



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
Mayor Melvin Carter

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MEETING NOTES

Indian Mounds Regional Park Community Listening Session

MEETING DATE: July 22, 2019 - 5:30 -7:30pm

LOCATION: Marian Center of Saint Paul, Parkview Room (200 Earl Street)

FACILITATORS: Cecilia Stanton Adams, Malissa Adams, Shane Think Elk, Micah Nickey

ELECTED OFFICIALS:

- Ward 7 Councilmember – Jane Prince
- Ward 6 Councilmember – Kassim Busuri

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES ATTENDING:

- Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) – Melissa Cerda, Cult. Resources Specialist
- Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPOs) – Prairie Island Indian Community, Lower Sioux Community
- State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) – Sarah Beimers, Environ. Review Program Mgr.
- Minnesota Dept. of Transportation Cultural Resources Unit – Tim Tumberg, Archaeologist
- MN Department of Transportation – Kristen Zschomler, Historian and RPA-Registered Archaeologist
- Parks and Recreation – Mike Hahm, Director of Parks and Recreation
- Parks and Recreation – Gary Korum, Manager of Operations and Maintenance
- Parks and Recreation – Alice Messer, Manager of Design and Construction
- Parks and Recreation – Brett Hussong, Trail Reconstruction Project Manager
- Parks and Recreation – Bianca Paz, Cultural Landscape Study Project Manager

NOTES BY: Alice Messer, July 22, 2019

Brett Hussong, July 30, 2019

Meeting Purpose:

To provide factual information about the ongoing projects process; listen to community's concerns; share personal stories and views; and understand the cultural significance of the site to build common ground on the needs and visions for this area.

Background - Key Milestones:

- The City of Saint Paul Parks has been working with the surrounding community for nearly 3 years to have important conversations related to the sacred and burial sites located within Indian Mounds Regional Park.

- The Parks & Recreation Department made a lot of progress to ensure that we are listening to concerns and understanding the importance of the land. The conversations have resulted in cultural studies so that we can be better informed for future decisions.
- The trail reconstruction project is a part of a larger discussion surrounding the sacred land and cultural considerations associated with its location. As a city department, we are tasked with maintaining safe conditions for our shared amenities using the best information we have access to.
- The trail is being relocated because of its proximity to the bluff and the potential safety concerns associated with its location.
- Consistent with other bluff line trail projects, Parks & Recreation Department is working to widen the space between the bluff and the trail due to the unpredictable nature of natural/bluff areas. Example: Cherokee Regional Park
- Parks & Recreation Department no longer reconstructs trails along the bluffs without strong consideration of relocating or removing them completely. Example: Mississippi River Boulevard- when it comes up for reconstruction, it will need to be moved further away from the bluff line.
- Regional parks master plan's advice development over a long period of time. People enter and exit at different parts of the process, and it is not uncommon for there to be change-over in staff or changes in initial recommendations as we implement projects.

Role of Agencies in Decision Making:

Kristen Zschomler, Historian and RPA-Registered Archaeologist

- MnDOT's Cultural Resources Unit is the federally delegated agent that conducts with the [Section 106 Review](#), on their behalf, including consultation with SHPO and other parties, to consider the effect of the project on historic properties.
- Changes to the National Historic Preservation Act in the early 2000s gave Native Americans a larger role when considering the effect of the project on historic properties to which they ascribed religious or cultural significance.
- The current trail alignment locations are the result of a collaborative process between multiple government agencies and various tribes to avoid effects to historic properties, including the mounds, the overall landscape, and the anomalies, which have the potential to be significant.

Melissa Cerda, MN Indian Affairs Council, Cultural Resources Specialist

- MIAC is the liaison between the State of Minnesota and the 11 Tribal Nations of Minnesota.
- MIAC is tasked with protecting burial grounds under MN Statue 307.08 (Private Cemeteries Act)
- MIAC and the Office of State Archaeologist are currently delineating a cemetery boundary which may include the existing, historic, and culturally significant locations. This delineation is under review and has not been finalized. The delineation will not change the proposed [trail alignment](#), require removal of Mounds Blvd., or private residences.

