



# Phalen - Keller Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment

Saint Paul, MN | 2024



**SAINT PAUL**  
MINNESOTA

Submitted by the City of Saint Paul  
Parks and Recreation





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# Introduction

The City of Saint Paul completed a master plan for Phalen Park in 1975 and Ramsey County completed a master plan for Keller Park in 1977. In 1978, as a response to changing demands for parks and recreation activities, the City of Saint Paul, together with Ramsey County, completed a joint master plan for the Phalen - Keller Regional Park (Figure 1).

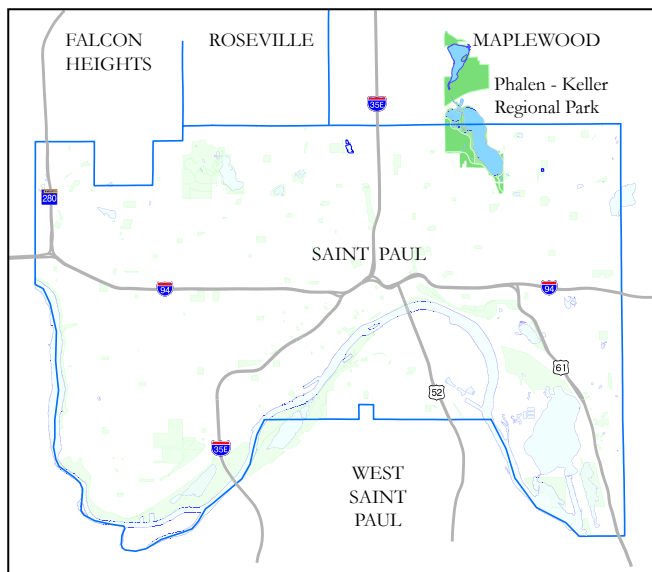


Figure 1: Phalen Master Plan (1975)

Though the plan combined the two recreational areas in this singular master plan, each jurisdiction continues to own and operate their respective portions of the regional park.

## Previous Amendments

In 2011, an amendment to this plan was adopted by the Metropolitan Council. The Phalen - Keller Regional Park Master Plan Amendment (2011) addressed the goals of responding to changing demands in the regional park by highlighting specific sub-projects that the City of Saint Paul and Ramsey County aimed to complete. These sub-projects included the expansion of native plant areas to be restored, the resolution of issues with trail connections, the addition of more picnic facilities, and the creation of additional cultural and historical amenities.<sup>1</sup>

## Phalen-Keller Long-Range Plan Amendment (2024)

This document, the Phalen - Keller Regional Park Master Plan Amendment (2024) will address the 11 elements identified for Regional Parks and Open Space Master Plans in the Metropolitan Council Parks and Open Space Development Guide/Policy Plan, and is specifically intended to meet the criteria required by the Metropolitan Council. Once adopted, the City will be eligible to apply for funding to implement Phase One of the Daylighting Phalen Creek project.

## Daylighting Phalen Creek

Phalen Creek historically flowed from the south end of Lake Phalen and discharged where it met with the Mississippi River. This corridor is culturally and geologically significant, particularly to the Dakota communities of Saint Paul. In the 1930s the City, evidently concerned with the flooding risks to the surrounding land development, piped the creek by putting it underground into stormwater system. Today, the Creek's path weaves through residential neighborhoods, multi-modal transit-ways, light-industrial and commercial lots, as well as park land.<sup>2</sup>

Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi, formerly known as Lower Phalen Creek Project, is a Native-led environmental stewardship non-profit organization centered in Dakota Values. It was founded in 1997 by community activists. In 2011, the group gained 501c3 status and they partnered with Capital Region Watershed to solicit a feasibility study to detail a possible path to daylight the creek. This study was completed by Inter-Fluve and divided the project into eight reaches. Reaches Seven and Eight make up Phase One of this project and are the focus of this amendment document. See Figure 2: Daylighting Phalen Creek Map (2023)

The goals of the Daylighting Phalen Creek project are to bring as much of the creek above ground as possible to restore native aquatic, riparian, and upland ecosystems and habitats along the Phalen Creek Corridor.

