

# The Falls Initiative

COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Prepared for the City of Minneapolis  
Department of Community Planning & Economic  
Development

**JANUARY 2022**



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The National Park Service began surveying otter populations in the Metro Area Mississippi River in 2009 to assess water quality and ecosystem health. This rare sighting of an otter on a rock at the base of St. Anthony Falls was snapped by a citizen observer in August 2019.

Photo Credits: Krissy Klein (full bleed), and hellograceedinger (inset), both on iNaturalist.

## Prologue

“We must shift our thinking away from short-term gain toward long-term investment and sustainability, and always have the next generations in mind with every decision we make.”

*Deb Haaland*  
*U.S. Secretary of the Interior*  
*Laguna Pueblo*

### LINEAR PROCESS

*a poem by Gwen Westerman*  
*Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate*

Our elders say  
the universe is a  
circle.  
Everything  
returns to its  
beginnings.  
But where do we go  
from here?  
Where are  
our beginnings?

Our parents were stripped  
of their parents  
names tongues prayers,  
lined up for their meals  
clothes classes tests.  
When it was our turn  
to come into this world,  
they did not know  
what family meant  
anymore.  
They did not  
know.  
Yet even  
from here,  
we can  
see that the  
straightest line  
on a map  
is a  
circle.

---

from “New Voices of Native Nations” (Graywolf, 2018)  
first published in “Follow the Blackbirds” (Michigan State  
University Press, 2012)

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## Foreword



**Robert Lilligren**

The importance of place is fundamental to Indigenous People, our cultures and lifeways. That is why removing Native People from their lands, and desecrating sacred spaces were such successful strategies of colonization. However we'd like to, we cannot go back and change the past, but we can commit to doing better in the present and for the future. I believe the level of community engagement by the Friends of the Falls is an example of how to do better.

The determination by the leadership of Friends of the Falls, in partnership with NACDI, to center Native voices - the voices of the descendants of the First People of this land - is groundbreaking. We have the opportunity to show the world a pathway toward reconciling our country's colonizing history with a more just present and future. And a means to respecting the rights of nature, water, and the river herself.

**Robert Lilligren**

*President & CEO, Native  
American Community  
Development Institute*

*White Earth Ojibwe  
Preferred pronouns: he/him*



**Mark Andrew**

The central riverfront of Minneapolis was once the beating heart of Indigenous societies - a place to celebrate births, create art, worship and hold ceremonies.

With the arrival of European settlers and shift to industrialization, this sacred place was destroyed, and as the edges hardened and fences went up around industry, the public as a whole lost access to the river.

Friends of the Falls and NACDI are embarking on this initiative as partners. Our mission is to acknowledge the traumas of the past, and through that acknowledgment, cultivate a common understanding of our shared history, and create opportunities to heal.

Together, we've shaped an engagement framework that centers Native voices and is founded on racial equity. The Falls can become a center for truth telling, justice, art, culture, learning, recreation and enjoyment. It can invite not only the Dakota, but all people, to return to the river again.

**Mark Andrew**

*President, Friends of the Falls*



## Preface

The Falls Initiative Community Engagement Plan leadership team is composed of the Native Partnership Council Facilitator (Carrie Day Aspinwall), the project Design Lead (David Malda), Friends of the Falls Communications Director (Amanda Wigen), and the Falls Initiative Project Director (Kjersti Duval).

This team has met weekly over the course of many months to learn from one another, authentically listen to the tribes and the community, assess past engagement, and draft a thoughtful and implementable plan for engagement that embraces Native leadership while building bridges to the broader community. We believe that by doing so, the Falls can become a place where all people are stimulated to reckon with our past and embrace a more equitable future.

Through this process, the team grew to understand that too often, “engagement” of Native people really means seeking superficial input and “checking a box”, without ceding any power.

This is a practice that reinforces the inequity and disenfranchisement that began with broken treaties, displacement, and stolen homeland. We knew we had to start from a different place. The Falls Initiative therefore embraces an engagement process that begins with acknowledgment, and establishes a framework that welcomes Native leadership at all levels of the planning process to shape the future of this site.

The Falls Initiative has been, and will be, a *different* kind of public engagement. It has at its heart a commitment to truth and reconciliation, and a mission to educate as well as engage. This framework allows us to build bridges to the broader community and ensures that we live up to the City’s Core Principles of Community Engagement. All people are included. All people will be welcome. Our team believes that an organized and transparent process founded on empowerment and inclusion will result in an authentic opportunity for healing, and lays the groundwork to create a place of great significance.



**Carrie Day Aspinwall**  
Native Partnership Council  
Facilitator and proprietor,  
CDA Enterprises  
Minnesota Chippewa Tribe,  
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe,  
Minneapolis Urban Band  
Member



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**Amanda Wigen**  
Communications Director,  
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**David Malda**  
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---

## Acknowledgments

### Native Partnership Council

Shelley Buck, Vice President, Prairie Island Indian Community

Margo Galve Prescott, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community

Representative to be Named, Lower Sioux Indian Community

Representative to be Named, Upper Sioux Community

Jewell Arcoran, Dakota Lakota, enrolled member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate

Janice Bad Moccasin, member of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe

Juanita Espinosa, enrolled member of the Spirit Lake Nation, Turtle Mountain and LCO Descendant

Thorne LaPointe, Sicangu Lakota

Wakinyan LaPointe, Sicangu Lakota

Maggie Lorenz, Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe, descendant of Spirit Lake Dakota Nation

Mona Smith, Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota

Carrie Day Aspinwall (NPC Facilitator and proprietor, CDA Enterprises), Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Minneapolis Urban Band Member

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Pamela Johns, Administrative & Executive Assistant (Red Lake Nation)

### Friends of the Falls

Paul Reyelts, Founder & Chairman, Board of Directors

Mark Wilson, Founder & Vice Chairman, Board of Directors

Mark Andrew, President

Kjersti Duval, Project Director

Amanda Wigen, Communications Director

Margaret Richardson, Operations & Management Coordinator

### City of Minneapolis

Jacob Frey, Mayor

Michael Rainville, Council Member

Andrew Johnson, Council Member

Steve Fletcher, former Council Member

Jeff Johnson, Assistant City Coordinator

Fatima Moore, Director, Intergovernmental Relations

Erik Hansen, Deputy Director, Community Planning & Economic Development

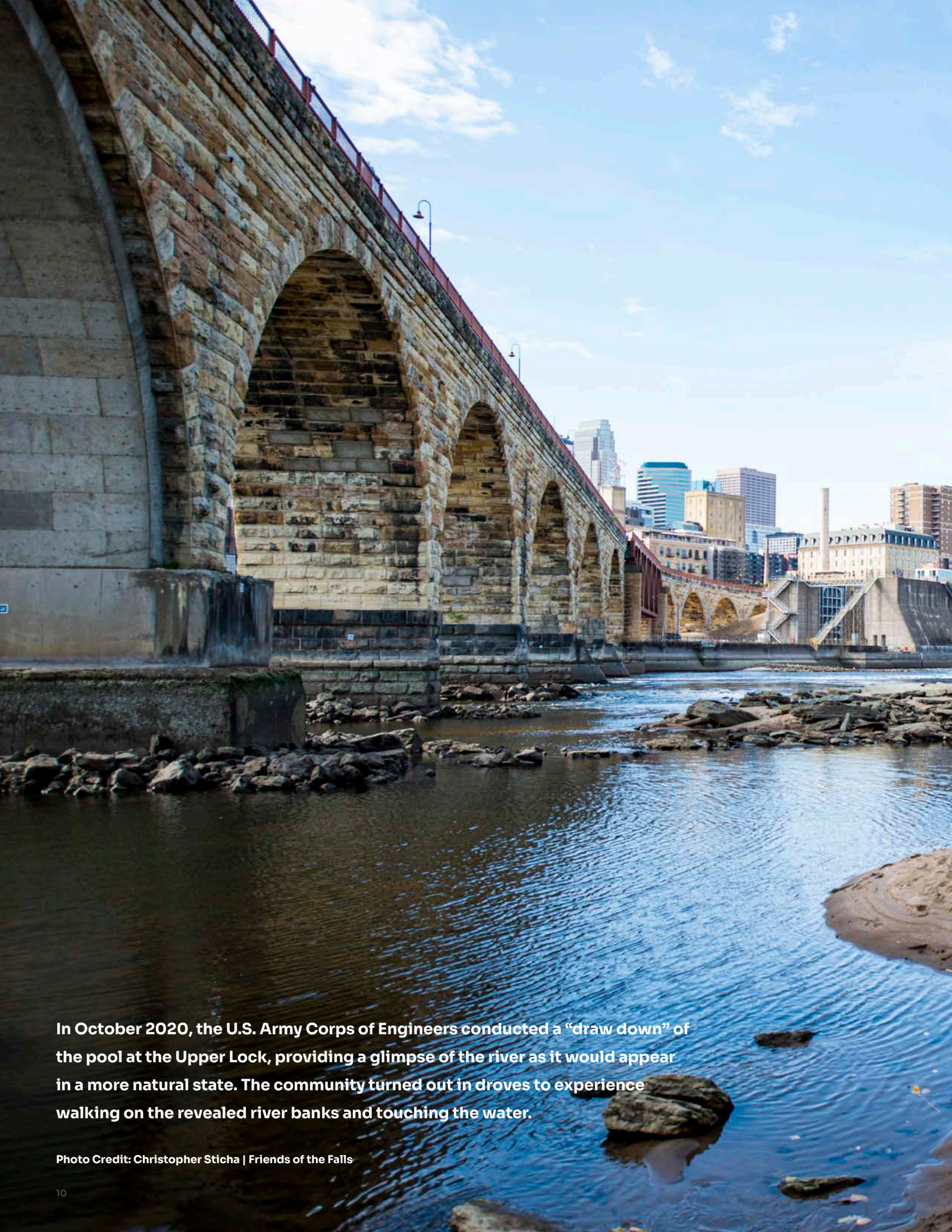
Emily Stern, Development Coordinator, Community Planning & Economic Development

Adrienne Bockheim, Principal City Planner/Designer, Community Planning & Economic Development

Christine McDonald, American Indian Community Specialist, Neighborhood & Community Relations Department

Shelley Roe, City Attorney





**In October 2020, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conducted a “draw down” of the pool at the Upper Lock, providing a glimpse of the river as it would appear in a more natural state. The community turned out in droves to experience walking on the revealed river banks and touching the water.**

Photo Credit: Christopher Sticha | Friends of the Falls







## Introduction

The site of The Falls Initiative project is an iconic place on the Central Riverfront, in the shadow of the Stone Arch Bridge and next to Owámniyomni, St. Anthony Falls. For more than 60 years, it has been largely used as a parking lot, and is fenced off with limited public access. Most people understand the site based on its context within the St. Anthony Falls Historic District, where it is flanked by the archaeological ruins of old mills, a few blocks away from the Mill City Museum.

However, the site is also significant for what can no longer be seen. Before industrialization, the natural Falls and the islands surrounding it were a sacred place for Dakota people. Spirit Island and the natural cascade were both destroyed as the Mississippi River was harnessed and industrialized. This missing history, from an Indigenous perspective, was rendered invisible for generations.

The waters of the mighty Mississippi River at historic St.

Anthony Falls once cascaded over a 50-foot limestone drop and roiled as misty white water through the islands at its base. Dakota people came to Owámniyomni for ceremony, and to Spirit Island, an oasis in the mist kicked up from the falling water, to give birth.

As westward expansion advanced and soldiers and settlers systematically displaced Indigenous people, the Falls drew a different kind of attention. Industrialists seeking to tame the wilderness and grow wealth through resource extraction saw the Falls as an economic driver capable of powering large scale industries: first sawmilling for the lumber industry, then flour milling, and finally commercial navigation.

The once natural River was harnessed, hardened, and industrialized. As a result, the living River ecosystem was biologically diminished and it became a dangerous place to be, its waters inaccessible to people for generations.

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**St. Anthony Falls, Owámniyomni, lies at the heart of the historic district on the Central Riverfront in downtown Minneapolis.**

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Christopher Sticha | Friends of the Falls



Graphic Art Credit: Kjersti Duval | Friends of the Falls

The Upper Lock at St. Anthony Falls (Owámniyomni) was shuttered by Congress in 2015, and both the Lock and the land surrounding it are subject to a disposition study being conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Before industrialization, the Falls and the limestone islands at its base were frequented by Dakota people coming for ceremony, and to give birth.