Franky Johnson, Compliance Officer for Prairie Island Indian Community

- THPOs are contacted when federal funding activates [Section 106 Review](#)
- THPOs worked cooperatively with the City of St Paul Parks and Recreations, MnDOT's Cultural Resources Unit and SHPO during the review process.

Questions and comments based on information presented:

What is the timeline related to projects?

Response:

Trail Reconstruction

<i>Master Plan Priority Project</i>	<i>2011</i>
<i>Trail Project Application/Award</i>	<i>2014 - 2015</i>
<i>Meeting #1: Project Kickoff</i>	<i>May 2018</i>
<i>Meeting #2: Preliminary Alignment</i>	<i>Nov 2018</i>
<i>Meeting #3: Revised Trail Alignment</i>	<i>May 2019</i>

Meeting #4: Trail Alignment June 2019
Anticipated Trail Construction 2020

Cultural Landscape Study

Master Plan Priority Project 2011
Meetings with 4 Dakota Communities October 2019
Project Advisory Team (PAT) Meeting # 1 October 2018
Public Meeting #1 November 2018
Public Meeting #2 / PAT Meeting # 2 December 2018
PAT Meeting # 3 / PAT Meeting # 3 January 2019
Cultural Landscape Study Report September 2019
Resume PAT and public meetings September 2019

Question: Since this is a sacred site, will the public be able to access the park after the cemetery delineation?

Response: The delineation process has not been completed and we don't know at this time.

Question: The city is spending tax dollars where they don't need to be spent.

Response: The funding is federal and state sources, not from the city capital improvement budget.

Question: What is the delineation distance from the mounds?

Response: 75' from the mounds is typical, however this is unknown until more information is gathered. The Cultural Landscape Study is paused once a full understanding is gathered. The Cultural Landscape Study will most likely start back up in Fall 2019. The proposed trail reconstruction project has completed consultation with the governing agencies (listed above) and the proposed alignment has been approved by the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA), who administers the funding.

Question: Why not postpone the trail reconstruction until the completion of the cemetery delineation? *Response: Construction of the trail was originally planned for 2019 and it has already been postponed to 2020 to allow for advancement of the cultural landscape study. The current trail alignment locations are the result of a collaborative process between multiple government agencies and various tribes to avoid effects to historic properties. There will be no changes to the trail project as a result of the cemetery designation, because the same tribal representatives from the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) and the four Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs) in Minnesota, will be consulted during Cultural Landscape Study.*

Question: Is Mounds Blvd going away?

Response: No, the cemetery delineation will not change the proposed [trail alignment](#), or remove Mounds Blvd., or remove private homes/property.

Question: How will safety concerns be addressed related to a shared path with walkers, strollers, bicycles, and scooters.

Response: The shared trail along Mounds Blvd. will follow the guidelines of the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA). In addition, we will consider striping the trail at key locations including hills and curves to delineate a two-way multi-use trail.

Question: Will the results of archaeological studies be released to the public?

Response: MIAC and the THPOs have asked the City to not release the archaeological study because of the sensitive information and potential vandalism. The City of Saint Paul is honoring that request.

Community Speakers (Below is a summary of statements heard. Excuse any mis-spelling of names)

Gary Brown – The park is a cultural and geological resource for the community. People didn't know what happened here and have the opportunity to get it right. We need to know the delineation. The story needs to be told. We need transparency.

Joyce Maddox - Pass. Anxious to hear and listen.

Liz Newberry – 44 year resident. Relinquish privilege and action of US government from unethical means to build wealth. Proposed realignment is a small modest step and supports protecting these mounds. Happy for neighborhood and conversation.