<sup>1</sup>: Phalen - Keller Regional Park Master Plan Amendment (March 2011)

<sup>2</sup>: <https://www.wakantipi.org/daylighting>

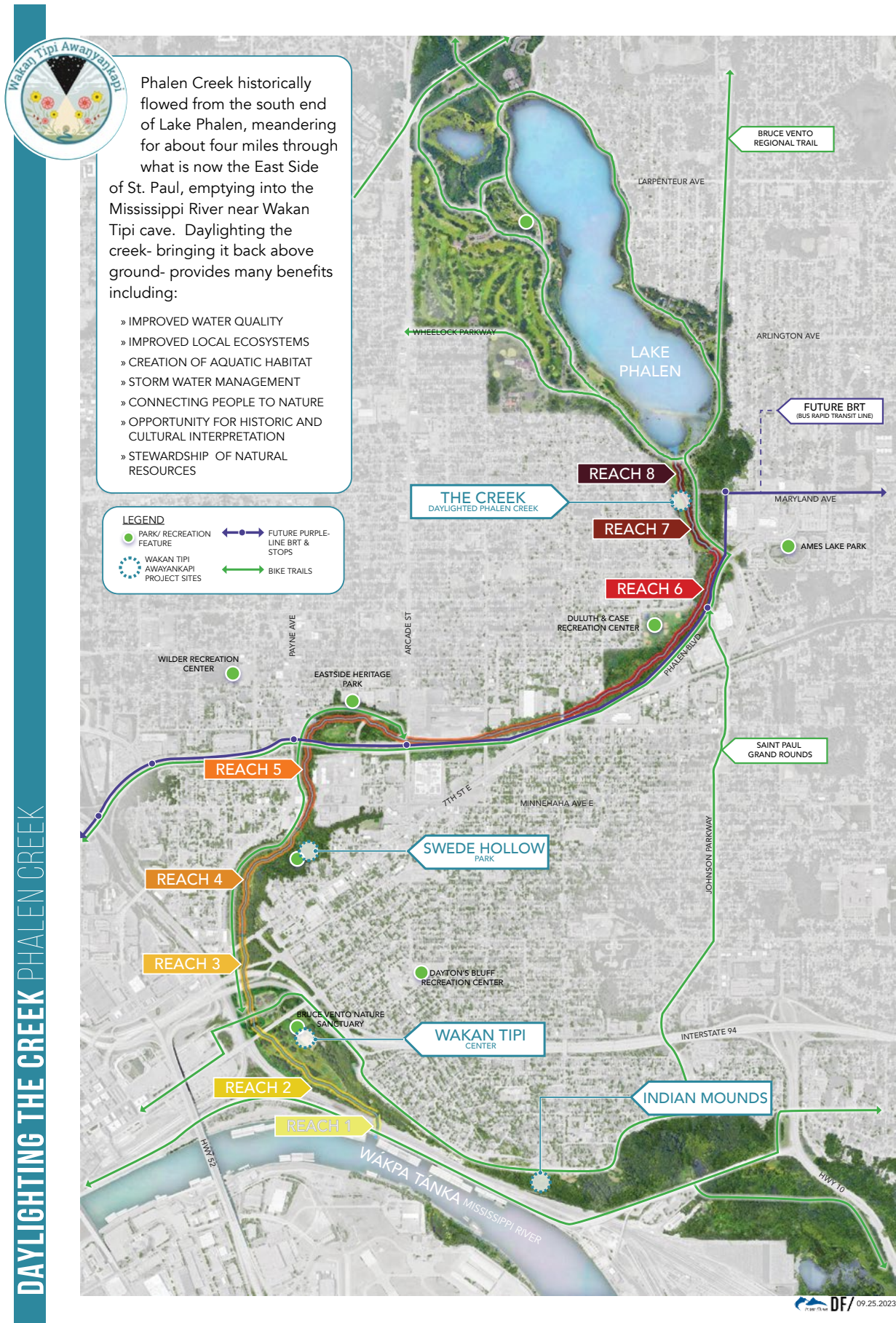


Figure 2: Daylighting Phalen Creek Map (2023)



# Boundaries

Phase One is a 10-acre site located just south of Lake Phalen. It is bounded on the north and east sides by Johnson Parkway. The southern border terminates between Jessamine Avenue East and Magnolia Lane, along a privately-owned parcel (1275 Magnolia Avenue East). South of Maryland Avenue East, Phase One is bounded along the west by Burnquist Street. North of Maryland Avenue East, it is bounded by five privately-owned parcels (1190 Orange Avenue, 1205 Hawthorne Ave East, 1215 Hawthorne Avenue East, 1218 Hawthorne Ave East, and 1223 Maryland Ave East) as well as the terminus of Hawthorne Avenue East.

## Acquisition Costs

The entirety of Phalen - Keller Regional Park is nearly 750 acres in size, which includes the 10-acre area covered by Phase One of the Daylighting Phalen Creek project.

Phase One is on land owned by the City of Saint Paul, with the exception of one portion of Right-of-Way owned by Ramsey County that transects the site (Maryland Avenue), an existing Metropolitan Council (Met Council) Sewer Easement, and an existing Saint Paul Regional Water Service (SPRWS) Easement on the west side of the site along Burnquist Street.

The only expected acquisition costs for this project would be temporary easements and amendments to permanent easements with Met Council, SPRWS, and Ramsey County for the construction and maintenance of the Ramsey County-owned section.

