineation has been completed and a site survey is underway. Staff will continue developing the schematic design in further detail to address programmatic needs, and developing a cost estimate with construction manager, RJM. We are planning to discuss this project with Council at its December 11 study session. Schematic Design will be presented for approval at the December 18 Council meeting.

**VISION CONSIDERATION:** St. Louis Park is committed to being a connected and engaged community.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:** None

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