



Title: 325 Blake Road Regional Stormwater and Greenway Effort

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Purpose:

At the August 18, 2021 meeting of the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), staff will present and lead a discussion around the current status and next steps to advance the 325 Blake Road Restoration and Redevelopment capital project. As the project advances into active design and MCWD proceeds to formalize its relationship with a potential private development partner, this is an opportune time for the CAC to provide its insight on early conceptual designs for the regional stormwater and greenway effort and how MCWD can best manage a range of potential risks as the project and partnerships solidify.

Background:

MCWD's capital project located at 325 Blake Road in Hopkins is intended to stitch together the Minnehaha Creek Greenway between the Minnehaha Creek Preserve and Cottageville Park through riparian restoration and the addition of trails, and provide regional treatment of stormwater runoff from approximately 270 acres surrounding the site. These improvements will consume only 4-6 acres of the nearly 17 acre site, with the remaining acreage intended to be redeveloped into a mixed-use transit-oriented development that meets the City of Hopkins' (City) needs and takes advantage of the site's location adjacent to the future Blake Road LRT station.

While the mixed-use redevelopment is an important outcome, it will be completed by a private developer and is subject to market forces, making the timing and scale inherently more uncertain than MCWD's stormwater and greenway project. MCWD has been following a dual track approach of conducting preliminary engineering, community engagement, and design while simultaneously seeking a private development partner. The goal is to align the timing of the private development and MCWD's project to create a holistic site plan and achieve efficiencies of scale, while avoiding the risk of delaying MCWD's project if the development fails to materialize in 2021/2022. Both MCWD and its funding partners have invested significant time and money to prepare the site so this approach protects that investment by ensuring timely completion of the stormwater and greenway project, while maximizing the chance MCWD will be able to complete the work in conjunction with the ultimate development of the site.

MCWD has also established two sets of Board liaisons to help shepherd the project through both the redevelopment and capital project design processes. The development liaisons have counterparts on the Hopkins City Council, creating a "joint liaison group" that has been charged with aligning policies and creating the partnership agreements necessary to coordinate the redevelopment portion of the project. The design liaisons are charged with ensuring that MCWD's stormwater and greenway project meets all of MCWD's goals irrespective a larger redevelopment.

Through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process led by MCWD in conjunction with the City, the partners solicited interest in redevelopment of the site over the first half of 2021. Based on a responses to a request for letters of interest, MCWD and the City invited five developers to propose on the site. All five firms submitted development proposals, with three developers ultimately invited to interview based on the quality of their proposals. MCWD analyzed the finalist proposals from a financial and design perspective to understand the relative merits and risks of each proposal. This effort culminated with a joint meeting of the Hopkins City Council and MCWD Board of Managers, at which the Board ultimately supported the City's unanimous vote for Alatus based on the City's assessment that Alatus' proposal best met

the City's comprehensive plan's density, affordability, and other goals. As the preferred developer, Alatus will lead redevelopment of the portion of the site not used for the stormwater and greenway project.

Shortly after the selection of Alatus, MCWD hosted a two-day design charrette which was intended to marry the development and design processes. At the charrette, MCWD's and the community's stormwater and greenway goals were merged with Alatus' preliminary site plan to provide a concept for a unified design. The stormwater and greenway concept were shaped by several rounds of community engagement held in the months leading up to the charrette. In addition to MCWD, the City, and Alatus, regional agencies with an interest in the project were also invited to attend and provide their ideas on how to create the strongest possible connections to existing and future transportation, parks, and housing.

The outcome of the charrette was two concept plans; one showing MCWD's stormwater and greenway project and its tie-in to a future redevelopment, and the second demonstrating a fully integrated greenway with Alatus' redevelopment proposal. These two concepts provide the basis for the project's next steps, described below.

CAC meeting focus and next steps:

At the August 18, 2021 CAC meeting, staff will provide supplemental project background information as necessary, but the focus of the meeting will be to receive input on the concept plans and facilitate a discussion around the risks and opportunities of a joint community engagement and design process. The ideas generated at this meeting will help structure the next steps of the project, which include a second phase design contract to bring the project from conceptual design (30%) to final design and construction. In addition to the future design effort, next steps include formalizing development agreements and coordination processes with Alatus and the City around community engagement, design of public spaces, final development concepts and a potential land sale.

Attachments:

1. Baseline and Development Conceptual Renderings



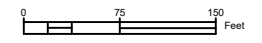
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ISSUE	DATE	DESCRIPTION

PROJECT MANAGER	

CHARRETTE SKETCH WITH AERIAL





PROJECT MANAGER		
ISSUE	DATE	DESCRIPTION

CHARRETTE SKETCH WITH AERIAL