### Parcels and Property:

- Ramsey County: Maryland Avenue East between Burnquist Street and Johnson Parkway.
- SPRWS: Tax Parcels: 212922440001
- Met Council: [See Appendix A for sewer easement agreement and easement legal description.](#)

The site is suitable for the proposed improvements as an existing open lawn space which is currently unprogrammed.



### Legend



-  City-Owned Park Land
-  Phase One Boundary

Figure 3: Phase 1 (Reaches 7 & 8) Boundary Map

# Stewardship Plan

The City of Saint Paul will own and maintain the Phalen Creek Daylighting project. Saint Paul Police and Saint Paul Parks & Recreation Security will be maintaining public safety in the park. There are no non-residential uses or collection of revenues from such uses planned at this time. Should such uses occur in the future, revenues will be utilized consistent with the adopted Recreation Open Space Development Guide/Policy Plan.

## Demand Forecast

Based on the 2021 Metropolitan Council Annual Use Estimate of the Metropolitan Regional Park System, Phalen - Keller Regional Park was ranked as the 10th most visited regional park with 1.1 million visits.

Previous Metropolitan Council Parks and Trails Survey indicated walking/hiking, jogging/running, boating (including sailing, canoeing, kayaking, rowing, and jet skiing), fishing, picnicking, and relaxing are the top activities occurring in Phalen - Keller Regional Park

# Development Concept



## DAYLIGHTING THE CREEK CONCEPT ALTERNATIVE 2: "CREEKSIDE CANOPY"

### OVERVIEW

- » PARTIALLY LOOPING PATH: AGGREGATE & MOWN
- » FEWER INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES
- » CONTAINS THE MOST HABITAT SUPPORT STRUCTURES
- » FOCUSES HUMAN ACTIVITY ON NORTH HALF
- » SMALLER GATHERING LAWN
- » INCREASED CANOPY COVERAGE

### ECOSYSTEMS

#### UPLAND

- » PRESERVE EXISTING TREES
- » NATIVE SAVANNA PLANTINGS
- » POLLINATOR FORAGE AREAS
- » SONGBIRD HABITAT

#### RIPARIAN

- » AMPHIBIAN HABITAT
- » NATIVE RIPARIAN PLANTINGS
- » TURTLE BASKING LOGS
- » POLLINATOR FORAGE AREAS

#### CREEK

- » SPAWNING GRAVELS
- » FISH FORAGE AREAS
- » MUSSEL HABITAT

### LEGEND

- PRIMARY TRAIL (6') - ACCESSIBLE AGGREGATE
- SECONDARY TRAIL (2-4') - MOWN
- CREEK CROSSING (BRIDGE)
- CREEK CROSSING (STEPPERS)
- SEATING OPPORTUNITY / BENCH
- NATURE PLAY OPPORTUNITY
- SITE ENTRY / TRAILHEAD
- GATHERING / REFLECTIVE SPACE
- INTERPRETIVE FEATURE
- HABITAT SUPPORT STRUCTURE

N 1" = 100'

DAYLIGHTING THE CREEK PHALEN CREEK



DF/ 09.25.2023



# Development Concept

## Planned Developments and Capacity

The proposed improvements and natural resource management projects include the restoration of wetlands, wet meadows, stream banks, and savanna, as well as a variety of walking trails, seating opportunities, areas for nature play, gathering spaces, stream crossings, and interpretive areas. The proposed improvements feature three concept alternatives.

