

## Minnesota River Valley Master Plan – Overview

### **Purpose of the Plan:**

This master plan compiles comprehensive information on the portion of the Minnesota River Valley owned by, and located within, the City of Bloomington in order to identify opportunities to enhance access, use, and stewardship of this unique resource.

### **Vision:**

To enhance awareness, appreciation, and enjoyment of the Minnesota River Valley by ensuring that City-owned land in the Valley is used and managed in a manner that balances resource preservation with appropriate access and utilization.

### **Key Goals:**

1. **Enhance access** to recreational opportunities in the River Valley
2. **Increase awareness** and understanding of the River Valley environment
3. **Improve utilization** of land and resources in the River Valley
4. **Ensure protection and preservation** of natural and cultural resources in the River Valley

### **Guiding Principles:**

- **Balanced approach** – Opportunities to achieve the key goals must be considered in the context of many, sometimes divergent interests. The range of possibilities and trade-offs must be understood and evaluated. Priorities must be considered in the broader context of balancing resource preservation and enhancement with utilization and access to the River Valley.
- **Respect and Cooperation** – Multiple owners and stakeholders have interest in the River Valley. It's critical that we acknowledge our shared goals and work together to make them real. This will involve coordinating our individual authority, knowledge, and strengths to improve efficiencies and maximize effectiveness. It requires that the multiple stakeholders have opportunities to contribute to the planning process and their voices are reflected in the vision and recommended outcomes.
- **Connecting the Past and Future** – The River Valley has been home to human settlements for millennia and played a crucial role in the livelihood of people who settled in this area. Evidence of early settlements remain and the location of those settlements influenced subsequent settlement patterns in the surrounding community. While the

River Vally forms the entire east/southeast border of Bloomington, many have only a passing awareness of this unique resource. Increasing awareness of the River Valley is essential to wholly appreciate its tremendous value to the community - throughout history and into the future.

## **Public Engagement Process**

**Key Stakeholders** - The majority of land in the Minnesota River Valley is under the ownership of three government agencies: US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS); the State of Minnesota (MNDNR, MNDOT); and the City of Bloomington. In addition, there are multiple stakeholder groups with interest in the use and management of the River Valley. Opportunities to engage in the formulation of this master plan will be provided for all property owners and interested stakeholders, including:

- Federal agencies (e.g., USFWS, USCOE)
- State agencies (e.g., MnDNR, SHPO)
- Regional agencies (e.g., Three Rivers Park District, Metropolitan Council)
- Adjacent cities
- Native community and cultural resource advocates
- Bicycle/Trail advocates
- Natural resource advocates (Audubon, IWL)
- Local advocates (e.g., "Geezer Squad", "Friends")

**Input & Engagement opportunities** – There are four primary means for stakeholders and other interested parties to provide input and stay informed about the planning process. These include:

1. **Stakeholder meetings** – Staff will convene several meetings with stakeholder groups at key points during the planning process. Input will be specifically requested near the beginning of the process and again when draft recommendations are made public.
2. **Open house(s)** – Two open houses are proposed. One near the beginning of the planning process to get input on the vision, goals, and initial ideas about opportunities. The second open house will be held when the draft plan and recommendations are complete, prior to review by City officials (PARC, Planning Commission, and City Council).
3. **Media** - Several forms of media will be utilized to allow interested persons to obtain information and provide input on the project. These include:
  - **Project webpage** - Staff is in the process of creating a webpage specific to this project that will be available on the City's website. It will provide information on the status of the project, upcoming meetings, copies of draft reports when available, and how to provide input.

- **E-subscribe list** - Staff is also in the process of preparing both an e-subscribe and standard mailing list. This will be used to send out notices of meetings and other opportunities to provide input on the project.
  - **On-line survey** – Staff will prepare an on-line survey that is anticipated to be available on CityWeb in late May or early June. Notification of the survey will be sent out to stakeholders, the e-subscribe list, City officials, government agencies, and other known interested parties. The survey is intended to obtain community input on opportunities to explore in the master plan.
  - **Briefing Newsletter** – Staff will prepare articles for the *Briefing* summarizing plan recommendations and information on opportunities to provide input.
4. **Official City Meetings** - Stakeholders and other interested parties can also attend any of the public meetings held with City officials during the planning process. While study sessions are open to public attendance, they do not provide opportunity for public comment. Prior to approval, the plan will be reviewed at regular commission and City Council meetings, which will provide opportunity for public comments on the plan.