

Minnesota River Valley Master Plan Focus Group Meeting

July 22, 2014

1:30-3:30 p.m.

1. Introductions

- a. Randy Quale: City of Bloomington Park & Rec Manager
- b. Jim Goodermont: Long time neighbor
- c. Ed Crozier: Long time involvement in the valley
- d. John Crampton: Pond Dakota Society, Izaak Walton League, MN Valley Geezer Squad
- e. Bob Williams: MN River Valley Audobon Chapter
- f. Larry Granger: Bloomington Historical Society
- g. Susannah: MN
- h. Dong Youngdah: Mountain Bike Rider, Trail work volunteer
- i. Matt Andrews: MORC, IMBA
- j. Mark Morrison: City of Bloomington
- k. 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:

- Ed: How will this plan coordinate with the other management agencies? It seems like there should be a combined plan for the valley.
- Randy: Each agency has their own plan already established and we are trying to work in concert with what they have

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.
- Ed: What about at the end of the Norman dale for a trail head?
- Randy: That could be considered an access point, but there is not enough room for parking to be a trailhead. The area right at 86th Street and Old Shakopee Road has been discussed as a location for a trail head by working with Cyprus and MAC to create a use agreement for the parking lots.
- Jim: Would be nice to have that trailhead especially with the mall nearby and the upcoming South Loop district.
- Matt: Some bicycle repair stations would be a good amenity to have at a trailhead as well as some bathroom facilities, at least a portable toilet and a changing area. Also a Mountain biking skills course would be nice.

- Mark: A potential water bottle station would be great as well.
- John: I would suggest the gateway trailheads as a model for this area. Lots of people want to see the historic things as well so make sure people can use the trail to get to the Pond House to draw more attention to it.
- John: Identity signs, all the signage should work in QR codes or something for smart phones.
- Ed: Kids are more interested in interpretation through media rather than a sign. I would recommend looking up discovernatureapps.com as an example.

c. Utilization Opportunities:

- City staff provided a concept map with utilization ideas not necessarily exactly where they could 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. Thoughts on following the rule the Met Council uses as 80% natural and 20 % developed for the City owned property.
- Matt: Picnic areas, skills course or mountain biking loop can change the atmosphere just by bringing in a positive recreational opportunity. We have a couple of case studies that show this if you would like.
- Don: Regarding trails, the last time I heard the Fish and Wildlife was opposed to a paved trail. I'm concerned overall from the different land managers, who will dictate each area?
- Randy: This will require the 3 agencies to get together and have discussion, at this point we have not heard no or yes from other agencies. We will do our best to do what will benefit the majority of the people.
- Larry: Bloomington will grow more east of the mall and in the south loop area so we need to consider that area. Also trails in combination with the old cedar bridge, there will be a major influx of more urban folks. We need to look 20-30 years out on who will be using this area and make the best decision from there. There may need an increase of law enforcement with the number of users.
- Don: What are the plans for the environmental review? Are you planning on assessment worksheets?
- Randy: The DNR would do the full review required by law including archeological review. What does everything think about the concept of prohibited uses? There are regulations that are different between the different jurisdictions, how do we handle that? For example, the City has a 10 p.m. close time, Fish and Wildlife go to sunset and the DNR trials are 24/7.
- Matt: whatever is decided should be a constant message. Education is key for the user conflicts and the whole trail is one collaborative project with the same rules throughout.
- Ed: Good point. They should be unified regulations.

d. Awareness:

- We want to celebrate the opportunity to provide interpretive planning, programs etc. and also recognize location s and showing the ways of doing it. We have extended invitations to the Dakota community and leaning heavily on our friends from the Bloomington Historical Society for guidance.
- Larry: We have to have specific ways to balance this. You need to do a whole study before doing interpretation, and shouldn't hint at probable locations until you truly investigate it. There are funds available through the Legacy dollars that could be used for this. I would also like there to

be some commonality for the whole river valley with everything including the trail issues, recreation amenities and trailheads.

e. Protection and Preservation:

- Would like to do a better job of managing the pristine areas in the river valley such as Ike's creek, the bass ponds 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.
- John: Area of a very strong interest. This is a major attraction and we really need to plan this out and get a natural landscape plan. This goes beyond getting rid of buckthorn. There is a real gem at the end of nine mile creek. Izaak Walton league can be a partner and many other groups would like to get their hands dirty and learn a little bit.
- Mark: Tip of the iceberg with Pond Dakota native prairie and the interpretation and now we have much more similar planning to do in the future within the valley.
- Jim: There are some areas that have turned from walking trails to mountain biking trails and there are so many historical and cultural site along the valley, are you going to be sensitive to these sites? There are also many unique plants and historical sites that I am worried about.
- Randy: we are not proposing to increase the number of trails, but take better care of what we have and minimize impacts and reduce conflicts between users.
- Mark: be assured that any kind of work will include a survey of the area first

f. 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.

g. Questions for City Staff or topics that didn't get touched on:

- Ed: is there an 80-20 rule now within the City?
- Randy: It is the policy that the Met Council has for park reserves and we follow those rules as far as Hyland, Normandale and Bush Lake.
- Don: How do you measure the 80-20?
- Randy: We would go through and take reasonable measurements based on usage and maintenance.
- Don: Would like to sum up my chief concern which is the paved vs. improved surface trail. If a paved trail is going to be building the river bottoms, I think it would be benefited to all users that the trail closest to the river be the natural surface trail, with the paved trail further from the river to have the least amount of maintenance needing after flooding.
- Ed: I concur with Don.
- Randy: Regardless of what the State will be putting in for the trial, we want to come up with something that is acceptable to the majority of people.
- Jim: We think it's a great idea to have a master plan for the future for the area.