## Trail Connections

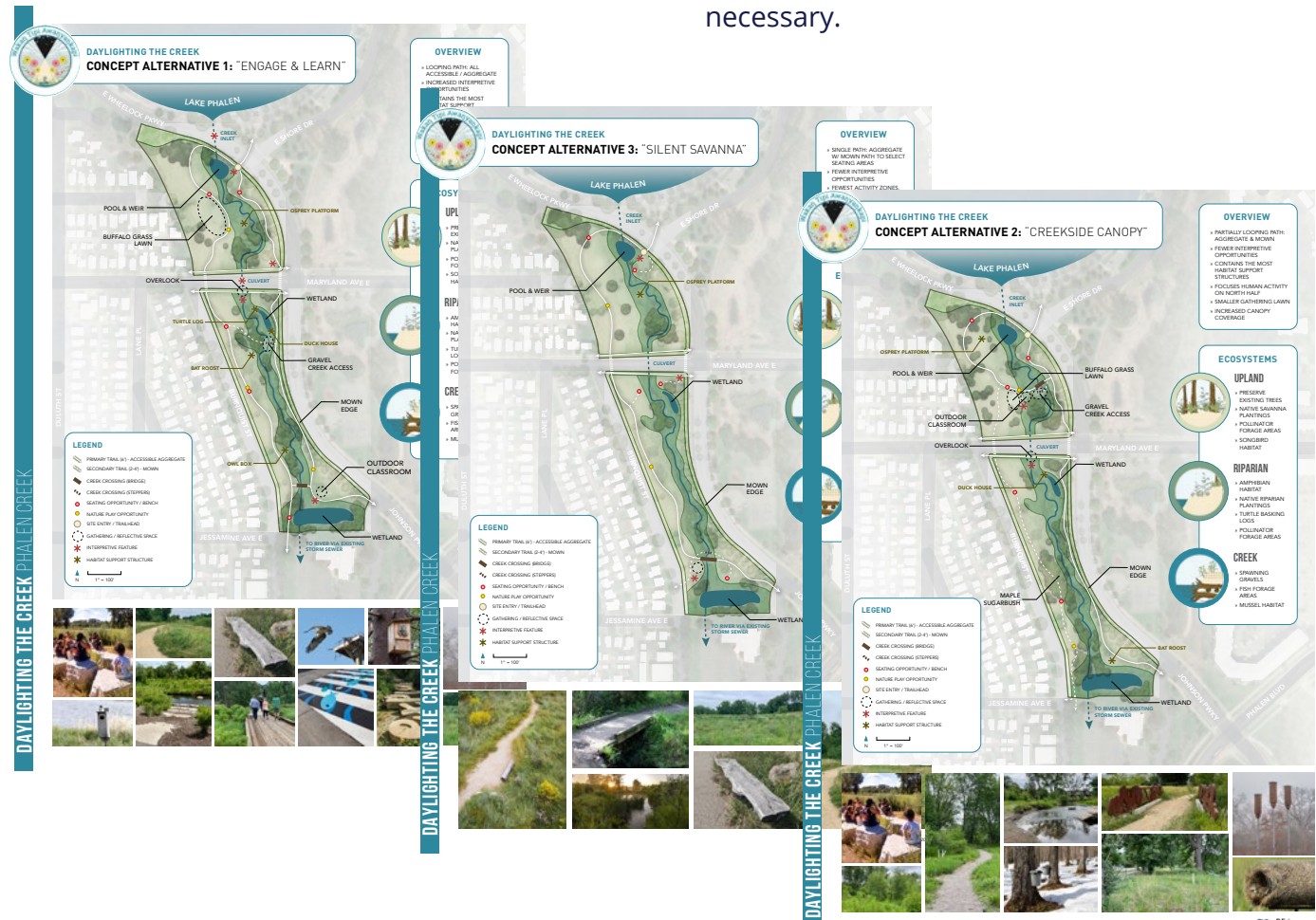
The internal 6' wide aggregate path will connect to the Bruce Vento Regional Trail system on the east side of Johnson Parkway to the north and local trail systems around Lake Phalen. Intersections will include pedestrian crossings based upon industry standards. Coordinate with Saint Paul and Ramsey County Public works.

## Wayfinding

Both interpretive and wayfinding signage will be integral to each planned intervention on this site. The concept plans include sites for Interpretive Signs with Viewshed Panels, Interpretive Pillars, Wayfinding Trail Markers, and Monument Trailhead Signs. In addition to clear and frequent signage elements, there will be several different pavement types which clue visitors into whether they are on the main north-south pathway or if they are deviating toward a different focus element.

## Drinking Water

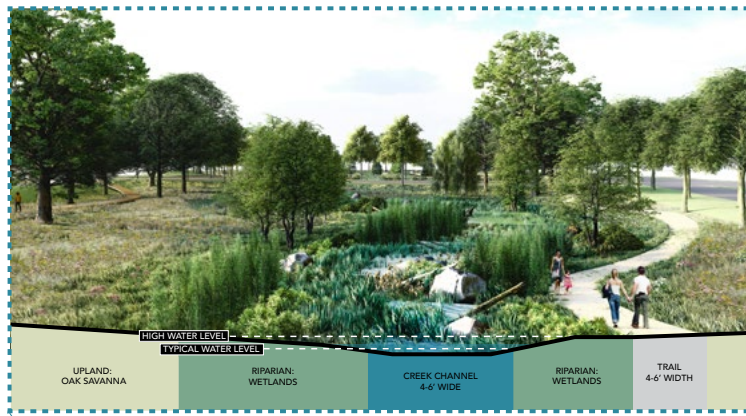
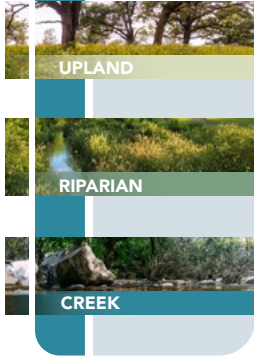
There are not currently any planned drinking fountains in the development concepts for Daylighting Phalen Creek. An existing drinking fountain is located at the parking lot along East Shore Drive. There is a Saint Paul Regional Water Service line running through the segment of the site that is south of Maryland Avenue and thus drinking water could be made available if necessary.