To Native people, these activities were a desecration, incompatible with a world view in which the River is a spirit and a mother, and in which all living things are our relatives.

Construction for the Upper Lock at the Falls began in 1959, claiming a dominant position on the Central Riverfront. Friends of the Falls (FOF) was formed and The Falls Initiative was launched in response to the closure of the Upper Lock to commercial navigation in 2015.

## RECLAIMING THE SITE FROM FEDERAL OWNERSHIP

The Upper Lock and the land around it is currently owned by the U.S. government. The Lock was shuttered by Congress through legislative direction in 2015, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has since begun a

disposition study and will make a recommendation to Congress about the future of the site.

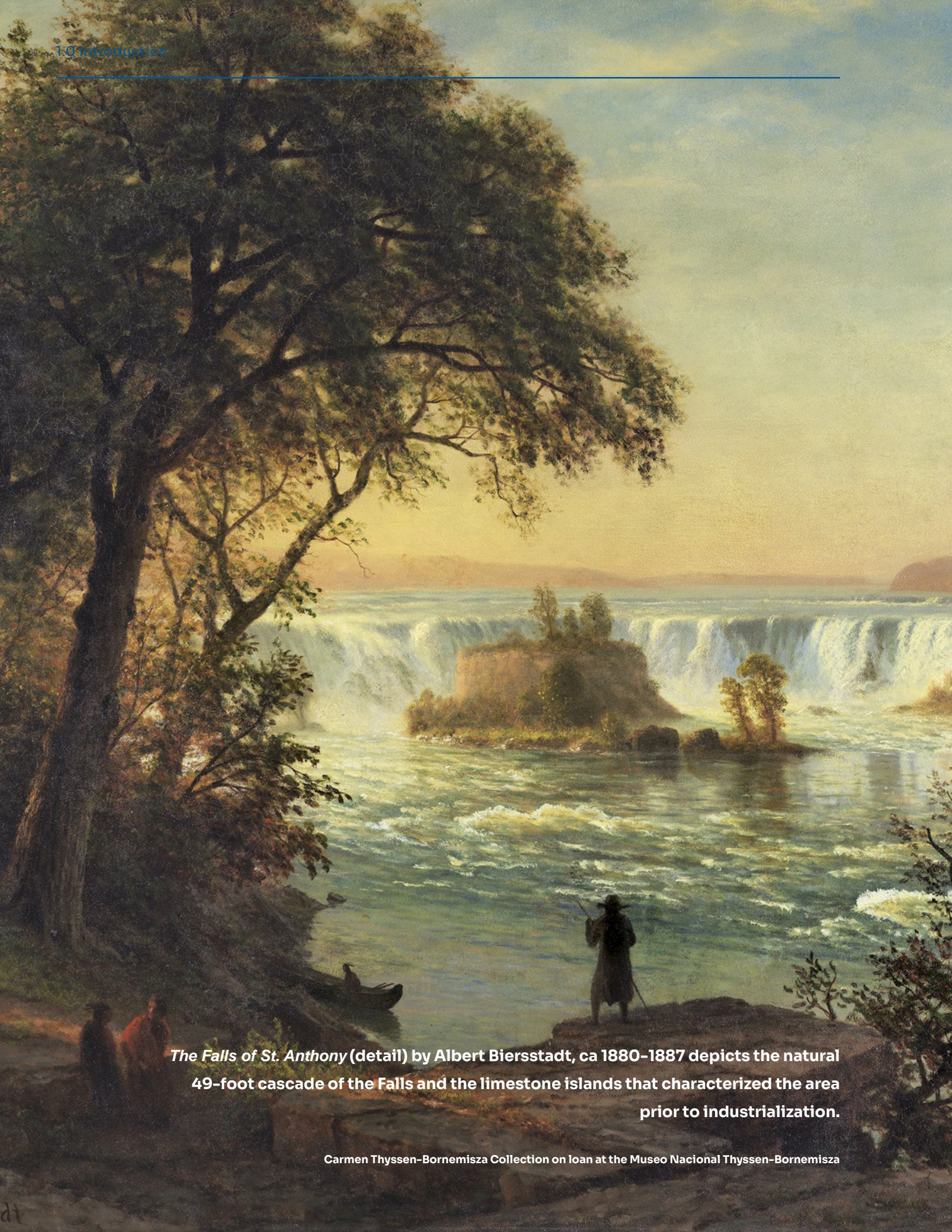
Achieving a path forward for the site has required substantial intergovernmental relations work at the municipal, state, and federal level, as well as Government to Government consultation by the City of Minneapolis with the four Dakota Nations.

The City of Minneapolis and Friends of the Falls have acknowledged the inherent sovereignty of the Dakota people on this site. It is a sacred place located on Dakota homeland. Since 2016, Friends of the Falls and the City have been advocating for the transfer of land to public control through legislative action, and since 2019 have been cultivating relationships with the Dakota nations to ensure that the future of the site centers their voices.

## Threat of Privatization

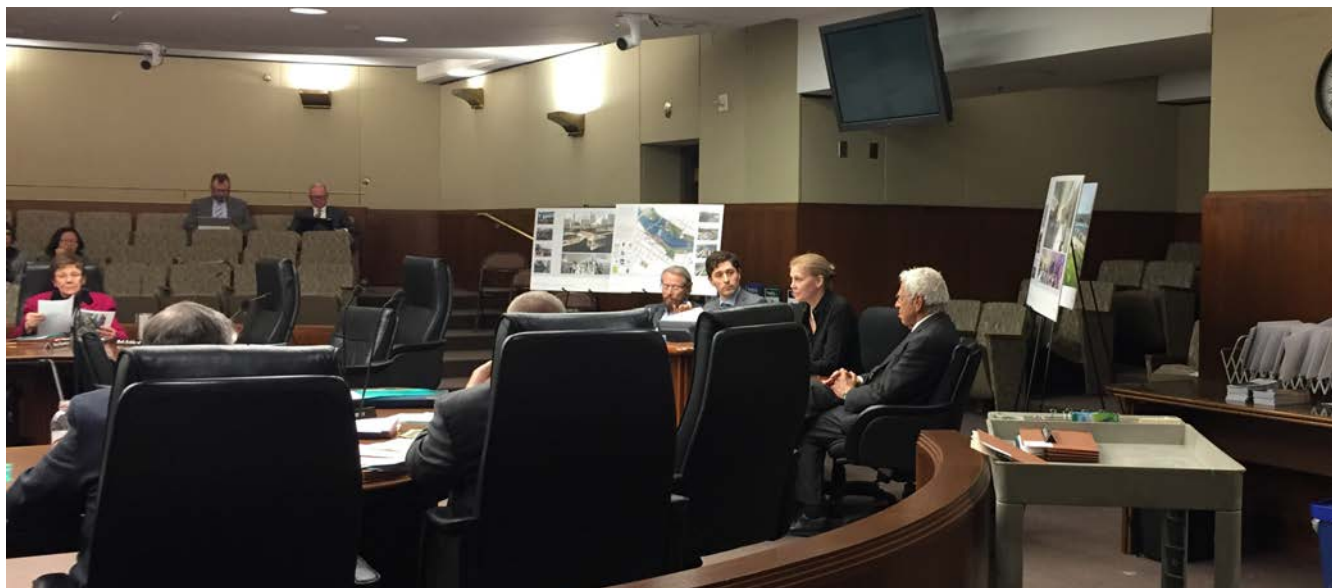
When the Lock closed in 2015, a private hydroelectric company called Crown Hydro emerged seeking to transform the site into a hydropower station. Crown Hydro holds a 20+ year old license to develop a power facility in the sub basement of the Crown Roller Mill (a failed project), and sought to amend its project location to the Upper Lock. The plan would disrupt the vision of a fully public riverfront and create unsafe conditions in the water. Friends of the Falls, its coalition partners, and all government actors engaged with the process (including the City of Minneapolis and Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board) opposed Crown Hydro's plan. Despite unified public opposition resulting in a decision against Crown Hydro at the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, and the protracted battle resulting





***The Falls of St. Anthony* (detail) by Albert Bierstadt, ca 1880–1887 depicts the natural 49-foot cascade of the Falls and the limestone islands that characterized the area prior to industrialization.**





Representatives of the City of Minneapolis, Friends of the Falls, and State Representative Raymond Dehn testified before the Minnesota Legislative-Citizen Commission on Natural Resources, seeking funds for improvement of the site.

finally in the rejection of the license amendment request by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Crown Hydro continue to pursue its case in the D.C. Circuit Courts. Constant vigilance and legal intervention by Friends of the Falls and the City of Minneapolis has been necessary to protect the site.

### Legislative Actions

Since 2016, community engagement has been central to the success of The Falls Initiative. A detailed accounting of engagement outcomes to date is summarized in chapter 5, *Phases & Timeline*.

Initial coalition building was centered on protecting the public interest at the Upper Lock and preventing continued industrial use. This created the foundation for constituency-driven government actions that envisioned a more public-interest future for the site at the local, state, and federal level:

- *Section 210* of the federal Water Resources and

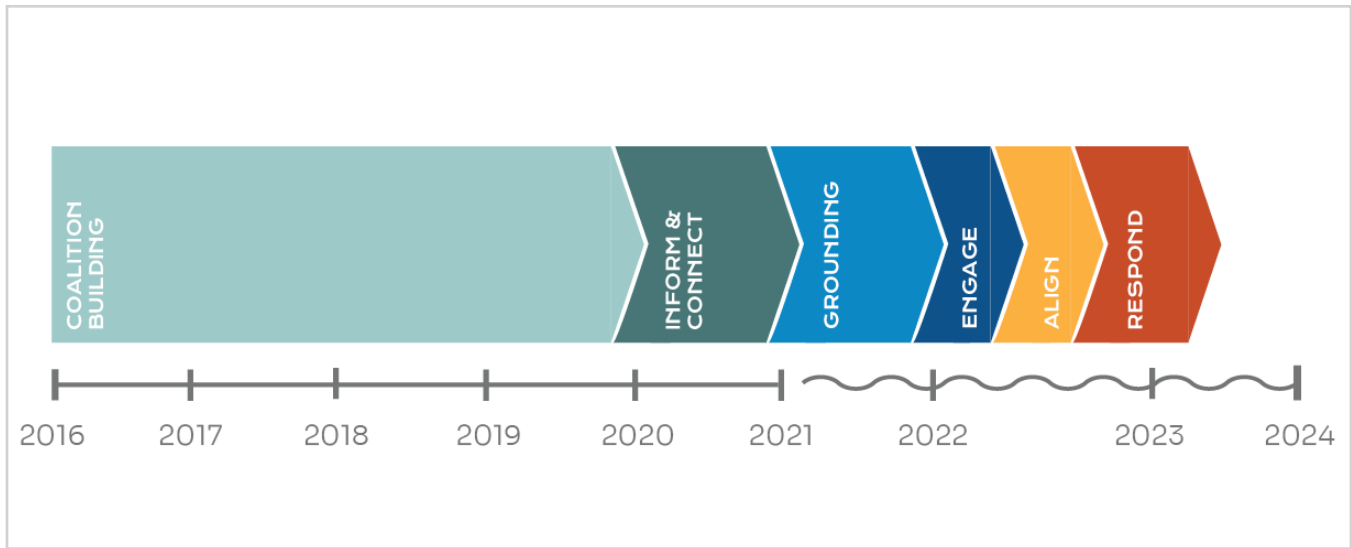
Development Act of 2014 was the initial act of Congress directing the Corps of Engineers to close the Upper Lock to commercial navigation (understood to be in response to declining barge traffic and concerns about invasive species)

- *City Resolutions 2017R-273* added Upper Lock redevelopment to the City's state bonding priority list
- *City Resolution 2018R-098* approved The Falls Initiative and directed staff to work with Friends of the Falls and other stakeholders on implementing it. It also prohibited hydroelectric power generation on the site (see *Threat of Privatization* previously in this section)
- The Minnesota Legislature's *Omnibus Environment Bill* of June 2022 approved \$2.8 million from the Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund to support early enhancements on the site (matched by \$2.5 million from Friends of the Falls)
- *Section 1225* of the federal

Water Resources and Development Act of 2018 cleared the Upper Lock away from the "Minneapolis Locks Disposition Study" being undertaken by the Corps of Engineers, which focused on all three Upper Mississippi Locks. It enabled an expedited study for the Upper Lock alone, and opened the door to partial disposition of the site, so that the land could be conveyed without the Lock structure itself

- *Section 356* of the Water Resources Development Act of 2020 specifically directed the Corps of Engineers to convey the partial property to the City of Minneapolis without consideration, upon request

This series of actions made it possible to open negotiations with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers about conveying the federally owned land (but not the Lock structure), secure funding for early enhancements through Minnesota's Environmental and Natural Resources Trust



Graphic credit: Amanda Wigen

Early phases of engagement focused on building constituency for action, informing the public, and grounding the team and the process. 2022 is characterized by broad public engagement to shape the future of the site.

