

Minnesota River Valley Master Plan Community Stakeholder Meeting
June 9, 2015

1. Introductions

- Randy Quale: City of Bloomington Park & Rec Manager
- Julie Farnham: City of Bloomington Planning
- Elizabeth Heyman: City of Bloomington Planning
- John Crampton
- Bob Williams
- Larry Granger
- Vonda Kelly
- Dick Duerre
- Ed Crozier
- Roger Willette
- John Hickman
- Steve Thomforde
- Stan Danielson
- Jim Goodermont
- Dennis Porter
- Representative Ann Lenczewski
- Alison Warren: City of Bloomington

2. Refresher on Background Information Regarding the Minnesota River Valley Master Plan

- We are here to review the Master Plan for the MN River Valley. This meeting is a part of the public engagement process which also includes online surveys, partner and focus group meetings and open houses. The draft of the Master Plan has been available online and an example of the design for the final document was passed around at the meeting. The portions focusing on vision and goals, existing conditions, the online survey, the community open house, the initial recommendations and the draft recommendations are complete. This meeting is to help determine what the top priorities are for the Minnesota River Valley, to hear feedback and to talk about the next steps.
- The initial recommendations were shared again with the members at the meeting including, retaining natural character, enhancing maintenance and improving signage. In regards to the trails the recommendations are to retain and maintain, create connecting trails, potential mountain bike skills course and construct the state trail. The need for interagency coordination, as well as strengthen the existing partnerships were also discussed especially in relation to implementing best practices and undertaking restoration projects.
- Ed: Is there consideration of using smart phone technology on the signage? The response was that the technology is ever changing and that the different options are being explored.
- Dennis: What is the lifespan of the signage? What are the priority resource protection areas? Emerald Ash Borer is coming and the River Valley is filled with Ash Trees; what is the plan? The response stated that staff in Park Maintenance has been speaking with other organizations around the country regarding their current plans and a City Wide plan is being discusses, including the River Valley.

- Steve: Suggests a resource management plan and a comprehensive list for the City as a whole, including the River Valley to include things that need to be done and protected over the next 5 years. The response stated that staff have participated in a prioritization exercise, but more information is needed and there is limited funding available.
- Ed: Inquired as to the ability to sell land or create an MOU for additional land in the River Valley.

3. Top Priorities for the River Valley:

- Complete On Going Activities:
 - Examples of ongoing activities to be completed include the Park Asset Inventory, the Old Cedar Ave Bridge Reconstruction and the Minnesota River Valley State Trail.
 - Dennis: Is a user study included in the Park Asset inventory? The response stated that at this time the inventory is focusing on current resources and their life cycles.
- Complete System Wide Plan:
 - System wide plans include the Master Trail Plan, the Master Sign Plan, a Comprehensive maintenance plan and a resource protection plan. All of the plans should work together.
 - Ed: Would it be possible or make sense to create an overall Master Plan for the River Valley and include all of the partners. Response stated that at this time other agencies may have their own plans completed. It was also mentioned that there should be one set of rules and regulations.
- Quale stated that there is the potential to seek the regional park designation for the City-owned parklands in the River Valley. This would increase awareness and enhance marketing of the Valley parklands to the region. This designation could also add some additional protections to the parklands and some potential funding sources for operations, maintenance and improvements. Further exploration is needed to determine this idea's potential. It was also noted that a Master Plan for the River Valley parklands is required as part of the regulations put forward by the State and the Met Council.
- Julie stated that at this time this is more of a strategic plan and framework for the more in depth plans. The idea is to set some big picture priorities and then if we need help to get some inventories or come up with some sign design guidelines those would come later. This plan will lay the ground work so we can set up the next steps and develop actionable plans.
- Larry: What is the planning horizon for the Master Plan? How many years does the plan include? The response stated that it depends on the funding, but at this time there is no timeline. Larry expressed his desire to have a 50+ year rolling plan similar to Minneapolis and St. Paul's waterfront plans. He stated that this should include a real analysis of bluff lands, flood effects and worst case scenarios. Larry also expressed his concern for the archeological sites in what he believes are the trail pathway.
- Funding:
 - Current funding includes: the general fund, the storm utility fund, the strategic priorities fund, the park dedication funds, grants and partnerships. Potential new funding resources include Legacy funds through the Park Reserve designation.
 - Ann: Shared her desire to look at Legacy dollars as a serious funding source and option. She stated that there is lots of potential in this area.
 - Ed: What are the economic benefits to the City as part of the plan? Will there be growth in tourism because of this area? Should that be considered?
 - Stan: Are all of the trailheads owned by the US Fish and Wildlife? Does the City have any say in what happens to those areas? The response stated that there is possibility for some say in the