Ann Marie – Indigenous educator and lives in the neighborhood. Previously attended a sacred site tour of the area and this place matters. Only place she has ever lived and where she will always live. Acknowledges the park is Dakota land and would love to see the land protected. Desire for young students coming into classroom to be proud and hear Dakota stories that survived this place.

John Fahey – tried to stay informed and read the contention in the paper. Besides federal and state rules, who are the players and how do we stay informed?

Response: A list of the project stakeholders can be found [here](#) (page three of Meeting #4 presentation). See key milestones listed above. Construction of the trail was originally planned for 2019 and it has already been postponed to 2020 to allow for advancement of the cultural landscape study. The current trail alignment locations are the result of a collaborative process between multiple government agencies and various tribes to avoid effects to historic properties. To stay informed, continue to monitor the project websites and provide your email to brett.hussong@ci.stpaul.mn.us to receive emails.

Kate Beane – is a descendant of Black Hawk Village. She would like to say thank you to THPOs as they are constantly under attack. Her tribe was exiled and now her family has come home and hopes people remember that ancestral remains have been here for a long time. We need time to do this right, take care of what's left, and to honor and respect other perspectives. How does it feel for other people to come here when their bones are in the soil?

Trudy Ohnsurg– lives in neighborhood and is fascinated by geology. She is hearing confusion about the process and not division. We need to understand what the plan is and believe there is a way to honor the place together and appreciates stunning views, walking, and choose areas where we won't be. It's been confusing because we don't understand the plan and or what is happening. Is the current trail proposal going to change once the Cultural Landscape Study (CLS) is completed?

Response: Proposed trail alignment found [here](#). There will be no changes to the proposed trail alignment as a result of the cemetery designation, because the same tribal representatives from the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) and the four Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs) in Minnesota, will be consulted during Cultural Landscape Study.

Response from Bianca Paz (City of Saint Paul Parks) – it is confusing because there are two projects occurring simultaneously: 1) [Trail Reconstruction](#) and 2) [Cultural Landscape Study](#) (CLS). Ideally, the CLS would occur prior to the trail reconstruction however, the trail reconstruction has funding deadlines. Also, not everyone has been involved with the master plan or prior meetings. We are learning and were trying to change the way we communicate to develop a better process and to be inclusive. We invite you to come to future meetings and help us reach out to others.

Lisa Lemke – neighbor and homeowner for 5 years. Has respect the park. Mounds are viewed as sacred site. She would like to see respected and more information about the trails. People feel the trains and correlate the vibrations to erosion. What studies done about train yards? Concern with combined trails and safety factor when trails are shared between bikes and pedestrians. Safety is greatest concern. Residents have a million ideas for a community/ interpretive center and love to see that come to fruition.

Response: An interpretive center is tentatively planned for the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary. Please reach out to Lower Phalen Creek Partnership for information regarding Wakan Tipi at Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary.

Marjorie Pitz – resident for 40 years. Worked on mounds park master plan project and worked to reduce the active recreation component. Process has been more divisive and need a solution for both sides to feel a sense of progress. The overlook parking lot is more disrespectful, and disturbing compared to path because of drug sales, alcohol abuse, and littering. The point of contention should be at the parking lot where 6 mounds were previously located. She would like the parking lot removal to be on the table and order priorities based on disruptiveness to park. Safety is not being addressed by moving the walking path to Mounds Blvd. Concerned with serious accidents.

Pam Halverson – Dakota and Red Stone women. First time heard she heard about this and came to say that this is a cemetery. We respect cemeteries and we don't put parks in them. Ancestors came from Kaposia and the sacred site is below the bluff. She would like to keep ancestors protected. Stand with us and protect our cemeteries. There are more cemeteries than lakes. Please help us.

Steve Slow Bear – member of the Pine Ridge Reservation. Know what the mounds mean to us, so we can be here today. My elders taught me what the mounds mean to the Dakota and brought me to tears when describing the historic land desecration. Something is wrong if people are okay with that and kids are the ones who will live with your decisions. A lot of people grew up here and were you given education of Native American history? Can't sit here and not say anything. What is the real issue? Spirituality goes a long way and there needs to be more education to kids. What kind of legacy do you want to leave?