Fund, and launch a broader engagement process as described in this plan.

**Future Government Actions**

The public engagement process described in this plan, as well as Tribal intergovernmental relations, will inform a long term plan for the ownership and stewardship of the site, which is anticipated to initially be conveyed from the U.S. Government to the City of Minneapolis in 2022.

**ABOUT THE PLAN**

The Falls Initiative Community Engagement Plan will guide community engagement regarding the future of property at the Upper Lock according to specific principles that are outlined in *Guiding Plans & Policies*. Key topics, audiences, and methods that will be utilized are described in chapter 5, *Phases & Timeline*, which describes each of the phases of the plan in detail:

- Phase 1: Coalition Building (2016–2019)
- Phase 2: Inform & Connect (2020)
- Phase 3: Grounding (2021)
- Phase 4: Engage (January - May 2022)
- Phase 5: Align (June - August 2022)
- Phase 6: Respond (September 2022 - March 2023)

The Falls Initiative Community Engagement Plan was designed to inform the public about previous engagement outcomes, and to guide the authentic, predictable, and meaningful engagement of all stakeholders as we move forward, including Tribal nations, Native organizations, community residents, neighborhood groups, diverse communities, the business and tourism community, environmental stakeholders, parks organizations, transportation interests, heritage interests, and the general public.

The engagement plan is informed by the adopted plans of several entities, as well as responsive to the outcomes of our own outreach.





**The implementation of Water Works Park (phase one) by the Minneapolis Parks Foundation and Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, including Owámní Restaurant, has increased the visibility of the site and expanded visitation around it.**

Photo Credit: HGA

## Engagement Team

**Friends of the Falls (FOF)** is a 501c(3) public non-profit with a vision to create places of healing and celebration that acknowledge the past and advance a more equitable and inclusive future. FOF will coordinate the implementation of the engagement plan including its costs and management. FOF will hire and manage all consultants, coordinate and document (with NACDI) all meetings of the Native Partnership Council, coordinate and document Community Conversations, and ensure that engagement meets the standards set in this plan's *Guiding Plans & Policies*. Learn more at [www.thefalls.org](http://www.thefalls.org).

The **Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI)** and **CDA Enterprises (CDA)** are contract partners of Friends of the Falls, providing cultural training to our board and staff, advising on engagement efforts with the Native American community, and, with FOF and facilitator Carrie Day Aspinwall of CDA, convening a **Native Partnership Council (NPC)** to steer the process. NACDI's mission is to help Native people create the future they envision. Friends of the Falls has committed to equal communications authority and shared decision-making with NACDI during the engagement process, making The Falls Initiative a co-branded initiative of equal partners. Learn more at [www.nacdi.org](http://www.nacdi.org).

The **City of Minneapolis** (the City) is anticipated to accept ownership of land surrounding the lock from the Army Corps of Engineers, as directed by the Water Resources Development Act of 2020, and will hold that land while the vision for long term stewardship emerges from the engagement process. The City passed a resolution of support for the Falls Initiative in 2018 and is anticipated to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with FOF as its cost

sharing and engagement partner. The City has also consulted with Dakota Tribal leaders about the Falls Initiative and has authorized Friends of the Falls and NACDI to serve as its representative in future conversations with Tribal leadership. The City will contribute to expanding awareness about the Falls Initiative and the engagement process in keeping with its core principles of engagement.

The **Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB)** will be an integral voice during community engagement due to the Falls' proximity to Water Works Park Phase 1 (completed) & Phase 2. MPRB will be consulted as design concepts emerge, and opportunities for synergy with Water Works Park will be considered. MPRB will help to expand awareness of engagement opportunities, and will be invited to participate in Community Conversations.

**GGN**, a landscape architecture firm based in Seattle, and **VJAA**, an architecture firm based in Minneapolis, are engaged to provide visual depictions (storyboards, sketches, renderings) of design alternatives for the site. With Friends of the Falls, and in consultation with the Native Partnership Council, GGN will lead the design consulting team and facilitate a series of Community Conversations, meetings to provide insight into Native American culture, topics and experiences and engage the public on key topics. Michelle Buchholz, a Wet'suwet'en artist who leads **Cassyex Consulting**, has been engaged to bear witness to meetings of the Native Partnership Council and create graphic recordings that capture the Council's stories and direction. Learn more at:

[www.ggnltd.com](http://www.ggnltd.com)

[www.vjaa.com](http://www.vjaa.com)

[www.cassyexconsulting.com](http://www.cassyexconsulting.com)





The Upper Lock is five stories tall. It was built to facilitate barge traffic up and down the river from the Upper Harbor Terminal.

Photo Credit: Christopher Sticha | Friends of the Falls



## Guiding Plans & Policies

*The Falls Initiative Community Engagement Plan* recognizes the importance of engaging the community effectively and in a transparent way. This document is intended to inform stakeholders about opportunities to participate in engagement for The Falls Initiative and to provide information about how decisions will be made.

Following are the touchstone documents, policies, and principles underlying the engagement plan.

### Acknowledgment & Inclusion

It is the intent of this plan to provide a framework that welcomes all members of the community to participate, and provides a forum for participants to contribute their thoughts, ideas, and priorities in the engagement process.

It is also the intent of this plan to acknowledge that the site of the Upper Lock is within Dakota homeland, and that the conspicuously missing story within our historic district is that of its first inhabitants. Therefore, the process will center Native voices and seek a fuller understanding of the Indigenous experience in our community and on this site.

### ADOPTED PLANS

There are several adopted plans, themselves the product of community engagement, that anticipated the transformation of this site and the broader riverfront. They envision a public riverfront and a visitors center at the Lock. Those plans include the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board's *Changing Relationships to the Power of the Falls* (2014), Minneapolis Downtown Council's *Intersections: Downtown 2025*

(2011), Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board's *Central Riverfront Regional Parks Master Plan* (2016), and Meet Minneapolis' *Destination Transformation 2030* (2016).

The plan is also recognizes *Minneapolis 2040*, the City's comprehensive plan adopted in 2019, and the *Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area Plan* (1979, most recently updated in 2017).

## GUIDING POLICIES

*The Falls Initiative Community Engagement Plan* is shaped around a series of key reference documents, which inform the engagement process:

### Core Principles of Community Engagement

Our process acknowledges the Core Principles of Community Engagement from the International Association of Public Participation, adopted by the City of Minneapolis in 2007:

- Right to be involved
- Contribution will be thoughtfully considered
- Recognize the needs of all
- Seek out involvement
- Participants design participation
- Adequate information
- Known effect of participation

### Blueprint for Equitable Engagement

The Falls Initiative seeks to contribute to equitable engagement by expanding community engagement strategies and methods.

The project seeks an unprecedented level of partnership with Dakota Tribes and the Native community.





### **MEET MINNEAPOLIS**

*Destination Transformation 2030*

“Build an iconic visitors center on Downtown’s Central Riverfront.”



### **MINNEAPOLIS PARK & RECREATION BOARD**

*Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park Master Plan*

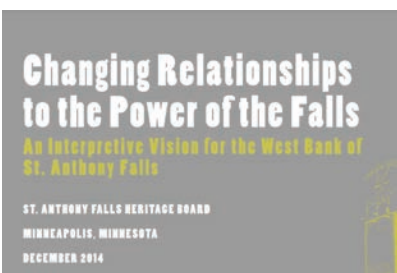
“Collaborate with partner agencies to create a visitors center on the lock and dam structure. The building is anticipated to include an orientation center, interpretation, classroom, restrooms, food concession, and indoor/outdoor patio.”



### **MINNEAPOLIS DOWNTOWN COUNCIL**

*Intersections: Downtown 2025 Plan*

“Create and sustain a green infrastructure - and showcase the Riverfront... Enhance and emphasize the Riverfront as a world-class destination and Downtown’s green focal point.”



### **ST. ANTHONY FALLS HERITAGE BOARD**

*Changing Relationships to the Power of the Falls*

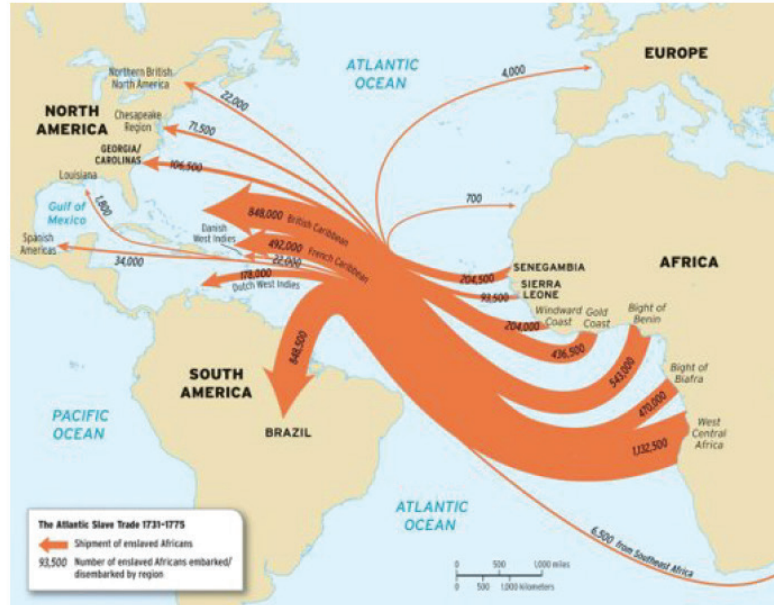
“Meet the needs of a growing number of visitors... in particular, focus on the federal processes to repurpose the Upper Lock and Dam as an ideally located venue for visitor amenities.”

Several adopted plans anticipated transformation of the riverfront generally, and this site in particular. The initiative supports these plans, and also recognizes the underlying policies in Minneapolis 2040 (the comprehensive plan) and the Mississippi Corridor Critical Area plan (protecting and restoring the environment of the river).

## Land stolen from people.



## People stolen from land.



### Our bodies remember.

The City of Minneapolis formed a committee to explore how the community could more proactively facilitate processes of truth and reconciliation. This diagram was an exhibit in a report to City Council about that process.

### Strategic & Racial Equity Plan

The engagement process can make significant contributions to goals cited in the City SREP, including:

- Increased spending to engage racially and ethnically diverse suppliers<sup>27</sup>
- expanding the City’s vendor list of Indigenous suppliers<sup>27</sup> and,
- providing a platform to increase the number of Minneapolis-based businesses with BIPOC owners.

changes that have the long-term probability of facilitating economic inclusion....”

Truth and reconciliation is a foundational premise of our engagement process. It is central to the work of the Native Partnership Council, and will underlie Community Conversations described in this plan under *Phases & Timeline*.

### Memorandum of Understanding Between the City of Minneapolis and Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors (MUID) on behalf of the American Indian Community

Our process and partnership with the City of Minneapolis will contribute to the primary purpose of the City’s MOU with MUID. The MOU states that it has been formed “to promote and sustain a dedicated promise and

ongoing sense of urgency to further develop reciprocal paths of participation and success for members of the American Indian Community.”

### Truth & Reconciliation

The City of Minneapolis has adopted a truth and reconciliation process that is anticipated to result in “policy, programmatic, and resource





**A week after the murder of George Floyd, a Jingle Dress Ceremony was held at the corner of 38th and Chicago for healing and solidarity. Floyd's murder sparked a global movement for justice, and energized the City of Minneapolis to form a truth and reconciliation working group to advance supportive policy.**

Photo Credit: Minnesota Native News, story reported on June 2, 2020.

## Phases & Timeline

*The Falls Initiative Community Engagement Plan* is comprised of six phases:

- Phase 1: Coalition Building (2016–2019)
- Phase 2: Inform & Connect (2020)
- Phase 3: Grounding (2021)
- Phase 4: Engage (January – May 2022)
- Phase 5: Align (June – August 2022)
- Phase 6: Respond (September 2022 – March 2023)

### EARLY ENGAGEMENT (COMPLETED)

Phases 1–3 (Coalition Building, Inform & Connect, and Grounding) are complete. In these early phases, from 2016–2021, The Falls Initiative engagement was focused on growing awareness about the opportunities of the site and risks emerging as a result of the federal disposition study, and building relationships.

