



Hidden Falls North Entrance: Site Improvements | Community Advisory Committee Meeting #3 – Meeting Notes

Meeting Date & Time: December 18, 2024, 7:00pm

Meeting Location: Highland Park Community Center (1978 Ford Pkwy, St. Paul)

Attendees: Committee Members Present: Jen Myers, Katie Tuma, Tom Lauria, Mike Boull, Tom Distad (joined virtually)

Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Staff: Anne Gardner, Niko Hadera, Katie Hamerlinck

CAC #2: *Presentation included a review of the Long Range Plan, site analysis graphics, guiding principles, recurring themes, and design strategies for the site.*

1. Questions and Discussion during the presentation:

Review of project scope and timeline – Improvements are based on the 2019 Long-Range Plan (HFCFRP Master Plan). Community Survey and CAC feedback are guiding priority improvements.

2. **Ford River Parcel (Area C):** The long-range plan identifies this area for potential acquisition – no timeline is set and requires cleanup of pollutants; the parcel is currently owned by Ford Motor Company. Helpful link from MPCA: <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/local-sites-and-projects/st-paul-ford-motor-company-area-c>
3. **Flood Management and Regulatory Considerations:** MRCCA and Floodway/Flood fringe boundaries limit development in the area and protect the natural resources. Building placement and structures will adhere to these requirements.
4. **Native Plant Harvesting:** Is there potential for incorporating native harvesting, such as plants along the river? Staff shared that the department has other projects (Wakan Tipi and RLC) to develop strategies, ordinance and potential policy for foraging and land management options partnering with Indigenous groups and knowledge keepers.
5. **Park Visitors:** Will large school groups use this site? One of the larger groups that utilize the site annually is the YMCA and recreation programs. Adjacent neighbors, community members, and small events (grad parties, family picnics, etc.) utilize this space frequently. Staff have not heard of large school groups using this site, though other small school outings (Preschool, homeschool, girl scout programs) do occur here.



6. **Stormwater Management Area:**

This area will likely include a depressed/rain garden area, considering the planned construction of the pavilion and parking lot.

7. **Budget and Phasing of projects:**

Budget alignment and sequencing will guide priority projects, with accessibility and restroom availability identified as key issues.

8. **Cultural Education:** How will visitors learn about the site's indigenous history? Comment to make sure to include Dakota voices in this project. Staff suggested interpretive signage, drawing from methods used in previous projects.

9. **Wayfinding and signage suggestion:** Consider reaching out to groups like boy scouts could be an opportunity for them to provide signage as a service project.

10. **Visitor Numbers:** Exact visitor counts are unavailable, but general estimates from the Met Council are tracked annually. The picnic shelter remains a major attraction and can be improved to be a regular, active community gathering space.

11. **Circulation:** Consider busy days in summer where the boat launch lot is full. The launch is one of the few free boat launches in the area. Find ways to engage with boating community. Question about how to make the boat launch accessible: adjust slope to meet ADA requirements.

12. **Pavilion size:** Pavilion is planned to support 60 attendees. There is support for more than one picnic shelter or consider one large shelter to be reserved for events and large groups in addition to informal picnic table. Small, individual picnic shelters were also suggested to cater to those seeking solitude.

13. **Site Design Preferences:**

- a. Feedback included preferences for concept designs, sustainable maintenance, and positioning of the pavilion and play zones.
- b. Mixed opinions were shared on the necessity of a play area, with some favoring funds allocated to other priorities like smaller pavilions.
- c. Typical playground not needed here; most agree that something more natural is best for this area.
- d. Play areas are great for community building!
- e. Having the play area next to the pavilion is good for families using the pavilion, maybe not ideal for when the pavilion is being used for a quieter event.



- f. Positive feedback about consolidating parking and reducing roads.
- g. Boat launch and boat parking area is very large, seems like most people who bring boats are not from the neighborhood/not from St. Paul
- h. Boat launch is well used, parking lot is frequently full.
- i. General preference for Concept B with some elements from Concept A
- j. Improvements to signage and wayfinding are needed.

14. Trail Design:

- a. Suggestions included reducing trails or improving signage for better functionality.
- b. Interest in providing access to the creek and falls.
- c. Prioritize trail connections to existing features (to creek and falls for example)

15. Funding:

- a. Project staff will work with funding expiration dates- first phase is planned to be completed before June 2026.

16. Architectural Theme:

- a. Questions arose about potential architectural themes and precedent images sparked excitement and provided an idea of what was to come.

Next Steps: Upcoming Meetings: CAC #3 will be scheduled in late January/February 2025 with the goal to show a more developed concept plan and pavilion proposal. Presentation and Meeting Notes will be shared to the [Project Website](#).

Meeting End: 8:15pm

Meeting minutes are intended to capture overall participation and summarize comments from City staff and CAC participants. This document shall serve as the official record of the community meeting and information shared. If there are additions or modifications that are required, please send them to Anne Gardner by January 21, 2025. Email: anne.gardner@ci.stpaul.mn.us.