Danny Gibson- Black Lives Matter. Honor and show respect to my Native American descendants. Verbal atrocity. The only conversation we need to have is a native conversation while white people listen.

Kavita Mehta – She told husband I can hear songs from my county here. Listen to sounds and only hear sounds of crying. Husband said she was “mad”. She now understands Dakota history about genocide and your people are crying and speaking to you. We are sitting in a church on native land that killed people. Why not give the land to native people?

Chai Lee – Metropolitan Council member for this area and council staff here to listen and thank people to be here.

Anna Bella – Acknowledges that she lives on stolen land. Her two cultural have different perspective on burial grounds. Mexican ancestors we celebrate our dead. Other ancestors are buried in Lakewood. Different perspectives on burial grounds require listening to the Dakota to understand how to act in Dakota burial ground. It may require people to sit and listen with discomfort. Thank you for everyone here, facilitators and Dakota neighbors to be willing to ask and listen.

Eric Foster – already a compromise and justice would be to give the land back. Justice would include whites to pay reparations of what done to Dakota people who walk on land. Compromise already happened and it is a very good compromise for people like me.

Maria Cermak – husband passed away 4 months ago. We are still here and on census record the Kaposia village is sacred.

Cole Cermak – Dakota and decent of Big Thunder and Big Crow. This is Mdewakanton and Dakota lands and protected under 1830 treaty. No land has been given back, but it should be given back. Keep telling the City to give back the land.

Spencer – He moved here from Iowa and takes issue with the us versus them narrative of the press. This can be an opportunity to address the ancient narrative. A story about the neighborhood, education and how we came together to address it. Many voices telling us the moral objective and proper moral course to take. Everything else is in the details and able to work it out.

John Slade – Acknowledges he is living on stolen land. Stands with the Lakota people and we've ignored the stealing and genocide.

Chelsey – Provided thanks for Dakota leadership and support going forward. Excited for there to be a new story and do something new. Respect for ancient.

Ann – Life began at Mounds Park Hospital, raised 8 children in the park, told her family about the hills were and we respected what was there. Has seen many changes in the area including the iron fence. Also, recalls the road going along the wall. Took many walks and sat on the wall thinking about everything there such as the river, railroad, and airplanes. Has used the play area, eating areas, water fountain, and remembers the canon in the park. She is the oldest one around at 95 and the only remaining of a family of 10. She is thankful every day. Husband liked the park because he was an amateur radio operator and the bluff gave him a place to speak to people around the world.

Julia Daley – live by the mounds, fiancé died. During her grief and sorrow she walked around the mounds and touched by ancestors and could feel them speaking to her. Walk the mounds in different directions. Each direction the sun and light was different. Understand paths going away and understand that. Wants to share gratitude for the mounds and not everyone always walks with reverence. But it will feel like a loss but will understand.

Mark Wandersee – very sad because had hoped to hear about the guidelines to know how to respect the burial grounds. Cultural Landscape Study far proceeds the trail project. It's absurd, why we still have that parking lot. Why not doing anything about it? Find artifacts and respectfully given back to descendants. Make the remaining land as sacred as possible.

Darlene St. Clair – relative from Kaposia. Educator and teacher. Part of education system and did not learn about Dakota people during her education. Opportunity to make a paradigm shift which is difficult, but still worth doing. It is tough work to engage in for a better future. Mother made offerings to mounds quietly and taught her. Let the Dakota lead this and have the utmost respect for the process.

Sheppard – Has lost many family members. The mounds were a place to have good conversations. The energy and good vibes of those conversations is one reminder to stay sober. Need to involve artist for progress to occur. All the fear goes away when people come to the park because of the spirituality.