Engagement objectives focused on defining key topics and identifying key audiences. The team gained understanding of adopted plans, listened to community values and priorities, built a constituency to move government to action, and cultivated knowledge and relationships to fully center the Native American community in The Falls Initiative.

Outcomes from Phases 1–3 are summarized starting on page 28.

### UPCOMING PHASES

In Phases 4–6 (Engage, Align, Respond), key audiences and the general public will have opportunities to learn about Indigenous perspectives, weigh in on key topics and issues

from connectivity to tourism to sustainability, and engage on successive programming concepts and site design.

### Readiness for Design & Planning Engagement

Important groundwork is now in place, creating a state of readiness for broad community engagement about the future of The Falls Initiative, including site planning and design:

- In keeping with Congressional direction in WRDA 2020, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is prepared to convey land to the City of Minneapolis or its designee
- The Native Partnership Council is convened and is prepared to steer the process
- Funding has been secured from the Minnesota Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund to undertake early capital improvements to the site

In response to these three conditions, it is time to begin a public conversation about the future use and design of this important and iconic site on the Central Riverfront.

### ENGAGEMENT TOPICS & KEY AUDIENCES

Phases 4–6 (Engage, Align, and Respond) will center Native voices in the public conversation, expanding general knowledge of the Falls' original identity and establishing a foundation of truth and reconciliation to inform our understanding of the Central Riverfront and Mississippi River.

We will invite the community to engage about the site's future in a way that prioritizes indigenous



perspectives and makes them visible in the landscape.

### Engagement Goals & Principles

- Prioritize Native voices and experience
- Uphold the principle of public access
- Cultivate a holistic understanding of the Central Riverfront and the Mississippi River
- Connect people to the river
- Demonstrate responsiveness to the direction and values of the Native Partnership Council and other stakeholders
- Cultivate opportunities for truth telling and healing

### Key Audiences

- The diverse Indigenous community, including sovereign Tribal nations, urban Indians and those in exile, and those held up by the community as important voices for the future
- Community and riverfront stakeholders, including recreation interests, neighborhood interests, business and tourism interests, river and environmental interests, education interests, and historic resources interests
- The greater BIPOC community and those engaged in the work of truth and reconciliation, recognizing the importance of acknowledging their shared experience of racism

### Key Topics

- Indigenous Perspectives: Re-centering Native connections to the Falls and the site

- Environmental Restoration: Ecological sustainability and the health of the river
- Programming & Activities: Public use and activation
- Connectivity: Blue, green and gray modes of access
- Business and Tourism: Financial sustainability and economic opportunities

### GOALS & METHODS TO ADVANCE EQUITY

The Falls Initiative engagement team has developed and is committed to a series of goals and methods designed to uphold the principles of equity and inclusion throughout the life of the project. They include:

- **GOAL:** Center Native voices in the process. **METHOD:** Form a Native Partnership Council to steer the engagement process and the project. **METHOD:** Co-brand engagement efforts with the Native American Community Development Institute and establish equal authority over public communications.
- **GOAL:** Seek alignment between Indigenous perspectives and public engagement outcomes. **METHOD:** The design consulting team will weave together Native Partnership Council guidance and public input from outreach and Community Conversations to create a positive feedback loop moving toward alignment.
- **GOAL:** Incorporate the creative community as a partner in the engagement process. **METHOD:** Document key outcomes through graphic recording. **METHOD:** Richly document Native Partnership Council

meetings and Community Conversations (large public meetings) with photography and video, and explore storytelling through media as an engagement tool.

- **GOAL:** Contribute to the City's goals for equity and economic inclusion in contracting and project outcomes. **METHOD:** Meet or exceed the goals established by the City for inclusive hiring and contracting throughout the planning, design, and implementation of the project.

## PHASE 1: COALITION BUILDING (2016-2019)

Friends of the Falls facilitated coalition building meetings from 2016 to 2019. Objectives for Phase 1 were to alert the public to the coming disposition of the Lock by the federal government, define community priorities, and build consensus for action. Phase 1 participants included diverse constituency-based organizations, neighborhood associations, and representatives of local, state, and federal government.

Through this 3-year period of intensive early outreach, stakeholders from over two

dozen local organizations endorsed the need for transformative change at this site and contributed to shaping shared priorities.

### Phase 1 Outcomes: Priorities & Actions

Key priorities shared by all participants of the Phase 1 coalition building process included:

- Lifting up the stories of the site (especially indigenous stories)
- Committing to ecologically restorative principles
- Restoring connectivity to the water and access to the site (blue, green, gray modes)

- Highlighting the site’s unique and iconic place identity

Coalition organizations joined together to advocate in support of legislative and regulatory actions based on the following two shared principles:

- The site must not be privatized or turned into a hydropower facility. The Crown Hydro license amendment should be contested
- The site should be redeveloped in the public interest and accessible to all

Finally, coalition meeting participants made the following consensus recommendations, or “programming principles,” for

## WHO WAS ENGAGED IN PHASE 1: COALITION BUILDING?

### GOVERNMENT

- City of Minneapolis
- Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board
- Hennepin County
- State Legislative Offices
- MN Congressional Offices
- Mississippi Parkway Commission

### NEIGHBORHOOD

- Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association
- Nicollet Island East Bank Neighborhood Association
- North Loop Neighborhood Association
- Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association
- St. Anthony West Neighborhood Association
- Friends of the Riverfront

### ENVIRONMENTAL

- Wilderness Inquiry
- Great River Coalition
- Mississippi Watershed Management Organization

### SCIENCE & EDUCATION

- River Life (University of Minnesota)
- UMN American Indian Studies Department
- St. Anthony Falls Hydro Lab
- Minnesota Design Center

### BUSINESS & TOURISM

- Meet Minneapolis
- Minneapolis Downtown Council & DID
- Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce
- East Downtown Business Partnership
- Target Corporation

### TRANSPORTATION

- MNDOT
- Minneapolis Water Taxi
- Metropolitan Council
- NiceRide

### PARKS & OPEN SPACE

- National Park Service
- Mississippi Park Connection
- National Parks Conservation Association
- Green Minneapolis

### HISTORIC & CULTURAL

- St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board
- Minnesota Historical Society
- Mill City Museum
- Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian
- Guthrie Theater





improvements on the site:

- Create an iconic civic and cultural destination
- Ensure public access to the Upper Lock, and to the water
- Share stories and knowledge, particularly about Native American culture, experience and perspectives
- Provide a unified experience along the Riverfront
- Develop a sustainable operating model for the project

**Expanding on Phase 1 Outreach: Equity & Inclusion**

Phase 1 participants advised that future phases must reach

out more purposefully to the indigenous community. Participants acknowledged that St. Anthony Falls was a sacred place to the Dakota people, and recognized the importance of engaging Native American perspectives in the process.

With a generous grant from the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board, a Phase 1 participant, Friends of the Falls engaged the Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI) in 2019 to train FOF’s board on Native history and law, and to guide outreach and relationship building for the Falls Initiative with the Native community and tribal nations.

**PHASE 2: INFORM & CONNECT (2020)**

Phase 2 engagement took place during a global pandemic. Nearly every method of engagement planned for Phase 2 was challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic and the community grief and social unrest that followed the murder of George Floyd.

Public events were canceled to ensure public safety and social distancing. Neighborhood association agendas (if the group was able to meet at all) were dominated by urgent and pressing issues.

Friends of the Falls pivoted to

**The Falls Initiative was preparing for Phase 2 engagement (Inform & Connect) in early 2020 when the global pandemic shut down in-person meetings & events. Then, the traumatic public murder of George Floyd shook our community and spurred a global movement for social justice. During this time, FOF was moved to self reflection, adopting a diversity and inclusion policy, diversifying its board, and placing new focus and resources on building trust with, and prioritizing, Native voices in the process.**

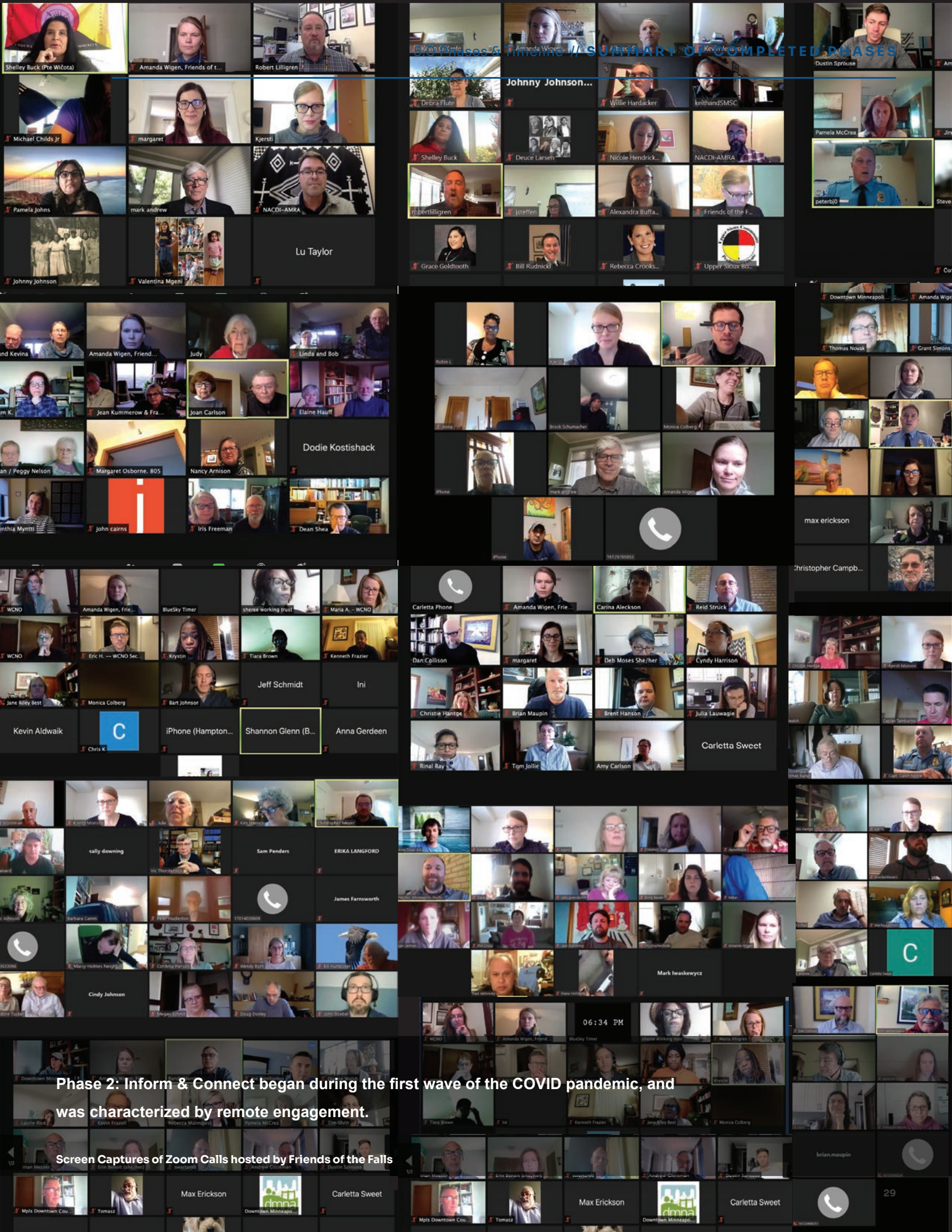


Steven Yang | Reuters



Joshua Rashad McFadden | New York Times





Summary of Completed Phases

Phase 2: Inform & Connect began during the first wave of the COVID pandemic, and was characterized by remote engagement.