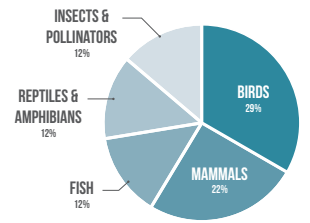


## DAYLIGHTING THE CREEK NATIVE ECOSYSTEM PROFILES

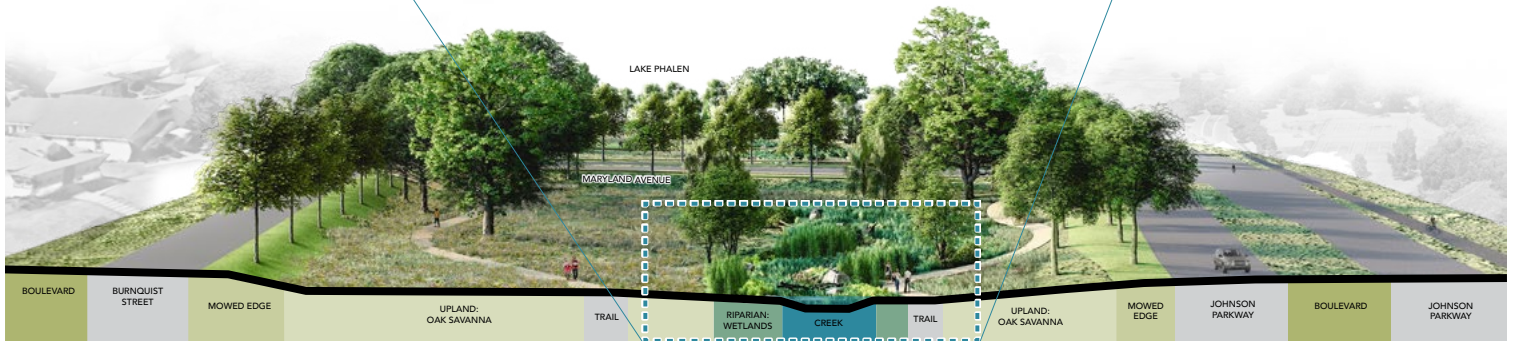
WHAT WOULD THE LAND  
& WATER LOOK LIKE?



WHAT WE HEARD: WILDLIFE YOU'D LIKE  
TO SEE BROUGHT BACK TO THE CREEK



WHO ELSE MIGHT LIVE HERE? CHECK OUT  
THE SPECIES PROFILES TO SEE MORE!