Nolan Berglund – Acknowledged we are on Dakota land and we have native voices here including Dakota elders to lead discussion. Should be a Dakota decision because of Dakota land. That's the way people feel about the whole state. The country has a dark history and only thing we ask is basic human rights we deserve. Give the mounds back to the Dakota people and it is important that the Dakota are leading the discussion.

Nina Berglund - Northern lights woman from the Cheyenne nation. This is our home and family. Comments moving and understand how we feel every day. The spirituality of the place creates the passion and not the narrative of us vs them. You don't have the right to tell us how we feel related to ceremonial spaces. We are older than these paths and our ways are older than anything built here. You don't have the right to tell us what is sacred. We make that story and we say what we want. Only right is for respect because land dates back 100's of years. Let us have that because it is the small bit that we have because we've always been here. This is our home and you don't have the right to tell us. Always be Dakota land. Respect that and let us take back our narrative.

Rosie – legal question. Learning about cultural study and park plan to do the path. It is confusing to me to have path before the Cultural Landscape Study. Concerned that cultural study will confuse results of the trail study.

Response: There will be no changes to the proposed trail alignment as a result of the cemetery designation, because the same tribal representatives from the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) and the four Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs) in Minnesota, will be consulted during Cultural Landscape Study.

Brenda Williams (Cultural Landscape Study Consultant) – look to THPOs to protect cultural aspects in their tribes. The trail project is consulting with the same tribes that are also guiding the Cultural Landscape Study. Consultation with the THPOs is a private process because of legal documents. Anticipate public review of the Cultural Landscape Study Report September 2nd. Trail has been approved by Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs) and Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) – THPOs are in agreement with trail alignment.

Crystal – let everyone know that I'm a neighbor and Dakota woman. She asked for the meeting because we want to hear all perspectives and build relationships. Everyone needs to work together as one. Her spirits are being tugged in each direction. Thank you everyone who came together to make this all possible. Hasn't been an easy road. Now you know how to be involved and know who to contact and make this a beautiful process.

Written public comments on comment cards

I believe the cultural study should be done before any path is done or changed.

Did not know to sign up to speak.

Thank you for food + words

Addendum to a different comment card! The facilitators were great. Parks staff needs some community engagement skills but the facilitators were good.

A lot of the anger is NOT against the Dakota people – it's against the awful communication of the Parks employees. I know they are trying (thank you!) but they seem in way over their heads. They need better community engagement skills or don't let them talk – hire someone to present with the skills to do so. It will end a lot of this divisiveness. Despite signing up for emails, didn't get one.

I believe it's important to honor the history and heritage of our Native community, a history & culture that impacts all of us. I stand in solidarity w/ leaders like Crystal Norcross and know that protecting the Indian Mounds is what will get us closer to a racially equitable community.
[Nelsie Y.]

I do not like combined walk/bike trails – and I am concerned about safety and disruptions to peaceful walking. I also do not like to walk next to the road.

New overlooks- fear they may become like current overlooks, filled often with rough looking people – smoking, etc. When I walk alone – I do not feel safe going to the current overlooks many times, so I fear any new ones will end up the same, dirty & smelly

Question: In general, how are Native American sacred sites/cemeteries funded? If this is a cemetery and no longer a publicly accessible park for general public use, shouldn't the tribes pay for it instead of tax payers? *Response: Once the cemetery delineation has been determined, the parkland will remain owned by the city and remain accessible to the public. Going forward, the City will be required to consult with the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices before working within the cemetery delineation.*

Question: In the decision-making process concerning cemetery status, are native mounds being afforded the same considerations as national cemeteries + national military cemeteries? Are access considerations as important for native people's relatives?

Question: The remaining mounds were NOT built by the Dakota but probably the Hopewells. Why are the Dakota being given such a prominent say in their management?

Question on comment card: What could have gone better?

