

# Minnesota River Valley Master Plan Partners Meeting

July 21, 2014

1:30-3:30 p.m.

## 1. Introductions

- a. Randy Quale: City of Bloomington Park & Rec Manager
- b. Julie Farnham: City of Bloomington Planning
- c. Cindy Wheeler: MN Department of Natural Resources
- d. John Mertens: Dakota County
- e. Mark Morrison: City of Bloomington, Recreation Supervisor
- f. Rachel Hintzman: DNR Parks and Trails
- g. Scott Pariseau: Fish and Wildlife Services
- h. Vicki Sherry: Fish and Wildlife Services
- i. Sarah Inonye-Leas: Fish and Wildlife Services
- j. April Crockett: MN Department of Transportation
- k. Brandon Jutz: Fish and Wildlife Services
- l. Tim Bodeen: Fish and Wildlife Services
- m. Jen Desrud: City of Bloomington Engineering
- n. Jim Gates: City of Bloomington Engineering
- o. John Gibbs: 3 Rivers Park District
- p. Judy McDowell: 3 Rivers Park District
- q. Maggie O'Connell: Fish and Wildlife Services
- r. Alison Evans: City of Bloomington

## 2. Purpose/Overview of the MN River Valley Plan

- We are here to undertake a Master Plan for the MN River Valley in order to create better public awareness and utilization of the valley. Also, we would like to preserve and protect the natural lands. This meeting is a part of the public engagement process which also includes online surveys, partner and focus group meetings and open houses. This plan will focus on the City owned land.

## 3. Topics for Input and Discussion:

- a. Project Vision and Goals:
  - On the right track for the vision and goals with the groups thoughts.
- b. Access Opportunities:
  - Different types of access points such as a trailhead or just an access point. Does the map provided have an appropriate amount of access points/trailheads? Should there be improvements made? Currently, the Old Cedar Ave bridge area is being considered as an option for a major trailhead working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to undertake that project. This may include updated parking, enhancing trails and connections and potentially a restroom facility.
  - Jim: The rehabilitation of the bridge is planned to be completed and open in early to mid summer of 2016. This should increase the already very active usage of this area, making this a good site for a major trailhead.
  - Tim: We have an Urban Wildlife Initiative that encourages us to reach into communities and get people to talk about conservation and get into the area for recreating. Having a major trailhead

site like this could support this initiative by creating a more park like area that encourages usage.

- John Mertens: We would like to see some bike pump stations put in at major trailheads. There is a program through Health Partners that may fund some or all of the costs.
- Cindy: I think water fountains would be an important amenity at these type of sites.
- Meg: It seems like there is a big gap near France Ave. for access points and trailheads.
- Randy: This is a problematic area due to the wetlands. Another possibility of an area the City would like to develop would be the land North of 86<sup>th</sup> street by potentially working out a deal with the Cyprus parking lot that is currently being used for overflow or construction parking.
- John Gibbs: The map looks compatible with a study that was done by 3 Rivers Park District regarding diversity and inclusions. Creating more access points on the east side of Bloomington would comply with this study.

c. Utilization Opportunities:

- City staff provided a concept map with utilization ideas and ideas of where they could possibly be located in the MN river valley. Examples included: picnic rounds, campgrounds, marina/boat rentals, mountain bike skills course or bike loop and others. Asked for thoughts or other suggestions.
- Brandon: What about a Children Discovery area or wildlife and outdoor themed programs. It looks like there are a lot of things aimed at adults, but we would like to get children out in the valley as well.

d. Trails:

- Currently there are many different types of trails in the river valley and many different types are being proposed including natural surface, and two trail corridor and others. Better signage and enforcement is being worked on.
- Many attendees commented on the need for better signage and enforcement, improved safety and additional clear connections. Discussion regarding the debate between a paved trail and a natural surface trail occurred, City staff reminded attendees that this meeting is not to focus on the type of trail, but the amount of trails, locations and accessibility.
- Randy: The state trail is proposed to be an approximately 100' wide corridor which would contain two trails, a 10' wide bituminous trail and a separate natural surface mountain biking/hiking trail. MN DNR staff indicated that a bituminous trail would be easier to maintain in a flood plain rather than a natural or crushed aggregate surfaced trail.
- Meg: Questions about the State Trail running through the refuge, City property and 3 Rivers property, how will roller blading, skateboarding etc. be handled with different bodies having different rules.
- Randy: It's possible that the trail could have its own rules but once you leave the trail you are bound to that entities rules, for example if you were to go on to City property after 10 pm you would be in violation.
- MORC organization has provided maintenance on the natural surface trails in the valley for years and the city intends to continue to work with MORC to design maintain and improve these trails.

e. Awareness:

- Possibility for interpretive signage, maps with QR codes, interactive connection to the website etc. Would like to identify locations and share information with the public in a correct manor.

- Julie: We would like to make sure that all of the efforts are coordinated to keep the flow throughout the trail.
  - Meg: QR codes are not as popular as they once were. ESRI story maps may be a better option. Should do our best to tie a lot of the updates into technology and smart phones. Consider use of National Grid Locator System for way finding/emergency services response.
  - Tim: Very good idea to provide opportunities to learn about the wonderful history of the valley.
  - Rachel: Will all maps be standardized for the state trail for way finding, interpretive etc.?
  - Randy: What type of branding will be used? Is everyone's logo on every sign? Should we come up with a MNRV trail logo?
  - Meg: Important that it looks good and is welcoming and comprehensive for the user
  - John: Try to keep the amount of signs down, had heard public comments of too many signs.
- f. Protection and Preservation:
- Would like to do a better job of managing the pristine areas in the river valley such as Ike's creek and the trout streams. Plan to work together with the City, Fish and Wildlife, Great River Greening and many others. Thoughts on following the rule the Met Council uses as 80% natural and 20 % developed for the City owned property.
  - Tim: We have a unique opportunity next to the mall that attracts 60 million visitors to provide those visitors with a natural experience in the river valley right next door. Has the long eared bat been considered a protected species and should it be addressed in the valley?
- g. Overview of the project schedule:
- Randy: Will continue to get input from the stakeholders and partners in the upcoming two meetings and open house. Thinking the schedule may be pushed back slightly into next year to get a complete plan together. Next steps would be to create a draft to send out for review and comment and then have another open house.
- h. Questions for City Staff or topics that didn't get touched on:
- Meg: Has an overall survey of the City residents been completed to address what they are looking for in recreation? A City wide survey was done but with limited questions regarding recreation. 3 rivers does this every 5 years and can provide that information.