Screen Captures of Zoom Calls hosted by Friends of the Falls



## WHO WAS ENGAGED IN PHASE 2: INFORM & CONNECT?

### NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES & ORGANIZATIONS

- Prairie Island Indian Community
- Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- Lower Sioux Indian Community
- Upper Sioux Community
- Minnesota Indian Affairs Council
- Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors

### LOCAL, STATE, & FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- City of Minneapolis
- Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board
- Hennepin County
- State Legislative Offices
- MN Congressional Offices
- Mississippi Parkway Commission

### NEIGHBORHOOD

- Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association
- Nicollet Island East Bank Neighborhood Association
- North Loop Neighborhood Association
- Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association
- St. Anthony West Neighborhood Association
- Sheridan Neighborhood Association
- Bottineau Neighborhood Association

- Webber-Camden Neighborhood Association
- McKinley Community Board
- Jordan Area Community Council
- Friends of the Riverfront

### ENVIRONMENTAL

- Friends of the Mississippi River
- Wilderness Inquiry
- Great River Coalition
- Mississippi Watershed Management Organization

### SCIENCE & EDUCATION

- St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board
- River Life (University of Minnesota)
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### BUSINESS & TOURISM

- Meet Minneapolis
- Minneapolis Downtown Council & Downtown Improvement District
- East Downtown Business Partnership
- Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce

### TRANSPORTATION

- MNDOT
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### PARKS & OPEN SPACE

- National Park Service
- Mississippi Park Connection
- National Parks Conservation Association
- Green Minneapolis
- Parks for All Community Advisory Committee
- Great River Passage Conservancy

### HISTORIC & CULTURAL

- St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board
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- Mill City Museum
- Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian
- Hennepin History Museum
- Guthrie Theater



virtual and digital platforms whenever possible and sought alternate forms of engagement.

Over the course of Phase 2, despite unprecedented challenges, FOF's digital outreach expanded awareness among a larger and more diverse audience of neighborhoods and organizations, and built new relationships with the Native American community.

### Phase 2 Engagement with the Native American Community

Phase 2 was characterized by the team's commitment to building trust and cultivating relationships with the Indigenous community and Tribal nations.

This work was undertaken in parallel with Friends of the Falls' organizational development, including the adoption of a diversity and inclusion policy,

recruitment to grow board diversity, and board education and training on Indigenous history and experience. The outreach and the training were guided by the Native American Community Development Institute. NACDI provided regular mentorship and training to FOF staff and leadership, expanding the organization's knowledge of Indigenous history and experience, and facilitating proactive outreach to the Native American community informed by cultural traditions and community norms.

NACDI advised that engagement with the Tribes should begin with outreach to elected Tribal leadership and organizations. We would need to form relationships, earn trust, and invite Native leaders into a central role in shaping the future of the site.

Key topics of early engagement with the tribes and Native

organizations included:

- A commitment to the Native community to set aside concepts that were explored during Phase 1 prior to their involvement<sup>2</sup>
- A commitment to authentically center Native voices in the planning process moving forward
- A question: how do you want to be engaged?

In September 2020, FOF was offered an opportunity to present to the elected Tribal leadership of Prairie Island Indian Community, Shakopee Mdewakantan Sioux Community, Upper Sioux Community and Lower Sioux Community.

FOF and NACDI proposed forming a Native Partnership Council as a channel to share stories about this place, consider the site from an Indigenous perspective, and set guiding



Friends of the Falls participated in several in-person engagement opportunities at the Lock during Phase 3 (ongoing), including this event on the top of the Lock, with Minneapolis Downtown Council and Meet Minneapolis.

Time Into Pixels Photography | Meet Minneapolis

principles for the project. All four Tribal leaders were invited to participate in the Council or to name a representative. Following the meeting, FOF and NACDI were directed to engage with each nation’s Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO). Meetings and engagement with Native leaders and organizations in Phase 2 included:

- Prairie Island Indian Community, Tribal Council Meeting (3/5/2020)
- We Are Still Here Conference (3/11/2020)
- Minnesota Indian Affairs Council Quarterly Meeting (6/26/2020)
- Federal Indian Law 101 Training (7/31/2020)
- Mni Sota Dakota Tribal Leadership Meeting (9/4/2020)
- Mni Sota Dakota Tribal Historic Preservation Officers Meeting (10/26/2020)

**Phase 2 Engagement with Community Stakeholders**

The team also pursued broader and deeper outreach to neighborhoods and stakeholder organizations during this phase

with the goal of expanding awareness and reaching key audiences.

FOF staff engaged with community members at neighborhood, community, and business engagements throughout the year. Most of these events were held virtually due to COVID-19 and were significantly underattended.

However, neighborhood and organizational leaders learned that in future phases there would be a series of opportunities for community members to engage with the process, and that those would be forthcoming.

Engagement topics included:

- Disposition: We provided a briefing on the U.S. Army Corps’ draft disposition study, which was released for public comment. FOF provided a summary of the study and an invitation to join us in pursuing a public interest outcome for the site by commenting on the draft
- Friends of the Falls organizational development and commitment to center Native voices: Background

on why this site and this moment demand a process that centers Native voices, and how Friends of the Falls is initiating and developing ongoing, reciprocal relationships with Dakota Tribes

- How to engage: During this phase, we shared a conceptual process timeline and promised to reconnect with stakeholders with a schedule of engagement opportunities when site control was in sight and site planning could begin

We attended meetings (for some, more than one meeting) with 25 stakeholder organizations during this phase.

Questions from the community centered on what action was being requested of them, how our process would embrace equity, and requesting information about engagement opportunities to share with their constituents.

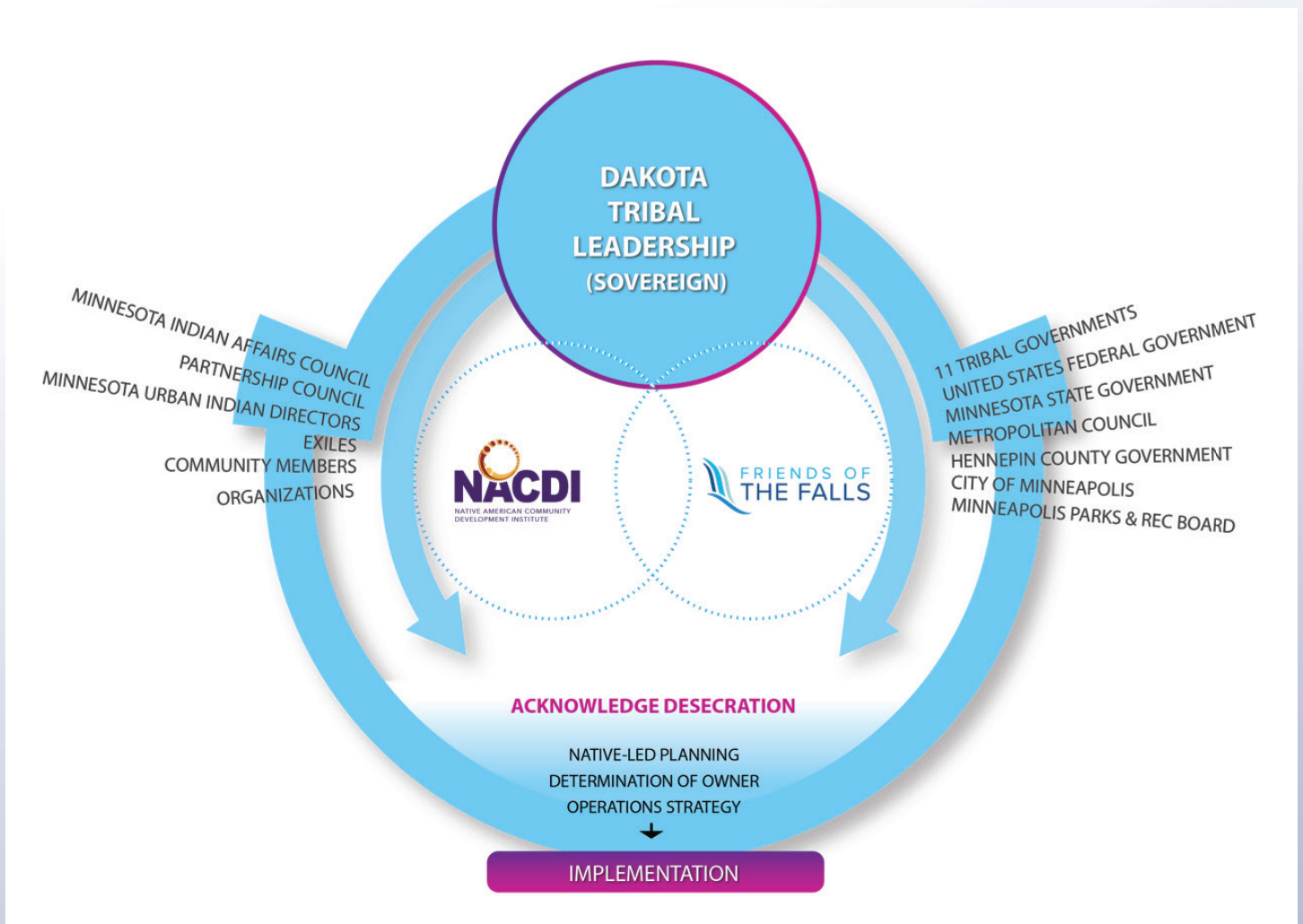
Many took immediate action on the request for public comment on the U.S. Army Corps’ Upper Lock disposition study. In a demonstration of awareness and solidarity by community

***The Uncompromising Hand (2017), by Native artist Andrea Carlson, projected an image of Spirit Island onto the Lock wall. Spirit Island, quarried for its limestone for decades, was ultimately completely destroyed to build the Lock.***



Rik Sferri | Northern Lights





Graphic Art Credit: Kjersti Duval

With input from elected leadership of the four sovereign Dakota nations in Mni Sota, a conceptual diagram was created to reflect a process of engagement that centers Native leadership in the planning process.

members, out of 110 public comments received by the Corps on its draft study, 100 of them opposed full disposition of the Lock, supporting FOF's and the City's view that the Corps of Engineers should continue to own and operate the Lock while the land next to it is conveyed for a public purpose. A sign-on letter was generated with over 600 signatures.

### Phase 2 Engagement with Elected Officials and Public Bodies

FOF consulted with staff and elected City, County, and Park Board leadership throughout Phase 2 to understand their

constituents' goals and priorities, and to brief elected stakeholders on the progress of our outreach. Twenty-eight local elected officials representing the City, County, and Park Board were engaged, in addition to numerous contacts with staff, boards and commissions.

### Additional Engagement

In addition to meetings and events, Friends of the Falls advanced awareness about the project through the following activities:

- Provided financial support to the National Park Service and Mississippi Park

Connection to fund ranger operations at the Lock and arts programming to activate the riverfront

- Launched a new organization name (becoming *Friends of the Falls* rather than *Friends of the Lock & Dam*) and brand identity, recognizing the significance of the natural falls rather than the built environment of the lock and dam
- Communicated project history through a renewed web presence at [www.thefalls.org](http://www.thefalls.org)
- Promoted project updates and partner efforts regularly via new social media

channels (@TheFallsMpls on Facebook, Twitter) and an email newsletter

- Conducted an online survey and received 42 responses from 14 zip codes, providing insights on frequency of visitation, memories of the site, reasons for visiting the riverfront, things missing from current riverfront experience, defining characteristics of the site and ideas for future partnerships
- Established media partnership with Mill City Times and launched Voices of the Falls blog segment
- Hosted summer office hours and attended the Twin Cities Pride Festival (both virtually)

### Phase 2 Legislative Pursuits

Legislative and regulatory pursuits continued to be shepherded by Friends of the Falls in partnership with the City of Minneapolis during this phase. A summary of enacted legislation pertaining to this project can be found in the *Introduction* section of this document, under *Legislative Actions*.

### Phase 2 Key Outcomes

During Phase 2, awareness of The Falls Initiative expanded to a broader public audience and deepened among existing stakeholders. The strong focus that was placed on relationship building with the Dakota Tribes was fruitful over time and continues to grow.

Key takeaways from engagement with Tribal and Native organizational leadership:

- It is important to acknowledge that the site is located within Dakota homeland.
- The River, the Falls, and Spirit Island are sacred, and have been desecrated.
- Tribal Historic Preservation Offices should be engaged ongoing.
- A Native Partnership Council should be formed to steer the process.

Key takeaways from broader community engagement:

- Community members support FOF's intention to

center the project on Native voices. Every conversation during this phase included supportive comments from community members about this direction, with no comments in opposition. Many participants spoke more broadly of their support for equity, truth, and reconciliation as topics central to healing our community in the wake of George Floyd's murder.

- The public commonly expressed confusion about current ownership of the Lock and surrounding property, maintenance standards, and the projected timeline for a public-interest project. The team determined that more information should be made available to answer these questions.

Like neighborhood groups, elected leaders supported the intention to center the project on Native voices. Elected officials also continued to support the goal to create a public-interest project at the Upper Lock.