Attendee Response:

1. *A Facilitator should have been @ sign-in table explaining the purpose of speaker sign-in sheet. Other comments: It seems that facilitators did not enforce ground rule 7. That is unproductive venting and narration. While I came to learn and out of respect I felt that I was being treated as the enemy.*
2. *Limiting the length of some speakers*
3. *The presenters were all from the Dakota community with no one representing a neighborhood point of view. The panel felt very stacked, 16 different tribes can weigh in on the cultural study, but can the people who actually live here and use the park be given a voice?*
4. *How to find out what is coming.*
5. *That THPO's would do their jobs!*
6. *More info about the project before the meeting; Ask speakers not to use acronyms. Other comments: I generally support what the tribes want here, glad the meeting was held.*
7. *I think maybe a little more time for more people to speak.*
8. *The park should be let back to for the Dakota people.*
9. *The ground rules were not enforced. Many people allowed to give accusing and ugly, divisive comments. It would have been very helpful if the path map were provided to all and the plans for construction acknowledged in the beginning of the meeting, so we were on the same page.*
10. *Make drawings of proposed trail available. Other comments: Too divisive. Stressful to hear claims of land ownership.*

Public comments sent via email

1. We were unable to attend the meeting in June but we did attend the meeting last week. I was very disappointed with the format of the meeting. I thought I was coming in to get information about the park plan, but I walked into a culture war and was not expecting to be lectured to and lumped into a 'privileged group' based upon the color of my skin. I consider myself a progressive democrat, but that activist rhetoric was over the top and was not helpful and was very divisive.

My main issue and complaint is that I think the city and the parks dept. is way overreacting to the bluff collapse on the west side. It seems like this knee jerk overreaction led to the initial idea of moving the trail back to address a very minimal chance of a catastrophic collapse and perceived liability on the city's part, which then prompted greater scrutiny by the federal government, and the Native community. The park has been in place for over a hundred years without much controversy (as far as I know). It has also been known for a long time that many of the original mounds were destroyed and it seemed to me safe to assume that there would likely be remains and archeological artifacts scattered by that very unfortunate desecration by previous generations. The city opened itself to this conflict with the overreaction to the bluff safety issue.

Anyway, I think the bluff trail asphalt should be gently removed and the base gravel trail should be allowed to remain. I think some signage alluding to the desecration and compelling respect with a definition of respect should allow for the bluff trail to stay open. I do however support the idea of removing the parking area at the downtown overlook. There is enough room on the street for parking and taking a walk to the overlook. That parking lot is always occupied by drug dealers, we all know it and see it every time we drive by. I understand the sentiments of all people who care about the park and the mounds that there is much disrespectful activity going on in the park. We have people that setup camp in the park every night and leave trash everywhere. I know this is a complicated issue, but please continue to push for more attention to the park from law enforcement and more stewardship of the park as I know you have been doing.

I think my point of view is widely shared by the neighborhood and the users of the park.

2. The listening session on Monday was a great event and well attended. And I am glad everyone in attendance could hear all sides of the concerns. I want to applaud you for the great organizing and really, it is refreshing to see committed, passionate folks in community who want to work through a difficult topic.
3. Friends of the Mississippi River supports the city's plan to remove the bluff trail at Indian Mounds Park to protect sacred burial sites. A letter of support is attached. Thank you for your leadership on this issue.
4. There seemed to be an attempt to explain all the confusion around the neighbors' questions about the laws etc. So, thank you both for that. It was not enough. With that said, who do we "blame" for how far off the rails this whole thing went. How are we suppose to have a discussion or ask questions with people who think our homes should be abandoned and left because it's on stolen land. How do we have open discussions and accept "concessions" when our homes are within the 75 feet of the anomalies. As neighbors, we were not able to get the information needed to NOT be terrified even more while living here.

You both know that police do NOT monitor the parks for drug deals. Drug deals, by the way we have all witnessed, reported and nothing. The vulnerable people living on the bluff mixed with the people living on the bluff who are unpredictable, are no longer monitored, so more are living there. We have had increased theft, homes broken in to while we are sleeping, cars and their parts stolen, garages broken in to, gas tanks drained etc.

