



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** MCWD Board of Managers

**From:** Michael Hayman and Kim LaBo

**Date:** March 25, 2019

**Re:** Policy & Planning Committee: Item 4.1 – Minnehaha Creek Greenway Programming and 325 Blake Road

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### **Purpose:**

At the March 28, 2019 Policy and Planning Committee (PPC), staff will provide an update on the development of the Minnehaha Creek Greenway Community Engagement and Programming Plan and its relationship to the 325 Blake Road restoration and stormwater management project.

In an ongoing effort to improve service delivery and integrate programmatic efforts, a Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed interdepartmental team is being formed to coordinate efforts in achieving subwatershed goals. This team will advance plans in project areas, such as the Minnehaha Creek Greenway and Minneapolis creek corridor, and adjust efforts in response to new opportunities and threats. The 325 Blake Road site, and the integration of stormwater and public space as part of the potential redevelopment, will be an early focus of the team as a component of the Greenway engagement and programming effort.

### **Background:**

Since 2009, the District has been focusing on the most degraded section of Minnehaha Creek – between West 34th Street and Excelsior Boulevard in St. Louis Park and Hopkins – to implement a comprehensive corridor restoration that focuses on reducing pollutant loads, mitigating flashy hydrology, reconnecting the riparian corridor, and restoring the physical character of the stream channel. While the District and its partners continue capital improvement project implementation in the Minnehaha Creek Greenway, with projects such as 325 Blake Road and Meadowbrook Golf Course, there is an opportunity to increase community connection to the creek by activating existing and new Greenway spaces through programming and place-making.

The development of the draft Minnehaha Creek Greenway Community Engagement and Programming Plan (attached) focuses on the opportunity to raise community understanding and

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support of District projects by increasing outreach and involvement of key stakeholders, and creating a feedback loop to elected officials on the benefits of District work. The plan also creates community engagement processes for planned District projects and activation of completed project spaces through programming, signage and place-making.

Regarding the District's ongoing efforts at 325 Blake Road, by further defining the restoration of the site's natural resources and how they can complement a publicly-accessible development along the planned SWLRT line, the District will further realize its mission of creating a balanced urban ecology. As we work with our public partners to add clarity and vision for the site's public spaces, a community engagement process will further clarify the potential public features of the site, with a focus on activation, place-making and community understanding.

Therefore, the relationship of public space in achieving the District's objectives for the site while contributing to the successful redevelopment remains a top priority for the organization. Building on feedback from City staff and other partners, and reflecting on the master development process to date, the District's internal design/vision team has been developing options for effectively advancing the planning efforts on the 325 Blake Road site.

The forthcoming PPC meeting will focus on the development of interdepartmental teams in focal geographies, the draft Community Engagement and Programming Plan and its relation to efforts throughout the Minnehaha Greenway, and finally, options for effectively advancing planning and visioning efforts for the 325 Blake Road site.

Additional questions, comments, or ideas related to the Greenway plan or the 325 Blake Road site can be directed to Michael Hayman at [mhayman@minnehahacreek.org](mailto:mhayman@minnehahacreek.org) or Kim LaBo at [klabo@minnehahacreek.org](mailto:klabo@minnehahacreek.org).

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## MINNEHAHA CREEK GREENWAY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PROGRAMMING PLAN

2/14/2019 Draft

### PURPOSE

As part of its effort to improve service delivery and integrate programmatic efforts, a Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed interdepartmental team is being formed to coordinate efforts in achieving subwatershed goals. This team will advance plans in project areas, such as the Greenway, and adjust efforts in response to new opportunities and threats. The Minnehaha Creek Greenway community engagement and programming plan (the Plan) sets forth a path to achieve elements of the Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed goals.

The Minnehaha Creek Greenway plan nests under two plans - MCWD's draft 2020 strategic communications plan and the Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed plan, contained within the 2017 MCWD Watershed Management Plan.

**MCWD ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS:** MCWD's draft strategic communications plan identifies the below goals for the District:

1. The MCWD has the support and assistance of local and state officials for its major capital project initiatives
2. The MCWD has the support of local government officials and developers for early coordination on land use change
3. The MCWD receives more funding and leverages more partnership contributions for its capital projects, operations and programs
4. The MCWD's responsive program has the support of its key stakeholders across the District, especially those in non-focal geographies
5. The MCWD is perceived by its key stakeholders and the general public as a credible, transparent and responsive agency that adds value in its communities

### INTRODUCTION

The Minnehaha Creek Greenway (Greenway) is the area along Minnehaha Creek which starts at West 36<sup>th</sup> Street in St. Louis Park and runs southeast through Hopkins, again into St. Louis Park, and then Edina. Major businesses and institutions located within the Greenway include Target and the Knollwood Mall, Japs Olson, Methodist Hospital and Meadowbrook Golf Course.

Monitoring data collected by the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) identified this stretch of Minnehaha Creek as contributing the highest pollutant load of any segment along the approximate 22-miles of stream channel. The creek is listed as impaired by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency for chloride, fecal coliform bacteria, biota (fish and macroinvertebrates) and dissolved oxygen.

Based on the identified water quality issues and drivers, the MCWD identified this area as a focal geography, prioritizing restoration and capital projects within the Greenway. The management

strategies to address issues impacting Minnehaha Creek include stormwater management to reduce runoff volume and pollutant loading, stream restoration to stabilize streambanks, wetland and ecological restoration to reduce nutrient loading, all conducted in a manner that improves corridor and community connectivity.