trailheads, but they are not City owned. It was also mentioned that they should still be comprehensive.

- Open for Comments:
- Dennis: – I am encouraged by more information and more studies. We also need more information from the DNR. User studies are also very much needed. We don't know what 20 years down the road what people will be looking for as far as recreational opportunities,
- John: I would favor completing the current projects that have the funding and the momentum. Increases awareness. Have to have some deliverables and can't study things forever. Get people down there and get more people using it. Example (Canon Valley trail) – friends of the trail have not only sold the trail but a variety of other improvements and water quality monitoring. Can get different user groups who can assist the area.
- Ed: There is a lot of focus on cleaning up the Minnesota River, but people do not know about it or appreciate it. This plan could get a lot more people going down into the valley, realizing the value and cleaning it up.
- Julie: Look at this as an opportunity to make things clearer for continuing to study and make improvements in the valley. Help us decide what the next steps are and help us to come up with a critical path of action.
- Ann: I am not a big fan of the studies because studying doesn't bring in the money. My job is to get as much money from the State to bring to the assets in my community. I would hope we could push to study as little as possible and get to action plans and City funding initiatives. It's going to require more partnerships with State and Met Council to get the money in the valley to keep all of these amenities. We have to get people there first for people to see it and then there will be support. Need more access. Wants to create a user map for access points on the Bloomington side of the river including the hidden parts where if you don't live close or someone hasn't taken you to it, you would not know that you can access the valley. They aren't facilities; this is just where people are coming in. Things like this can build momentum.
- Dennis: I would still advocate for a user study because the mountain bikes groups have been advocating for many other people that we encounter in that area. By discounting the current user groups in numbers and survey you are making an uneducated guess or decision.
- John Hickman: The Nine Mile Creek has a significant amount of sediment especially in the case of a run off event. This is continuing to pollute the Minnesota River. We need to find a way to lessen the City's impact on the water quality. I would recommend that the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District is included in the potential partners for the planning document.
- Dick: I took a clarity reading at the end of Lyndale Ave., the river is getting worse. I've been monitoring it for 10 years and it's not improving. I also monitor the run off out of Black Dog Lake and that for 9 years that has been dirtier and running into the river. Suddenly this year the Black Dog Lake water is cleaner. The power plant has converted from coal to gas and I suspect that has something to do with it. We should be aware how dirty the river is and the sources of some of that in Bloomington on our stretch of the river.
- Dennis: You can see it in the past nine years the river has flooded nine times and the amount of sediment that is left in the Valley is growing yearly. Those are areas I haven't seen in over 30 years due to the sediment.
- John Crampton: What we consider recreation today may not be the same at 25 years ago or 25 years from now. At the Bush Lake Chapter of the Izaak Walton League we had a wetland that nobody even

knew it was there because it was covered in buckthorn, we cleaned it out a couple years ago and got some native plants and over the course of the past two years we got funded again by Nine Mile Creek Watershed District. We do native plantings and getting rid of the buckthorn and making some trails and observations points and now people have said we are joining because of the restoration work. Action can help to gain momentum and interest.

- Steve: The economic benefits would be a good thing to throw in to the plan. You should get the focus groups together again and maybe these people can identify really quick railways of what we would need to do and package some projects up that we can start doing and go to legislature and get some funds for the projects. Where can we get some projects on the ground right away? We need a little of both going at the same time.