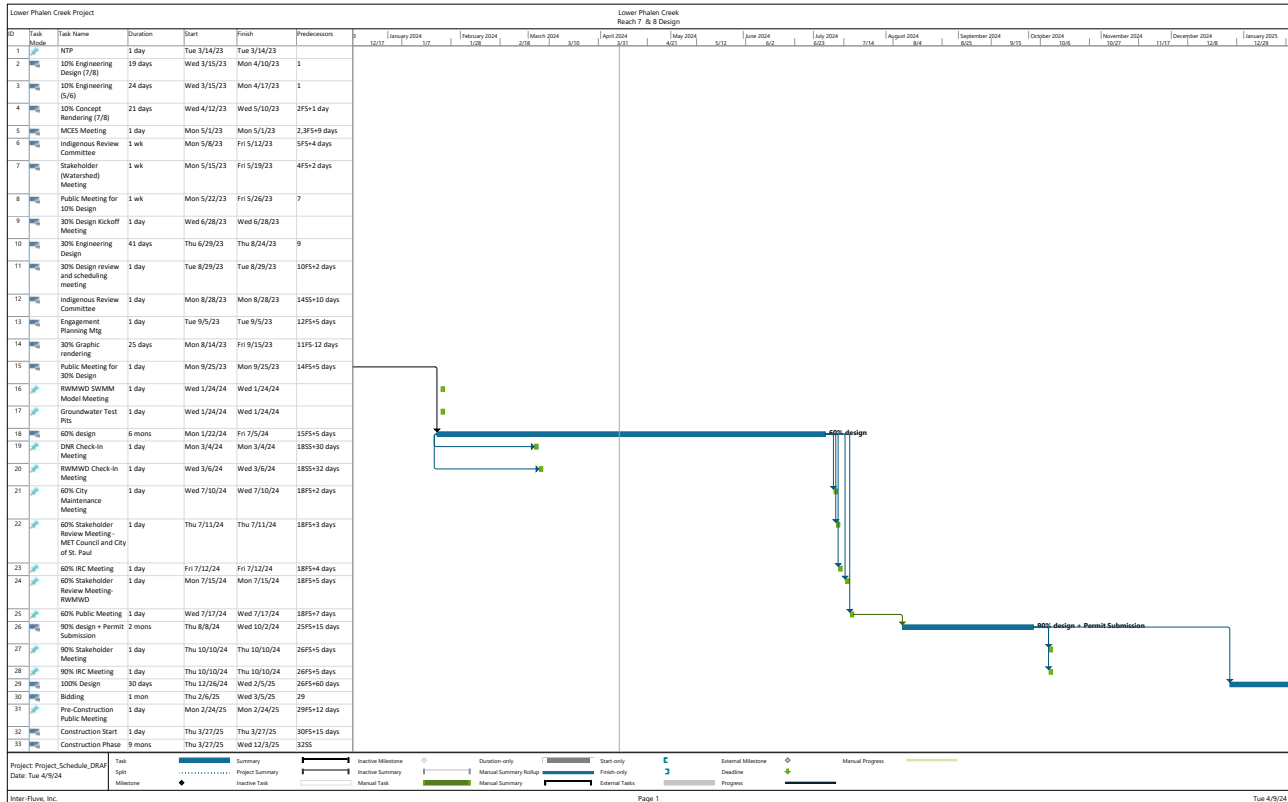
## DAYLIGHTING THE CREEK PHALEN CREEK

Daylighting Phalen Creek - Native Ecosystem Profiles



DF/09.25.2023

## Schedule



Daylighting Phalen Creek - Schedule

## Cost Estimate

Professional Services	\$ 1,400,000
Construction	\$ 2,300,000
Landscaping	\$ 720,000
Contingency	\$ 230,000
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>\$ 4,650,000</b>

Note: Cost estimate preliminary and final cost will be determined through bidding.



*Daylighting Phalen Creek - Bird's Eye Project Rendering (2023)*



# Conflicts

There is a 20-foot wide sanitary sewer easement which grants access to the Metropolitan Waste Control Commission. There is also a Saint Paul Regional Water Service Main Water Line running through the southwest portion of the site.

The proposed design accommodates these utilities by positioning the creek and greater landscape improvements on the east side of the parcels.

There are no known conflicts between recreational and natural-resource management needs in developing the park/trail unit

# Public Services

As part of the project, a new lake outlet structure is proposed at the south end of Lake Phalen. Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed District has tentatively agreed to maintain the structure.

# Operations

The City of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation, operates and maintains Phalen Regional Park. Patrolling of the facilities is provided by the Saint Paul Parks & Recreation Department. Under city jurisdiction, existing city rules, regulations, and ordinances for its operation and maintenance will apply.

Estimate costs for operations and maintenance are shown below:

Task	Hours	Cost
Cutting natural areas	48	\$4,800
Natural area detailed maintenance	100	\$10,000
Trail aggregate maintenance	30	\$3,000
Litter pick up, waste disposal	100	\$10,000
Storm Water Pond Maintenance		

# Partner Engagement

Project partners, Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi (formerly Lower Phalen Creek Project), Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed District, Department of Natural Resources and Ramsey County were involved early in the design process. They have provided input on the creek daylighting and are supportive.

Additionally, Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi led a year 5 year community input process. See below Engagement process for details

# Public Engagement and Participation

## Engagement Process

The project to Daylight Phalen Creek was developed through extensive community, partner, and stakeholder engagement over seven years beginning in 2017. [See appendix for engagement documents.](#)



## Milestones

### I. Swede Hollow Master Plan Community Engagement (2017-2018)

- 15 community events - LPCP engaged with the community and collected survey responses
  - » One is titled the *Phalen Creek Daylighting Survey: BVNS* and asked about creek Reaches 5 and 7 that were identified in the initial technical feasibility as most technically feasible. (453 responses)
  - » The other survey is titled *Phalen Creek Restoration Survey: Swede Hollow Park* and asked about restoring steady stream flow within Swede Hollow Park. (117 responses)
  - » Community engagement events ranged from larger community events, tabling or speaking in academic spaces, and Indigenous community events
  - » Surveys were translated into Spanish, Karen and Hmong
- Approximately 1,344 people were engaged
- 570 survey responses
- 201 respondents indicated they would like to see the creek restored in Reach 7 (just south of Lake Phalen), 220 said they would like to see water flowing through Swede Hollow and 238 indicated they would like to see the creek restored at BVNS
- Nearby residents (to Swede Hollow and BVNS) were the primary survey respondents (approximately 400 respondents)
- 62 respondents indicated they were part of the indigenous community, with 30 respondents indicated they are a member of the Dakota community
- Overall, 63% of respondents were European American/White, 18% Asian/Asian American, 10% indigenous, 4% African/African American, 4% Latinx/Hispanic
- 254 respondents were ages 30-54, about 160 respondents were ages 55+



