



MEMORANDUM

To: MCWD Board of Managers
From: Renae Clark, Planner/Project Manager
Date: July 11, 2016
Re: Arden Park Project Development Process and Schedule Briefing

Purpose:

This memorandum provides project history and discusses project benefits and opportunities using the project prioritization framework developed by staff which will be reviewed by the Planning and Policy Committee on July 14, 2016 prior to the Board Workshop. The details below also describe the proposed partnership agreement between the City of Edina and MCWD to create a concept plan for Arden Park which integrates creek restoration to the surrounding park landscape, schedule and next steps.

Project History:

In October 2013, the Board authorized staff to investigate alternatives for the West 54th Street grade control structure in Edina in coordination with the City's proposed street reconstruction and replacement of the West 54th Street bridge. The grade control structure was recommended for removal in the District's 2003 Stream Assessment because it is a barrier to fish passage and creates an impoundment causing accumulation of sediment, degrading upstream aquatic habitat.

The public engagement process implemented by the City of Edina and MCWD revealed that the grade control structure caused a standing wave to form at the downstream end, and this wave was a regional attraction for whitewater paddlers and therefore the Board directed that project alternatives maintain the existing recreational functionality. For this reason, staff recommended a bypass channel alternative that would allow for fish passage but would leave the structure intact. The Board ordered the project on September 25, 2014, and the pipe portion of the bypass channel was incorporated into the City's bid package for West 54th Street.

The street reconstruction project was delayed due to bid prices and it was subsequently discovered that, following the record flooding of 2014, the wave was no longer forming and that there was further deterioration of the spillway presenting potential entrapment hazards for paddlers. Given the loss of the recreational feature, staff recommended that the District revisit removal of the structure and restoration of the creek and the Board authorized this direction in Resolution 15-009 on January 29, 2015. A larger-scale stream restoration effort incorporating recreational amenities, safety improvements, and enhancement to riparian vegetation throughout the Park was supported by the City of Edina in a letter of support. In addition, the Rapids Riders Club provided written support to remove the grade control structure and encouraged the incorporation of new whitewater features in tandem with meeting ecological goals. The group organized a subcommittee "Friends of the Wave" to participate in the design of the project.

In response the Board resolved on April 7, 2016 to delay the project schedule. Staff provided a project briefing on April 14, 2016 which reviewed project history and next steps towards project development

which include cooperatively working with the City of Edina and the community to develop an overall Concept Plan for Arden Park in 2016, designing improvements in 2017 and construction in 2018.

Since that time staff and the Board of Managers have been continuing to develop the 2017 budget and undertaking organizational strategic planning. As part these processes, a draft project evaluation framework has been developed and will be reviewed with the Board of Managers at the July 14, 2016 Planning and Policy Committee meeting. Overall, the framework provides a project priority raking based on several factors regarding resource need, project benefits and other influencing factors such as partner support and urgency of opportunity. This evaluation is intended to be revisited on a routine, reoccurring basis for the Board of Managers to set priorities and make decisions based on an overall project ranking relative to other project opportunities and staff/budget resource allocation.

The Arden/54th Street stream restoration is not within a focal planning geography. The project urgency at this time is driven by a moderate level of public awareness from recent District planning with the City of Edina and support from City staff. The restoration opportunity would be planned to connect the creek improvements with City goals for Arden Park identified through recent public engagement processes as part of the City's Strategic Parks Plan and recent road reconstruction projects. The natural resource benefits include an opportunity to connect 1.5 miles of stream channel to 8 miles upstream which addresses fish and macroinvertebrate impairments within Minnehaha Creek. Broader community benefits include recreational improvements, public safety and improved used of park land. Funding for the concept design is included in the current budget and is proposed to be supplemented by the City of Edina as outlined in a draft Memorandum of Agreement. Staff and budget resource allocation for this project throughout design and construction, will be reviewed at the July 14, 2016 Planning and Policy Committee in context of the current list of project opportunities.

Next Steps:

Staff has been working with the City of Edina to develop terms for a Memorandum of Agreement to align goals and responsibilities for project development. The project development process will begin with a concept design that includes a public participation process. At the July 14, 2016 Board Workshop, staff will review the Memorandum of Agreement, consultant contracts, schedule and budget. The terms of the Agreement, in general, provide for a jointly lead public participation process to develop a concept plan for Arden Park and a 30% design alternative for stream restoration which would be incorporated into the overall concept park plan. The Agreement provides for a 50% cost share of the overall park concept plan with MCWD funding 100% of the stream restoration design component. The needed MCWD funds for 2016 work are available in the current project budget. The concept plan is tentatively scheduled to be complete and approved in November. Design is scheduled for 2017 and construction in 2018. A request for Board action to approve the Memorandum of Agreement and consultant contracts for concept design is scheduled for the July 28, 2016 Board Meeting.