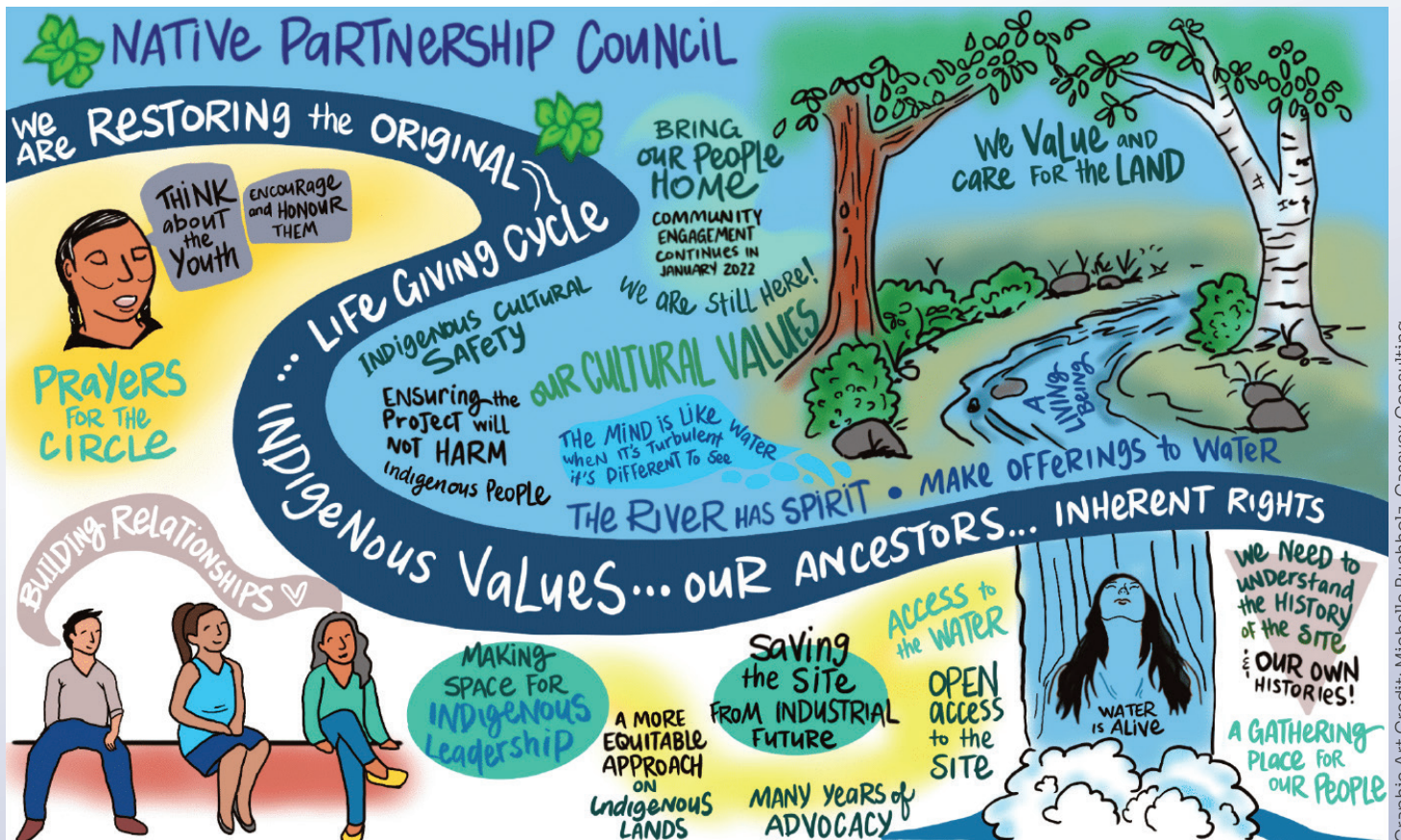
**“We are not just with you, we are backing you and what you want to see for this particular area.... We view it as being of critical importance for, yes, in some cases, trying to right the wrong. Pushing for, yes, a land back movement. It is an honor to partner with you.”**



Mayor Jacob Frey speaking to the Native Partnership Council on September 24, 2021.

Pamela Johns





Graphic Art Credit: Michelle Buchholz, Cassyex Consulting

Each Native Partnership Council meeting is documented in a graphic recording by indigenous artist Michelle Buchholz. Key principles and values are thus easily carried forward, as well as communicated and shared with others.

### Extension and Expansion of the Engagement Timeline

The final key outcome from Phase 2 was the realization that relationship building and earning trust would require more time and structure than was originally planned. The team needed to respond to what Native leaders advised, and amend the process accordingly to authentically center Native voices.

NACDI recommended and FOF agreed that it would benefit the process to extend and adapt the original engagement timeline, initially scheduled to conclude at the end of 2021. A third “early engagement” phase was added: “Phase 3: Grounding.” The three “early engagement” phases (Coalition Building, Inform & Connect, and the added phase, Grounding) raise

awareness, identify issues, and bring stakeholders to the table.

The final three phases (Engage, Align, and Respond) will fold in opportunities for learning through community conversations, a process to center Native voices in steering the process, and engagement opportunities related to site planning and design. The amended timeline extends the community engagement process into 2023.

### PHASE 3: GROUNDING (2021)

Phase 3 engagement placed a strong focus on authentically engaging the Native community. The team amended the initial engagement plan as a direct response to unified support expressed by Native leadership and community stakeholders in Phase 2 to shape a process around the principle of centering Native voices.

Doing so required the extension of the engagement timeline. The new Grounding phase would make space for the time and trust necessary to bring authentic Native leadership into the process.

The team continued outreach to the broader community during





Mark Andrew of Friends of the Falls, Robert Lilligren of NACDI, and Ward 3 Council Member Steve Fletcher share information about the Falls Initiative on the City Steps in Water Works Park, summer 2021.

Kate Lamers

Phase 3. It was important that all stakeholders stay up to date and informed about how the process would take shape, how Native voices would be centered, and how it would impact the engagement timeline. Adapting the process in response to community and Tribal input in Phase 2 is consistent with the value we place on participants designing participation, one of the City’s Core Principles of Community Engagement.

This phase formally brought Native leadership into the center of the process, and teed up future phases of discovery, dialogue, weaving, and alignment with the broader community.

**Native Partnership Council**

A key component of the Grounding phase was to create and convene the Native Partnership Council to steer the planning process and shape priorities from an Indigenous perspective.

To undertake this work, FOF brought on a new addition to the engagement team to form and

facilitate meetings of the Native Partnership Council: consultant Carrie Day Aspinwall of CDA Enterprises. As a former member of the City’s Neighborhood & Community Relations department, engagement consultant to the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board for Water Works and Upper Harbor Terminal, and as a leader in the Native community, Carrie brings deep insight to this work.

Because the site is located on Dakota homeland, four seats of the Native Partnership Council are reserved for Dakota Tribal leadership or designated representatives. Additional candidates for the Council were identified from the following categories: History Keepers, Spiritual Leadership, Artists, Environmental, Youth/ Young Adult and Exiled Dakota Descendants.

Members of the Council include:

- Shelley Buck, President, Prairie Island Indian Community
- Margo Gavle Prescott,

Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community

- Representative to be Named, Lower Sioux Indian Community
- Representative to be Named, Upper Sioux Community
- Jewel Arcoran, Dakota Lakota, enrolled member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate
- Janice Bad Moccasin, member of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe
- Juanita Espinosa, enrolled member of the Spirit Lake Nation, Turtle Mountain and LCO Descendant
- Thorne LaPointe, Sicangu Lakota
- Wakinyan LaPointe, Sicangu Lakota
- Maggie Lorenz, Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe, descendant of Spirit Lake Dakota Nation
- Mona Smith, Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota

Meetings of the Native Partnership Council are



documented in two ways:

- High quality media (photography and video documentation)
- Graphic recording by indigenous artist Michelle Buckholz, highlighting key themes and outcomes from the meeting

The initial meeting of the Native Partnership Council was held on September 24, 2021 in the form of a Ki Ceremony. ‘Ki’ means ‘to arrive back to where one started, to return’ in the Dakota language.

The Ki Ceremony was attended by members of the Native

Partnership Council, spiritual leader Chief Arvol Looking Horse, storytellers Wakinyan and Thorne LaPointe, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, Ward 3 Council Member Steve Fletcher, and stakeholders of the Central Riverfront.

At the Ki Ceremony, Mayor Frey reiterated the City’s commitment to Government to Government consultation with the Tribes. He also expressed support for Native leadership in guiding the process for this site, saying:

“On behalf of the City of Minneapolis, I want to tell all of you -- the Native Partnership

Council, all of the tribes that are represented here, [President] Shelley Buck, all of the Chairpeople that are with us, and the leaders and elders of our Native community: We are not just with you, we are backing you and what you want to see for this particular area.... We view it as being of critical importance for, yes, in some cases, trying to right the wrong... Pushing for, yes, a land back movement... It is an honor to partner with you.”

### Deepening Relationships

During the Grounding phase, FOF and NACDI continued to deepen relationships with Native leaders



Part of the mission in Phase 3: Grounding was to educate the public about indigenous history at the site, and to raise awareness about the parts of the story they may not know.

Riley Slavics | Friends of the Falls

## WHO WAS ENGAGED IN PHASE 3: GROUNDING?

### NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES & ORGANIZATIONS

- Prairie Island Indian Community
- Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- Lower Sioux Indian Community
- Upper Sioux Community
- Minnesota Indian Affairs Council
- Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors
- Mni Sota Dakota Tribal Historic Preservation Officers
- American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association

### LOCAL, STATE, & FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- City of Minneapolis staff and elected officials
- Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board staff and elected officials
- Hennepin County staff and elected officials
- State Legislative Offices
- MN Congressional Offices
- Mississippi Parkway Commission
- City of Minneapolis Community Environmental Advisory Commission

### NEIGHBORHOOD

- Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association
- Nicollet Island East Bank Neighborhood Association

- North Loop Neighborhood Association
- Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association
- St. Anthony West Neighborhood Association
- Sheridan Neighborhood Association
- Bottineau Neighborhood Association
- Webber-Camden Neighborhood Association
- McKinley Community Board
- Jordan Area Community Council
- Marshall Terrace Neighborhood Organization
- Cedar Riverside Community Council
- Elliot Park Neighborhood Inc.
- Friends of the Riverfront
- LaRive Apartment

### ENVIRONMENTAL

- Friends of the Mississippi River
- Wilderness Inquiry
- Great River Coalition
- Mississippi Watershed Management Organization

### SCIENCE & EDUCATION

- St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board
- River Life (University of Minnesota)
- St. Anthony Falls Hydrology Lab

- Minnesota Design Center

### BUSINESS & TOURISM

- Meet Minneapolis
- Minneapolis Downtown Council & Downtown Improvement District
- East Downtown Business Partnership
- Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce

### TRANSPORTATION

- MNDOT
- Minneapolis Water Taxi
- NiceRide

### PARKS & OPEN SPACE

- National Park Service
- Mississippi Park Connection
- National Parks Conservation Association
- Parks for All Community Advisory Committee
- Great River Passage Conservancy

### HISTORIC & CULTURAL

- St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board
- Minnesota Historical Society
- Mill City Museum
- Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian
- Hennepin History Museum
- Guthrie Theater





Ne-Dah-Ness Greene

The Native Partnership Council has been convened and is prepared to steer the engagement process.

and community members, holding meetings with:

- Tribal Historic Preservation Officers
- Prairie Island Tribal Council
- Mni Sota Dakota Leadership (elected leaders of the four Dakota tribes)

During this phase, the City of Minneapolis, represented by Mayor Frey and Ward 3 Council Member Steve Fletcher, participated in a Government to Government consultation with elected leadership of the four Dakota Tribes at the Mni Sota Dakota meeting on June 11, 2021 with NACDI and Friends of the Falls. The request by the City to consult directly with Tribal leadership was an important step in the process to determine the future of the site.

### Broader Community Grounding

As the Native Partnership Council was formed and convened, FOF staff continued to engage with the broader community to raise awareness about the process, answer questions, report on follow-through from Phase 2, and share the extended engagement timeline.

FOF staff engaged with community members at neighborhood, community and business engagements, and was able to host and participate in in-person events to a limited degree throughout 2021.

During these engagements, FOF raised awareness about Indigenous history and perspectives. Additionally, FOF addressed prior questions raised by the public by proactively

clarifying current ownership of the Lock and surrounding property, distinguishing between land anticipated to be conveyed to the City of Minneapolis and remaining federal property, and continued to keep the public apprised of public response to the Army Corps Upper Lock draft disposition study which advocated the full disposition of both the land and the Lock structure.