# Public Engagement and Participation (Continued)

## II. 2020-2022 Community Engagement

- 15 community events - LPCP engaged with the community online and in person with some surveys conducted at select events
  - » Go With the Flow of Phalen Creek! - 9.1.21 (2 responses), Emergence Festival - 7.24.21 (8 responses), Phalen Creek CRWD Rendering Feedback (7 responses), Flower Power (35 responses), Go With the Flow of Phalen Creek! 6.26.21 (35 responses)
- Approximately 1,976 people were engaged
- 87 survey responses
- The survey responses mainly focused on questions related to future use and
- Importance of the daylight creek, such as:
  - » Water quality and ecological impact
  - » How people see themselves interacting with the daylighting space
  - » What people would like to see for future signage
- 17 respondents were ages 35-39, 12 ages 40-60, 9 ages 60+
  - » \*35 responses from the Flower Power event did not have any demographic questions
- 38 of respondents were European American/White, 3 were Asian/Asian American, 2 were Indigenous, 1 African/African American, 1 Latinx/Hispanic
  - » \*35 responses from the Flower Power event did not have any demographic questions
- It should be noted that most of the community engagement was done online during webinars and educational videos posted during the pandemic
- » 6/2/23 Water Fest Tabling (6 responses)
- » 42 online survey responses
- » Survey posted on WTA social media, newsletter and website
- Demographic Info:
  - » 66.67% of respondents are nearby residents
  - » 50% of respondents are 30-54; 33.3% are 55+
  - » 76.4% of respondents are white/European American, 22.2% are
  - » Indigenous, 5.6% are Asian/Asian American
- Current use of space:
  - » 31.9% of respondents rarely visit the site; 27.8% visit monthly, 20.8% visit weekly
  - » 77.8% of respondents use the area to walk/hike; 47.2% bird/wildlife watch; 38.9% bike ride; 37.5% for events
  - » 29.2% use the Bruce Vento Trail to enter the area; 23.6% use Phalen Pavilion; 19.4% use Lake Phalen Trail parking

## III. 2023 Community Engagement: 10% Design of Reaches 7&8

- 2 community events and 1 online engagement:
  - » 5/24/23 Community Engagement Session at Metro State University (24 responses)

## IV. 2023 Community Engagement: 10% Design of Reaches 7&8

- 2 community events and 1 online engagement:
  - » 5/24/23 Community Engagement Session at Metro State University (24 responses)
  - » 6/2/23 Water Fest Tabling (6 responses)
  - » 42 online survey responses
  - » Survey posted on WTA social media, newsletter and website
- Demographic Info:
  - » 66.67% of respondents are nearby residents
  - » 50% of respondents are 30-54; 33.3% are 55+
  - » 76.4% of respondents are white/European American, 22.2% are
  - » Indigenous, 5.6% are Asian/Asian American
- Current use of space:

## *Public Engagement and Participation (Continued)*

- » 31.9% of respondents rarely visit the site; 27.8% visit monthly, 20.8% visit weekly
- » 77.8% of respondents use the area to walk/hike; 47.2% bird/wildlife watch; 38.9% bike ride; 37.5% for events
- » 29.2% use the Bruce Vento Trail to enter the area; 23.6% use Phalen Pavilion; 19.4% use Lake Phalen Trail parking

### **V. Other**

- Payne-Phalen Community Council Meeting (Feb 27, 2024)
- Daylighting Community Engagement: Session #2 (September 30, 2023)
- Sent survey to residents via mail (August 2023)



# Equity Analysis

## 1. Project Data:

- A: Scope: What are the boundaries and demographics of the public engagement area? Please consider neighborhoods adjacent to the park or trail, travel sheds, and agency/regional boundaries.

*As a regional park, the public engagement area ranged from a half mile radius of the project site in the Payne Phalen Neighborhood and along the future creek corridor including users and residents of Swede Hollow Park and Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary.*

- B: Context: What is known about future stakeholders, under-served populations, and how the region's history created present-day inequitable outcomes?

*The 2024 Saint Paul Parks and Recreation System Plans identifies the entirety of the project (Reaches 7 & 8) are within an Area of Concentrated Poverty.*

*The entirety of Phalen Creek Corridor is within an EPA geographically designated community on the East Side of St Paul Minnesota as designated on the EPA IRA Disadvantaged Communities Map.*

*Phalen Creek is a long-buried waterway that once meandered through Saint Paul's East Side. Until the early twentieth century, Phalen Creek served as a thriving wildlife corridor and as a cultural resource for the Dakota people.*

*In 2019, the City adopted a Climate Action & Resilience Plan. In this plan, the City identified that northern Payne-Phalen neighborhood was one of several neighborhoods identified as having the highest combined risk of negative impacts resulting from climate change.*

## 2. Public Engagement and Participation:

- A: Participants: Which stakeholders discussed in 1b contributed to the planning effort? The following list is illustrative of stakeholders to consider including youth, Black, indigenous, and people of color communities, people with disabilities, low-income populations, populations age 60 and over, and neighborhood/regional groups that participated as planning staff, community advisory committee members, outreach

liaisons, and the general public.