Since 2009, MCWD has completed four projects within the Minnehaha Creek Greenway to improve water quality and increase community access and connection to Minnehaha Creek. The projects include Cottageville Park, Methodist Hospital Creek Remeander and Boardwalk, Minnehaha Creek Preserve and the Japs Olson-Minnehaha Preserve enhancement. An additional two projects – 325 Blake Road Restoration and Redevelopment, and Meadowbrook Golf Course Restoration – are presently in active development, with three more projects identified in the MCWD Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for future years.

#### **OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT:**

In the coming years, cities and agencies in the Minnehaha Creek subwatershed will be making infrastructure investments ranging from mass transportation projects to trail and stormwater improvements. These investments provide an opportunity to expand the connectivity of the Minnehaha Creek Greenway corridor while improving water quality through public and private partnerships.

There is also growing interest by Minnehaha Creek communities to reorient toward the creek and strengthen its value as a community amenity. The MCWD has an opportunity to increase community connection to the creek by activating Greenway spaces through programming and placemaking. Community engagement work in the area has the potential to raise community understanding and support of MCWD projects by increasing outreach and involvement of key stakeholders, and creating a feedback loop to elected officials on the benefits of MCWD projects.

#### **KEY PUBLICS:**

The primary audiences for this Plan are elected officials and community stakeholders from the cities of Hopkins, St. Louis Park and Edina.

#### **Actively Engage**

##### Internal

- Staff

##### External

- Government- Staff and Policymakers
- Key Community Stakeholders – institutions, businesses, organizations
- Interested Public in the Greenway
  - Lake associations
  - Neighborhood leaders
  - Residents living near projects
  - Trained volunteers

## Actively Inform

### Internal

- CAC
- Board of Managers

### External

- Property owners in the Greenway
  - Homeowners
  - Business owners
  - Community Institutions

## Passively Inform

- General public

## MINNEHAHA CREEK GREENWAY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PROGRAMMING PLAN GOALS

The Plan focus is to advance MCWD's 2017 Watershed Management Plan goals #1 and #3:

### **Goal #1: The MCWD has the support and assistance of local and state officials for its major capital project initiatives**

Objective: By **date, X** % of local government officials that serve communities within the Greenway express their support for the District's projects within the Greenway in policies and funding for the next ten years.

- a) Strategy: **(this will be developed as part of the interdepartmental planning process)**

Key Performance Indicators:

**Further develop as part of interdepartmental planning process** (sample examples below)

- 1) Number of city projects and plans that incorporate Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed goals
- 2) Increase in regional stormwater projects
- 3) Amount of funding secured for Greenway projects
- 4) Number of policies passed that advance Greenway goals

Objective: There is an increase in key publics who understand the value of protecting and restoring the Greenway's water resources, resulting in a 50% increase in the number of key publics who advocate in support of MCWD's projects by **XX**.

- a) Strategy: Conduct educational outreach and capacity building among key publics, growing the number and effectiveness of greenway advocates.
- 1) Tactic: conduct trainings, presentations and other outreach to community stakeholder groups on the MCWD's approach and projects
  - 2) Tactic: grow the number of water advocates by increasing the number of Master Water Stewards in the Greenway

- 3) Tactic: connect Master Water Stewards to neighborhood and water associations in the Greenway
- 4) Tactic: develop volunteer trainings to increase volunteer skills and effectiveness in engaging with local governments
- 5) Tactic: engage supportive community stakeholders in opportunities for public comment on Greenway projects

b) Strategy: Increase understanding and community investment in planned capital projects

- 1) Tactic: run a community engagement process with project partners and key publics

Key Performance Indicators:

- 1) Number of people who advocate in support of Greenway projects, plans and policies
- 2) Community attitude toward new/planned Greenway projects

Objective: More local government officials see the MCWD's work as complimentary to local climate resiliency plans and there is a 50% increase in the inclusion of MCWD projects in community climate resiliency plans by 2022.

a) Strategy: The MCWD increases collaboration and partnerships with local climate resiliency efforts that advance the resiliency of Minnehaha Creek and creek communities

1) Tactic: (figure out with subwatershed team)

2) Tactic: identify how to incorporate local resiliency efforts into Greenway programming

Key Performance Indicators:

Examples: (figure out with subwatershed team)

- 1) Local government officials view district projects as contributing to community climate resiliency
- 2) Greenway community members understand the connection between MCWD projects and climate resiliency

### **Goal #3: The MCWD receives more funding and leverages more partnership contributions for its capital projects, operations and programs**

Objective: By X date, X % of local government officials demonstrate they understand and value the ecological and community benefits project spaces and programming bring to local communities by contributing funding, staff time and other resources to project spaces and programming.

a) Strategy: Activate project spaces through collaboration and partnership with local governments, community institutions and other key publics on programming, signage and place making activities.

- 1) Tactic – issue an annual or bi-annual publication that demonstrates the value of projects spaces and programming
- 2) Tactic – conduct tours of completed projects and related programming with local elected officials

- 3) Tactic – engage supportive key publics in opportunities for public comment on Greenway initiatives
- 4) Tactic – pilot several activities in collaboration with community partners in 2019 to test ideas
- 5) Tactic – advance signage and placemaking plans in collaboration with community partners

Key Performance Indicators:

- 1) Increase in community affinity to and positive attitudes toward the Greenway
- 2) Amount of money, staff time and other resources secured for projects, programming and operations from community partners
- 3) Number of people participating in programming and using the Greenway

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