



## **Hidden Falls North Gate | Community Advisory Committee Meeting # 4**

### **Meeting Notes**

**Meeting Date:** May 27, 2025

**Meeting Time:** 5:00 – 6:30pm

**Meeting Location:** Hidden Falls Pavilion

### **Committee Members Present**

Mike Boull, Meg Duhr, Tom Lauria, Jen Myers, Tanagidan To, Katie Tuma

### **Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Staff**

Anne Gardner (Project Manager), Katie Hamerlinck (Landscape Architect)

### **Consultant Team Members**

Nathan Knutson (Principal, VJAA), Aaron McMurray (Architect, VJAA)

*The notes below capture the questions raised and discussion throughout the presentation. A copy of the boards shared at this meeting can be found on the project website: <https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/design-construction/current-projects/hidden-falls-crosby-farm>.*

### **Site Conditions/Site Restrictions**

- Analysis of factors that will impact design including MRCCA restrictions and requirements, existing utilities, bluff setbacks, and potential flood impacts.
- Discussion about park uses and activities:
  - YMCA camps, Soapbox Derby, fishing, picnicking, hiking, leisure, ceremonies, grilling.
  - Diversity of ages, demographics, and ethnicities using the site.
  - Nibi ceremony takes place at the River every Sunday (Indigenous-led ceremonies, prayer for the water).
    - Takes places where the water is (flooding can impact ceremony location).
    - Ceremony takes place at the top of the hill if Park staff determines the entry drive is too icy for cars to enter.
    - Ceremony consistently takes place weekly and an elder is always present.
    - Proposed space for ceremony needs to be near water.
- Clarification of flood elevations and elevations of current buildings
  - Existing restroom building elevation is 716'; above 100-year flood elevation
  - Storage building is below 716'; below the 100-year flood elevation – a new structure could not be built at this elevation.

### **Site Zones**

- Question about play area – location has not yet been determined.
- Existing view from entry drive – current building roof form is an important feature of the site.
- “Hidden” Falls are truly hidden – consider how access can be clarified/implied through design.



- Hill between existing building and parking lot is nice for privacy, sense of enclosure but also may feel unsafe.
- Aspects of the current building will be missed – feels thoughtfully designed, welcoming, cozy, “nestled in”. Skeptical about making new building fully visible from everywhere in the Park.
  - Current building – thoughtfulness in the siting of the pavilion and materiality.
  - Unique character of the current roof structures, resembling tree canopies or mushroom caps.
  - Consider how new building fits into the landscape.
  - Balance prospect and refuge with new spaces.
- Like the current feeling of the building but would like it to be more open to the areas south and west of the building. These zones currently feel very disconnected.
- Lots of vandalism at new underpass under MRB – what can be done with the new building to prevent a similar fate?
  - Lighting
  - Security cameras – not necessarily a deterrent
  - Thoughtful building materials
- Better site lighting is desired. The parking lot and pavilion often feel dark and do not allow for clear sight lines when users are making their way back to their cars at dusk/sunset.
- Restrooms:
  - Current restrooms have seemed to be locked for the past three years.
    - Some members of the group had never used the restrooms because they are always locked.
  - It would be great to have open restrooms in this area AND elsewhere in the Park (near the River).
    - Discussion about portable restrooms with wooden enclosure – portable restrooms would be nice to have although not as ideal as permanent restrooms.
  - Folks will choose not to come to the Park because there are not reliable restrooms.
  - Staff – discuss with Parks Operations and Maintenance staff what can be expected for restroom hours.
    - Could automatic timed locking/unlocking doors be considered?
    - Consistency in restroom hours so people can plan activities at the Park.

### Site Diagrams

- Views between building and parking lot – more visibility here would be good for parents with kids – can see them running to the car.
- Lights in the parking lot will help with unwanted behavior.
- Discussion about current storage building blocking visibility.
- Many agreed that visibility into the pavilion was desirable. However, a direct, unobstructed view of the parking lot/entry drive may not be the most visually attractive approach.
- Consider easy access from river to restrooms with path layout.
  - A more direct connection, whether visual or physical, to the river is desirable.
  - The river is what attracts many of the users to the site, whether for ceremony or recreation.
- General group preference for “dispersed” building arrangement



- Similar to current pavilion.
  - Best layout for multi-group rentals/events.
  - Would like each “pod” of tables to have grill to use.
- A connection from the parking lot to the pavilion was generally agreed upon by the group, similar to the paths shown in the “clustered approach”.
- Not preferred to have the primary pedestrian path through the middle of the picnic/pavilion space.
  - Could be conflicts between people using the space and people passing through.
- Access can be created through paved, accessible paths, gravel paths, or visual connections to other landmarks.
- Clarification – other picnic tables in the Park will stay as-is so people will still be able to use these and will support various uses and picnicking opportunities
- Desire for water source (drinking fountain).
  - There is not one in the Park and it is needed.
  - Place to get a drink, water for pets, place to fill water bottles.
- Current bathrooms are huge – smaller bathrooms may deter bad activities.
- Single-user restrooms were seen as desirable.
- Questions about separate toilet rooms with a shared sink area – may also help limit bad activities in restrooms.
  - Design team to study.
- Current storage building seems too large.
- Highlight Hidden Falls trail entrance.
- Consider education spaces – school groups that comes to Hidden Falls.
  - Many students are fearful of the forest, how can we make this experience more comfortable?
  - Think of ceremony space as an additional program element
- Next steps:
  - Design team to continue to refine concepts based on feedback from CAC.
  - Community Open House planned for July 2025 where a preferred concept will be shared.
  - Staff to send update to CAC between now and then with a progress check-in.

**Meeting End: 6:30pm**

**Notes:**

- Meeting minutes are intended to capture overall participation and summarize comments from City Staff and Advisory Member participants.
- Visit (<https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/design-construction/current-projects/hidden-falls-crosby-farm>) for more information and presentation graphics

*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 contact Katie Hamerlinck via email at [katie.hamerlinck@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:katie.hamerlinck@ci.stpaul.mn.us)*