I live in one of the homes who has to pay for a large garbage and pay for a small garbage. We never put the large garbage can out for pick up--ever. Okay, I didn't complain. The bluff, mounds and tennis court are NOT cared for, but no understanding about why. Is it by design. Nothing.

Please, PLEASE take responsibility for the confusion and please, try to answer how we are to move forward. Now, we have to live here and accept we are white supremacists for asking questions and for wondering about how to keep ourselves safe

By the time the meeting finished, all of our homes are on stolen land.

5. Has there been any discussion about removing the bike lanes from the park completely and striping the roadway/street as the bike trail instead? I usually see bicyclists on the roadway, anyway, and not on the park trails. *Response: Mounds Boulevard is a Public Works owned roadway. It is not planned for bike lanes.*
6. I have lived in Mounds Park for 18 years and I have walked the trails twice a day, everyday. My walks are both meditative and spiritual. It would sadden me deeply to have the trails removed. I realize everyone is looking for some kind of common ground and compromise. My compromise suggestion is, remove the sidewalks directly behind the designated mounds and the sidewalk that runs between the mounds. I implore you not to remove the other paths. To consolidate walkers, joggers, bicycles, scooters, and dog walkers all on one sidewalk is a recipe for disaster. I avoid the sidewalk that runs along the boulevard for that very reason, it's too dangerous with all the traffic. Please reconsider what you're trying to push through, the majority of the neighborhood wants the paths to remain. Please return to the idea of improving the children's area which provides a safe and fun park for children from diverse backgrounds.
7. We're writing to support the work that the City of St. Paul has been doing, in conjunction with Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, to protect the sacred mounds and Mounds Park. It has always seemed odd that the sacred mounds were so exposed. This is important governmental work -- thank you!
8. I am opposed to this proposed trail closing. It is a great walking trail along the bluff of the Mississippi River Bluff. The proposal would move the walking trail next to a street. Why would anyone suggest that and prefer walking next to a street rather than a bluff. It seems better to close the trail next to the street and fix up the trail next to the bluff for everyone to enjoy.



Working to protect the Mississippi River
and its watershed in the Twin Cities area.

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info@fmr.org

July 23, 2019

Dear Mayor Carter, Councilmember Prince, and Director Hahm,

We are writing in support of the city's plan to realign and remove trails at Indian Mounds Park. We applaud this effort to protect a sacred Dakota place.

As you know, Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) is a local non-profit organization that works to protect, restore and enhance the Mississippi River and its watershed in the Twin Cities metropolitan region. We have more than 2,700 active members, 3,500 volunteers and 2,500 advocates who care deeply about the river's unique resources.

The city of St. Paul sits on land that was stolen through treaties that exploited Dakota tribes for the financial benefit of white European settlers. Indian Mounds Park is an incredibly significant sacred burial ground for the Dakota people, yet their ownership of the site has been stripped away and the majority of their burial mounds destroyed. This damage cannot be reversed. But the city can and must respond to the guidance it's received from tribal communities about the best ways to acknowledge this devastating history and protect the burial sites that remain.

FMR believes that everyone deserves access to parks, trails, and the Mississippi River. East Side residents should have better access, but that disparity should be addressed within the larger system of parks and trails. One small site such as Indian Mounds Park cannot sufficiently meet all needs even with a blufftop trail. We encourage the city to make significant investments in improving river access and recreational amenities for the East Side. Sites such as Pig's Eye Lake Regional Park, Lower Phalen Creek, Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary, and Battle Creek Regional Park are all ideal opportunities.

Parks serve several purposes; preservation and recreation are both critical functions. The city's proposal to improve the Mounds Boulevard path, remove the eroded blufftop trail, and add spur trails to the bluff where possible is the right route forward for Indian Mounds Park. Thank you for your commitment to this plan.

Sincerely,

Whitney L. Clark, Executive Director

Irene Jones, Senior Policy Advocate