*Between 2017-2023, Approximately 3,320 people were engaged and 729 survey responses were received. The respondents identified as follows: 8.2% Asian/Asian American, 11% Indigenous, 1.5% African American, 1.5% Latinx/Hispanic.*

Involvement by different age groups was generally good, except that the proportion of young adults (20-29) was noticeably lower than the other age groups. Any additional engagement should make specific effort to reach the young adult demographic.

- B: Engagement: What engagement, outreach, and communication was conducted for stakeholders described in 2a? Please identify the level of public impact on the International Association for Public Participation's Public Participation Spectrum and requisite engagement strategies for each stakeholder group. Please consider culturally competent and community representative staffing, training, locations, times, public awareness, and input approaches.

*2017-2018 engagement ranged from large scale events, Indigenous events, tabling and academic spaces. Surveys were translated into Spanish, Karen and Hmong.*

*2020-2022 the project team engaged with the community online and in person. Surveys were posted on social media, newsletters and websites and some surveys conducted at several events. Note: most of the community engagement was completed online during webinars and education videos posted during the pandemic.*

*2023 project team conducted two community events and 1 online event. Online surveys were posted on Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi social media, newsletters and website.*

- C: Public Participation: What did you learn from the engagement conducted in 2b? Please summarize the advice you heard into themes and identify the contributing stakeholder.

*2017-2018: Total of 570 respondents. 201 respondents indicated they would like to see the creek restored in Reach 7 (just south of Lake Phalen), 220 said they would like to see water flowing through Swede Hollow and 238 indicated they would like to*

see the creek restored at Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary.

Generally, Respondents appear to favor all categories of benefits that would result from daylighting Phalen Creek, with a noticeably stronger overall preference for “more natural ecology and wildlife habitat.”

Respondents indicated the following creek uses in order of preference from highest to lowest: trail alongside creek, seating to view the creek, learning activities and programs, and wading in a shallow pool. All options received fairly strong responses, however. It is recommended to consider including all of these elements, but especially a trail and seating, when designing the daylighted creek in the future.

### 3. Evaluation Summary:

- A: Transparency: How did the public participation from 2c impact the decisions and policies made? Please consider input that advances, supports, coincides, and diverges from the master plan.

*Engagement supported future signage along the restored creek to learn about Dakota & Cultural Knowledge, Creek History, Nature/Environment, Water Facts, and Maps/Wayfinding. The project will incorporate these themes in future signage and wayfinding for enhanced visitor experience.*

*Aside from ecological enhancements, engagement supported nature based activities and passive recreation versus active recreation. The project team has design the improvement to account for activities such as walking, bird/wildlife watching and educational opportunities.*

*Engagement revealed a desire to renaming Phalen Creek as a recognized Dakota space. This is not part of this master plan but it is being considered in a future discussion with the Department of Natural Resources.*

*Engagement suggested retaining the open views for safety and comfort. The site is design to retain open views and utilize low native grass plantings.*

- B: Accountability: How will the planning effort create better outcomes? Please consider outcomes related to regional and local access, quality of experience, facility rules/policy, and reporting back about 3a to stakeholders discussed in 2a.

*The City of Saint Paul and Phalen-Keller Regional Park sit on the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Dakota homelands. Acknowledgment of this land and the legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that have brought us to current day are important to recognize in the context of Phalen-Keller Regional Park.*

*The geography of this project helps address significant environmental justice needs. Daylighting waterways is a viable nature-based solution to mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing pollution from runoff, providing flood mitigation, improving urban areas for residents, and restoring environmental health and building ecosystem resilience to watersheds and local ecosystems. The overall goals for this project are: 1. Recognize and celebrate Phalen Creek's value to the Dakota people, the original stewards of this land and to whom Phalen Creek holds a unique value as a trade route and resource cache; 2. Improve access to natural spaces and water resources in a heavily industrialized area of the city; The daylighting project advances the State of Minnesota DNR's 2015-2025 Strategic Plan for Waters & Watersheds (MN WAP) by contributing to the goal of no statewide net loss in wetland acres; 3. Align with regional watershed management plans surrounding water quality, stormwater runoff, and flood risk mitigation; 4. Restore critical riparian habitat and extend existing migratory corridors for a range of wildlife and reconnecting waterways. These goals align with the City of Saint Paul's Climate Action and Resilience Plan's natural infrastructure strategies to “protect natural infrastructure and enhance it to maximize its ability to mitigate weather and climate impacts”. The proposed project centers an Indigenous-led meaningful community engagement strategy, youth and adult workforce opportunities, and is built on decades of collaboration and partnership between a community-based organization, a national organization committed to access to green space for all, residents, neighborhood partners, watershed districts, environmental partners, Tribal partners, and the City of St Paul.*