### Training and Enrichment for FOF Board and Staff

FOF continued its organizational development during Phase 3, working to educate its leadership and team by providing the following opportunities for enrichment:

- A training talk by FOF board members John Koepke and Melissa Olson (6/21/2021)

- A training talk by FOF board member Angela Two Stars (6/9/2021)
- Organized trip to the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community's Wacipi (Pow Wow) (8/21/2021)
- Attendance at the 2021 American Indian Tourism Conference, an annual event of the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association

Engineers in 2022. The initial conveyance is perceived to be an interim state, with the final ownership and stewardship of the site to be informed by engagement outcomes.

### Phase 3 Outcomes

Phase 3 was completed at the end of 2021. Key outcomes will be identified and reported in early 2022.

### Additional Engagement

In addition to meetings and events, FOF advanced awareness about the project through the following activities:

- Funded curriculum development and hosted free Graphic Recording Workshop for BIPOC artists
- Provided financial support to the National Park Service and Mississippi Park Connection to fund ranger operations at the Lock and arts programming to activate the riverfront
- Challenged the public to learn about the site's Indigenous history with 'I knew that!' and 'That's new to me!' activities at public events
- Collected public comments about the future of the site at public events
- Maintained website, social media, newsletter and print media communication
- Developed and distributed branded collateral to raise awareness for the project

### Formalization of Partnership

FOF, NACDI, the City of Minneapolis, and the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board seek to formalize their partnership and begin negotiating conveyance with the U.S. Army Corps of





**The National Park Service operates a visitor center at the Upper Lock. Ranger-led tours were offered daily at 11am and 2pm during the 2021 summer season.**

Photo Credit: Bethany Birnie | Mississippi Park Connection

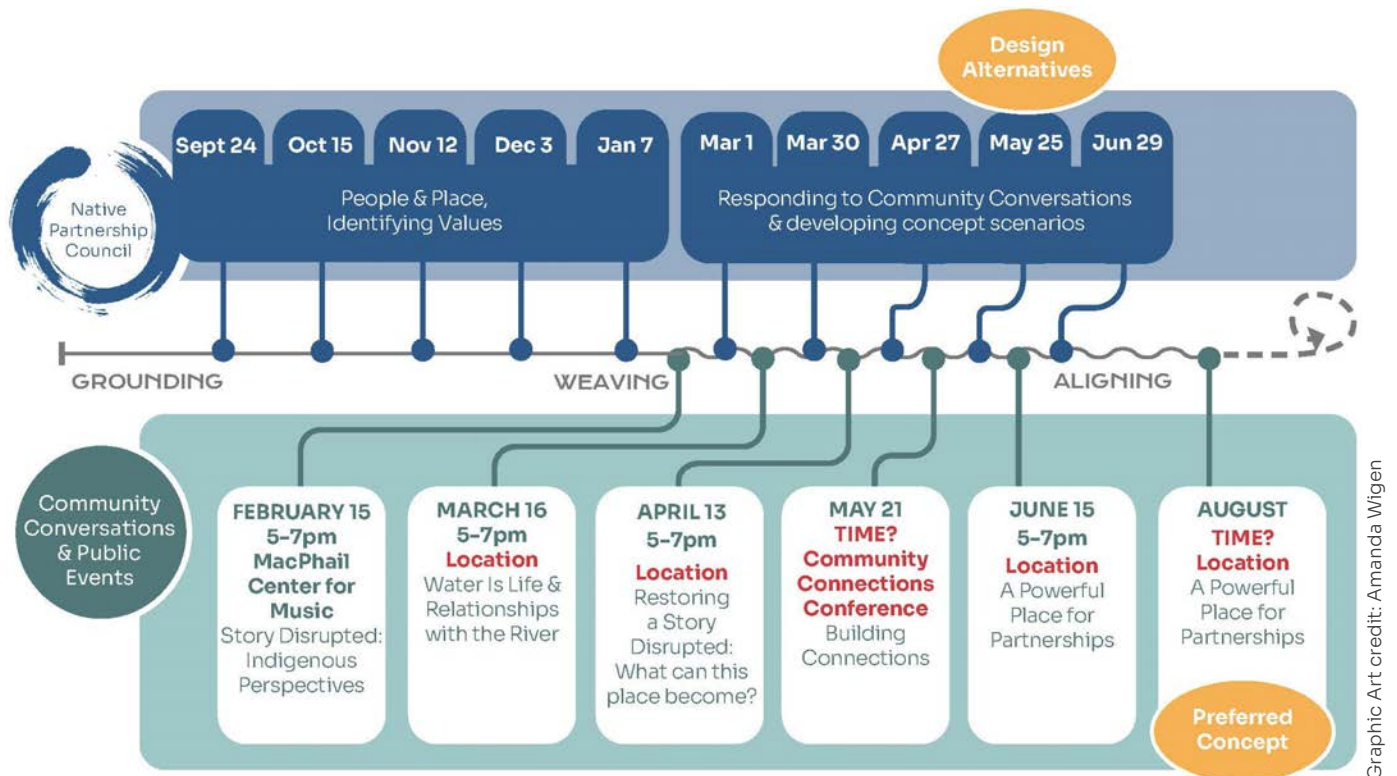




*Dancer at Water Works Park Grand Opening in 2021, near the celebrated restaurant, Owámni, by the Sioux Chef, Sean Sherman and Dana Thompson. Water Works Park abuts the site of The Falls Initiative at the Upper Lock. Owámni is a nationally acclaimed restaurant rooted in indigenous food systems and cuisine.*

Photo Credit: Minneapolis Parks Foundation.





Phases 4 - 6 of the engagement process will weave together Native Partnership Council meetings and “Community Conversations,” envisioned as large public meetings. At these events, stakeholders will have opportunities to learn from panels of speakers as well as respond through interactive engagement in an open house setting.

## PHASE 4:

### ENGAGE (JANUARY - MAY 2022)

Phase 4 features an intensive period of public conversation informed by, and interwoven with, the groundwork and priorities laid out by the Native Partnership Council. Design alternatives will be developed toward the end of this phase and shared at the 2022 Community Connections Conference..

In Phase 4, we will seek to establish a positive feedback loop between the Native Partnership Council and other key audiences, with the goal of moving toward alignment and decision-making about site programming and design.

The public will also be kept apprised of progress as

negotiations begin with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to shepherd the transfer of the site from federal to local control, per Congressional direction.

#### Native Partnership Council Themes Leading into Phase 4

In the four meetings preceding the kickoff of Phase 4, the Native Partnership Council affirmed four key themes:

- The River is a Spirit / *Mni Wiconi* (Water is Life)
- A Place of Connection
- A Place of Power
- A Place to Restore a Story Disrupted

These themes will underlie the engagement in Phases 4-6, and will emerge throughout Community Conversations.

#### How to Engage

Phase 4 engagement will include both in person and digital engagement opportunities.

Digital resources will be available on the project website, at [www.thefalls.org](http://www.thefalls.org), and will include information about the project, specific information about how to engage, summaries of what we’ve heard to date, and access to active surveys or other interactive media.

#### Community Conversations

In person engagement in Phase 4 will be in the form of a compelling series of Community Conversations.

Community Conversations will be large public meetings that take place in two parts: first, attendees will have an

opportunity to relax, listen, and learn from an expert speaker or panel. Then, participants will enjoy refreshments in an open house setting while interacting with the engagement team on a series of key topics related to what they just heard in the talk.

Community Conversations will include both Native and non-Native speakers and will touch on the following key topics:

- Indigenous perspectives: why are they central to this process?
- Restorative planning: how can we be good stewards of the environment?
- Public use and access: how will this place be activated?
- Connectivity: how will blue, green and gray connections serve the site?
- Economic viability: how will this place sustain itself and contribute to broader economic development goals?

Information about speakers, topics, dates, and venues will be posted on the project website at [www.thefalls.com](http://www.thefalls.com) as they are finalized.

Venues will be selected with geographic diversity in mind.

### Objectives

1) *Educate and engage key audiences* on topics that will lead to decision-making about programming and design. To do so, we will:

- Share outcomes from Phases 1-3 with the public
- Host engagement events that include both learning opportunities and opportunities for input
- Begin visualizing principles and values

2) *Increase transparency and expand the reach of our engagement process* through effective documentation. To do so, we will:

- Richly document all engagement activities so that content can be shared as photo and video content on social media, print media, and on the project website
- Continue to utilize graphic recording as a method to document Native Partnership Council meetings and Community Conversations
- Support and encourage conversations about the Falls Initiative to be hosted by others, and be prepared to provide informational materials and documentation strategies to capture outcomes

3) *Create, and Solicit Input on, Design Alternatives* that reflect alignment between the Native Partnership Council and Phase 4 public input. To do so, we will:

- Share engagement outcomes with the public
- Research the site, its context, its ecology, and its history for the purposes of informing site design and planning.
- Validate initial concept design alternatives with the Native Partnership Council, key technical advisors and stakeholders
- Solicit public input on concept design alternatives

4) *Explore collective impact* by learning how the Falls relates to a larger thematic and geographic context. To do so, we will:

- Engage with other projects amplifying Native voices
- Conduct outreach to similar projects and initiatives

taking shape across the nation

- Engage with other projects located on the Mississippi River
- Share what we learn with the public

## PHASE 5: ALIGN (JUNE - AUGUST 2022)

During Phase 5, the design team will begin to develop initial concept design alternatives.

Concepts will be shared and evolved with the Native Partnership Council and with technical advisors and key stakeholders to refine and validate proposed alternatives in preparation for larger public meetings.

Validated concept alternatives will then be presented to the public on the project website and in a large, interactive public meeting.

### How to Engage

Engagement in Phase 5 will be both digital and in-person. It will consist of focused outreach as a preferred concept takes shape, and a large public meeting to reveal the plan and share next steps. The preferred concept will also be presented on the project website for public comment.

Summaries of input and guidance collected in Phase 4, from both the Native Partnership Council and Community Conversations, will be shared on the project website and summarized in the team's Phase 5 public outreach. In particular, the team will prepare a series of narratives and visuals that explore identified areas of alignment for public review and comment.





Minneapolis Water Taxi began serving the Upper Mississippi River in 2017 from Boom Island, less than a mile upriver from the Upper Lock. Public docks at Boom Island, the Sample Room, Nicollet Island, and other destinations are emerging as ways for the community to move to and from the Central Riverfront by boat.





Christopher Sticha | Friends of the Falls

Native wildflowers like these marigolds growing near the river's edge near the Lock, and being visited by a bee, hint at a future in which shoreline abutting the living river could be nurtured and restored.

Information about engagement opportunities and the event will be posted on the project website.

### Objectives

1) *Develop a Preferred Concept* that reflects alignment between the Native Partnership Council and Phase 4 & 5 public input. To do so, we will:

- Share outcomes from Phases 4 with the public
- Distill concept alternatives presented in Phase 4 down to a preferred concept based on input from the community and validation by the Native Partnership Council, key technical advisors and stakeholders
- Share and solicit public input on the preferred concept at a large public event

2) *Continue to expand the reach of our engagement* process through effective documentation and public communications. To

do so, we will once again:

- Richly document all engagement activities so that content can be shared as photo and video content on social media, print media, and on the project website
- Continue to utilize graphic recording as a method to document Native Partnership Council meetings and Community Conversations
- Support and encourage conversations about the Falls Initiative to be hosted by others, and be prepared to provide informational materials and documentation strategies to capture outcomes

The team will additionally:

- Work to advance the story of The Falls Initiative through media, publication, and public relations strategies

### PHASE 6:

#### RESPOND (SEPTEMBER 2022 - MARCH 2023)

During Phase 6, based on input from the Native Partnership Council and community events, technical advisors, and stakeholders on the preferred concept presented in Phase 5, the design consulting team will develop the design of a Consensus Plan to a schematic design level of detail.

The Consensus Plan will include site design as well as a comprehensive project description, drawing together all previous input.

Phase 6 will include focused outreach necessary to inform the development of the Consensus Plan, including meetings with the Native Partnership Council, outreach to neighborhood organizations and community leaders, and input from technical advisors and partner organizations.

