Background

The idea of a connection over the Mississippi River has been in discussion for at least 25 years, and has been noted in Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, City of Minneapolis, and Hennepin County plans. A proposed bridge would be in the Above the Falls Regional Park and look to provide greater and more equitable connectivity to regional trails, amenities, open space, and retail corridors.

Throughout the fall of 2023, several engagement events were held to continue to develop community visioning. The current phase of engagement, Phase 2, shared what was learned throughout Phase 1 and gathered input on the project goals and community priorities for the bridge and areas on either end of the river through narrative and visioning exercises.

Timeline

Community Engagement Timeline

The success of the Above the Falls Feasibility Study is highly dependent on integrating the community’s voice in the process. Engagement will take place across three phases.

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<th>PHASE 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>Community Visioning</td>
<td>Conceptual Design</td>
<td>Recommendations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 2023</td>
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Project Goals

Project goals were developed throughout engagement during Phase 1, and incorporated into Phase 2 engagement activities and community feedback opportunities.

**SAFETY**
Make it comfortable for people walking, biking, and rolling

**GATHERING**
Create spaces for people to gather

**ENVIRONMENT**
Consider the impact of past city planning decisions and environmental injustices

**CONNECTION**
Promote connections to the environment and river

**ARTS & CULTURE**
Celebrate the history and culture of communities on both sides of the river

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**Recent Engagement Events**

**Open Houses**
- January 29, 2024
  - Broken Clock Brewery
- January 30, 2024
  - Farview Park Recreation Center

**Site Tours**
- February 3, 2024
  - The Overlook at 26th Avenue N
  - 1720 Marshall Street NE

**Neighborhood Meetings**
- October 2023 - February 2024
  - Bottineau Neighborhood Organization
  - Hawthorn Neighborhood Organization
  - Great Northern Greenway Task Force
  - Minneapolis Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committees
  - Northside Residents Redevelopment Council
  - Sheridan Neighborhood Organization

Overall, the project team engaged with about 115 people in person.
What We Heard: Visioning & Storytelling

The main activity during Phase 2 was a visioning activity, which asked participants to describe where treatments from the community-led goals should be along the bridge and at both landing sites.

Participants most consistently envisioned environmental treatments throughout the visioning exercise both on the bridge structure itself and on both sides of the river.

Participants most often desired safety elements on the bridge, and desired safe connections on the west landing site.

Arts and culture was heavily concentrated along the bridge and featured more on the west landing site.

Gathering, similarly to arts and culture treatments, was consistently envisioned on the bridge. Participants desire gathering spaces nearly equally on both sides of the river.

Participants envisioned strategic multi-modal connections across the bridge, and connections to local and regional trails on either side of the river. This was the most applied feature by participants in this exercise.

A narrative activity was used to understand community stories and individual narratives about the bridge and surrounding areas. Through storytelling, participants were able to share their unique vision for the site and describe important features and characteristics. The word clouds below represent responses to the narrative questions.

I care most about...

Arts and culture mean...

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Nature</th>
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<td>Serenity</td>
<td>Overlook</td>
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<td>Culture</td>
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<td>Water</td>
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<td>Conservation</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Place</td>
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<td>People</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brilliance</td>
<td>Expressing</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
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What We Heard: Treatments & Precedents

At the open houses, participants were asked to identify preferred treatments and characteristics related to each goal by placing dots or written comments on boards. Participant feedback for each goal is summarized below.

**Environment**

People resonated with elements of conservation, enhanced habitat development, educational programming and family-friendly activities on the water.

**Safety**

A well-lit, covered bridge featuring railings and lighting was often described by participants. Regular and seasonal maintenance was also favored. Minimizing conflicts between bicyclists and pedestrians.

**Arts & Culture**

Participants favored arts, harmony with the landscape, a dedicated plaza for local programming, highlighting local foods, and interactive play equipment.

**Gathering**

Participants resonated with interactive plaza space, parks, and food trucks. Ample seating, benches, grass or lawn-covered areas, and shade was consistently favored by participants.

**Connections**

Participants desire separated, paved, curved paths. Many comments highlighted the opportunity to close existing trail gaps not only east-west, but also north-south.

**Additional Feedback**

Community feedback was also collected through participants drawing on various maps and layouts to share their feedback, visions, and ideas for the bridge. Selected comments are available below.

- Work with Metro Transit for connectivity!
- A concern is gentrification.
- Our trail gaps are important to get resolved.
- Being able to make connections to schools is vital.
- Keep the trees.
- Tout benefits of additional bike parking and river access.
- Make a north-south connection.
- Have multiple pathways at approaches. Ramps are necessary but added stairways give options.
- Lots of community gardens. Important for the north side.
Site Tours: Treatments & Precedents

Site tours for the landing sites of the bridge were held to facilitate guided conversations. Participants provided written and verbal feedback, connecting elements of the bridge landing sites to desired treatments. Selected comments are available below.

- Strong support for the bridge to enhance connections to local destinations, trails and corridors.
- Participants desire art in harmony with natural areas and structures already present on the site.
- Strong support for Indigenous styles, voices, and artists to be uplifted.
- Conserving the river, trees, and natural bluffs was important for participants.
- Participants highlighted educational and water-based activities.
- Space to rest and enjoy the scenery on both sides of the river was highlighted by participants.

Next Steps

- March Open House to present bridge concepts and receive community feedback.
- Feasibility Study ends in spring 2024, and will be publicly available.

Contact & More Info

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