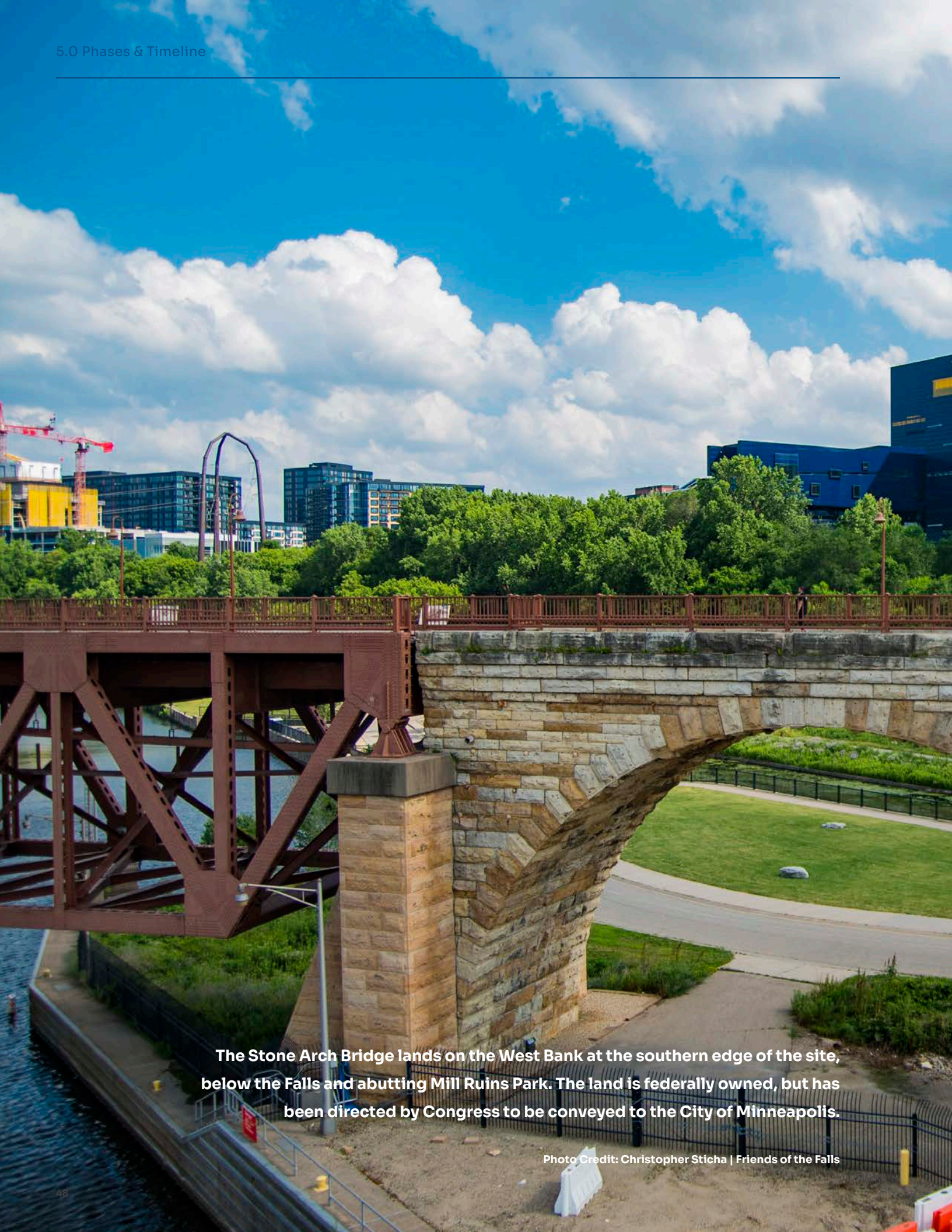




Along the shoreline above the Falls, on the North side of the Upper Lock, accretive land has formed along the urban edge. However, the public is prevented from getting to the water by a tall iron fence (hidden by foliage from this view).

Photo Credit: Christopher Sticha | Friends of the Falls





**The Stone Arch Bridge lands on the West Bank at the southern edge of the site, below the Falls and abutting Mill Ruins Park. The land is federally owned, but has been directed by Congress to be conveyed to the City of Minneapolis.**

Photo Credit: Christopher Sticha | Friends of the Falls



The Consensus Plan will be available for review and comment on the project website.

### How to Engage

Engagement in Phase 6 will be both digital and in-person. It will consist of focused outreach as the Consensus Plan develops, and online engagement to solicit public comment and share next steps.

### Objectives

1) *Develop the Consensus Plan to a Schematic Design level of detail* based on feedback on concept alternatives in Phase 4, and feedback on a preferred concept in Phase 5. To do so, we will:

- Share outcomes from Phases 4 and 5, and identified

consensus themes, with the public

- Conduct outreach to stakeholders to facilitate the design team’s development of the Consensus Plan, answer questions, and keep stakeholders apprised of progress.
- Share the Consensus Plan and inform the public about next steps.

2) *Create and share the unique story* of the process and the plan  
To do so, we will:

- Find and share the stories that have been captured with photos, media, and illustrative graphics throughout the process.

The team will additionally continue to:

- Work to advance the story of The Falls Initiative and the unique contribution of the Native Partnership Council through media, publication, and public relations strategies.

### A LIVING DOCUMENT

The City’s Core Principles of Community Engagement includes a principle of responsiveness of the engagement process to public input. Therefore, we consider The Falls Initiative Community Engagement Plan to be a living and evolving document.

Up to date information about community engagement will always be available at [www.thefalls.org](http://www.thefalls.org).

The screenshot shows the website for Friends of the Falls. The header includes the logo and navigation links: ABOUT, ENGAGE, NEWS, CONTACT, FRIENDS OF THE FALLS, and a language selector. The main banner features a large image of the Upper Lock with the text 'The Falls Initiative' and 'JOIN THE CONVERSATION TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF THE UPPER LOCK'. Below the banner is a timeline with five phases:

2020	2021	JAN-JUL 2022	AUG-DEC 2022	JAN - MAR 2023
Connect	Grounding	Engage	Align	Respond

Information about opportunities to engage is available at [www.thefalls.org](http://www.thefalls.org).

## Consensus Model

### NATIVE PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

Indigenous people view both themselves and nature as part of an extended ecological family that shares ancestry and origins. It is an awareness that life in any environment is viable only when humans view the life surrounding them as kin. The kin, or relatives, include all the natural elements of an ecosystem.

Turning to natural law and sacred law, some Indigenous peoples equate their own laws with the laws of the natural world and so describe their law as “natural law.” All Indigenous peoples believe that their laws come from the Creator, and therefore consider them to be sacred.

#### We Abide By The Four Laws of Nature

The universe you live in right now, the planet that is revolving around a star and which you are a resident of, and all the processes that happen in this planet are said to be a result of four fundamental laws of nature:

- Gravitation
- Electromagnetism
- Strong Interactions, and
- Weak Interactions

The “Rights of Nature,” which codifies this Indigenous philosophy, has been in the news lately. Alexis Bunten of Bioneers said, “Such rights would include the rights of the rivers to pure water, to flow, to provide habitat for river species, and other rights essential to the health and well-being of these ecosystems.”

Indigenous people can speak and should speak for those that cannot speak for themselves (the four legged, the fish, the winged)

and are considered the stewards of the river.

#### Finding Consensus in the Traditional Way

Consensus means a group or community arrives at an outcome by listening to the opinions and concerns of others. Participants work towards a suitable decision iteratively, through open discussion and sharing.

There is much diversity in traditional systems of Indigenous governance but the principle of consensus was a common foundation. Instead of determining winners and losers, the tribe must come up with a decision that serves the interests of the entire group. Participants make decisions by agreement rather than by majority vote.

A present day example of traditional consensus building is the model currently being utilized by the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Constitution Delegations in the review and realignment of the current Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Constitution. That process includes the following principles and values:

- Every partner voices a position
- All members agree to support the ultimate decision, even when it’s not everyone’s favorite choice. This ensures the buy-in of all members, thus increasing the likelihood of success
- Members strive to make the best decision for the group rather than competing for personal preferences
- All perspectives are taken into account





Ne-Dah-Ness Greene

Engagement alignment will weave together Native Partnership Council priorities and values and the outcomes of broader engagement.

### Consensus of the Native Partnership Council

The facilitator of the Native Partnership Council has designed a traditional process for finding consensus among Native Partnership Council members.

The consensus process will include:

1. Acknowledge Core Dakota principles and values. (*Foundation of decision-making*) (*Education*)
2. Agree on Priorities (*Emerging Themes*). The NPC developed the following priorities to guide the site thus far:
  - The River is a Spirit/Mní Wicóni (Water is Life)
  - A Place of Connection
  - A Place of Power
3. Community Alignment (*Broader engagement*) (*Being a good relative*)
  - A Place to Restore a Story Disrupted
  - Share culture, history, traditions, the use of ceremonies (education)
  - Truth telling and reconciliation (healing)
  - Find common alignments
  - Agreement
4. If there is no agreement, then the process will include the following steps:
  - Identify common areas to build from, realign original agreement, adjust, seek agreement again.
  - Identify the issue where there is no agreement
  - Have the group or individual state why they cannot come to agreement
  - All members will have opportunities to speak to support or not support the opposition

The Native Partnership Council will utilize the consensus process in its steering role.

The engagement team will consult with, and center, the Native Partnership Council throughout the planning and design process. It is the intention of both the NPC and the engagement team to seek alignment between Council guidance and broader public input.

### THE PRINCIPLE OF ALIGNMENT

The engagement team, including FOF and NACDI leadership, the Native Partnership Council



**Each convening of the Native Partnership Council opens with ceremony. Here, President Shelley Buck of Prairie Island Indian Community tears a leaf of sage in preparation for smudging. In circle, the Partnership Council is working to define essential underlying values to guide the engagement process.**

Photo Credit: Ne-Dah-Ness Greene





Ne-Dah-Ness Greene

*Carrie Day Aspinwall facilitates a convening of the Native Partnership Council near the Riverfront on December 5, 2021.*

facilitator, City of Minneapolis staff, and the design consulting team, met during Phase 3 to design a process of alignment between the Native Partnership Council and the broader public.

### Engaging Native Partners in the Right Way

Because of the principle of inherent sovereignty, and because Tribal Nations typically engage at a nation-to-nation level, not nation-to-nonprofit or nation-to-municipality, the team and the City needed to create a framework in which Tribal Nations and Indigenous people are consulted in a way that is distinctly different from standard stakeholder engagement.

The creation of the Native **Partnership Council** (rather than,

for instance, the Native **Advisory Committee**), was intentional and meaningful in that it acknowledges the unique status of the Tribes as partners who are central and integral to shaping the process.

The Native Partnership Council is a place where elected Tribal officials, medicine people, and cultural luminaries can come to the table as leaders to guide the broader engagement and establish a framework that acknowledges and centers Indigenous worldview and values in the process. The Native Partnership Council was formed in consultation with Tribal leadership and reflects the value of approaching Indigenous people as partners and leaders in making decisions about the land and water that they have been stewards of for generations.

### The Need for Engagement Alignment

The unique role of the Native Partnership Council is embedded in a process that includes broad-based community engagement, wherein the team will be continuing its outreach and soliciting input in the spirit of the City of Minneapolis' Core Principles of Community Engagement.

Public meetings, online engagement, and outreach to key partners has been part of the process since the beginning, and that outreach will grow in Phases 4, 5, and 6. Public engagement will include discussions pertaining to the environment, transportation, tourism, parks and recreation, heritage, and more. Engagement alignment is

the process by which the team will bridge and weave together topics of significance to the broader public with the work and guidance of the Native Partnership Council.

### Methods of Alignment

The team will work with the Native Partnership Council to:

- Educate the broader public on Indigenous perspectives on key topics
- Deeply understand the missing history of Owámniyomni, the place, and the River
- Identify points of alignment between the broader public engagement and NPC in order to find a consensus path forward for site design and planning

This engagement alignment framework will serve as a bridge for the engagement team to process outcomes and share information between the Native Partnership Council and the large public meetings, and will be in place throughout the final three phases of engagement.

### TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Falls Initiative is situated in a complex context that blends municipal, state, and federal infrastructures, land ownership, and jurisdictions. To navigate this, the project will be supported by a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The project team is committed to bringing technical stakeholders to the table as engagement and design proceed.

The TAC will be formed upon approval of the Falls Initiative

Community Engagement Plan. It will be comprised of planning and public works staff from the City of Minneapolis & Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, the National Park Service and Mississippi Park Connection, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and other agencies to be determined who provide technical input on issues including design, environmental, engineering, construction and operation of the Project during design and engineering.

Technical Advisory Committee members will review technical documents and provide technical assistance to the Native Partnership Council and the project team.