Bohemian Flats Master Plan

Prepared by:
Alex Boyce
Stephanie Hatten
Carol Hejl
Matthew Unzeitig

301 19th Ave S., Minneapolis, MN 55455
# Table of Contents

Problem Statement.................................................................................................3  
Vision Statement..................................................................................................4  
Introduction..........................................................................................................5  
What Needs to be Understood About this Place?.............................................7  
Site Through Time...............................................................................................8  
History of the Site...............................................................................................9  
Present Uses and History..................................................................................12  
Site Inventory and Analysis..............................................................................16  
Site Opportunities and Constraints.................................................................24  
Meeting Community Needs for Today and the Future.................................26  
Goals...................................................................................................................31  
Recommendations...............................................................................................36  
Example Site Plans.............................................................................................39  
Conclusion...........................................................................................................41  
Appendix...............................................................................................................42
Problem Statement

Despite being located in the heart of Minneapolis and adjacent to a traditionally underserved community, Bohemian Flats is an underutilized public resource. The site has never been planned or programmed to its full potential, and is disconnected from its physical, social, and historical contexts. In order to reach its full potential, surrounding communities and stakeholders must be engaged in an innovative way to create a park that is a valued resource for all.
**Vision Statement**

To create an adaptable masterplan and programming for Bohemian Flats that will connect and interpret the unique cultural, environmental, and historic context of the site for current and future park users.
Introduction

The Bohemian Flats is a large park, approximately 17 acres, on the Mississippi River about 1 mile from downtown Minneapolis, MN. It is located near river level, below the bluffs of the West Bank of the University of Minnesota and near the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood. The site has minimal recreational opportunities, especially for being so large and close to downtown. There currently exists some portable bathrooms, a paved path, and a boat launch for river tours. The rest of the site is mowed turf grass with beautiful views of the surrounding bluffs. The potential for improvement to this large, moderately sloped, grassy field on the river is immense.

The Bohemian Flats served as a homestead for immigrants upon their first arrival to Minneapolis. Is the story of this place simply a quaint artifact of the City’s river past? Or, is it a cautionary tale about the use of power to displace the powerless in an unjust manner for financial gain?

“The site has had a variety of uses, though none have lived up to the potential of its location. The creation of a river landing at Bohemian Flats did not have much of an impact on the city of Minneapolis. It was an underutilized spot storing coal, until the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board bought it and turned it into a park. Even then, though, it has been relatively underutilized, perhaps owing to its relative isolation below the bluffs and the university campus, perhaps due simply to other more pressing park needs. We need to know stories of how humans have shaped the land and water that have made the Mississippi a dynamic landscape. We need to know stories that illustrate what the river has meant to diverse people, and how those meanings have been contested and altered over time.”

Patrick Nunnally, Telling River Stories, The Mississippi River runs through all of us
Master planning is vital to the long term success of a project of this magnitude. For Bohemian Flats Park to fully serve stakeholder groups and other potential park users—University students, riverside bike, trail, and nature enthusiasts, residents of Cedar-Riverside, metro area residents, tourists, etc.—the park must be the subject of a complete re-envisioning process that starts “from the ground up”. Many improvements could be made without much investment, but substantial capital investment for infrastructure, programming, maintenance and marketing may be warranted, given the potential of the site.

At the beginning of the master planning process, the project team compiled background information, stakeholder interactions, brainstorming sessions, and feasibility studies. As the plan is being formed, this information is used to determine possible routes forward. Master planning should be an iterative process, with solicitation of feedback from stakeholders and readjustment of plans as often as practical. A quality master plan results from thoughtful analysis and proper weighting of all stakeholder and project owner requirements. It also gives plenty of attention to future needs and leaves sufficient flexibility for changing conditions and unknowns.

Three questions are critical in the creation of a successful master plan:
- What needs to be understood about this place?
- How can people be engaged to create a park that represents the neighboring communities and City of Minneapolis as a whole?
- How can we ensure the plan meets the needs of the community today and in the future?
What Needs to be Understood About this Place?

The Bohemian Flats has a rich, yet checkered, past. The Flats were transformed by European settlers in the mid to late 1800’s. As settlers moved into the area which was to become Minneapolis, they drove out Native Americans and began to develop areas atop the bluffs. As land prices in the area rose, the Bohemian Flats became a refuge for poor immigrants who could only afford to build homes along the flood prone Flats.

Journalists sometimes romanticized the Bohemian Flats as being an eclectic enclave of vibrant immigrants. In actuality, poverty was the norm, and many would classify the Flats as a slum. Many new immigrant workers were dependent on the wages from breweries, distilleries, and factories that were located in close proximity to the flats. However, use as a residential neighborhood only lasted approximately 60 years. In the 1930s the area was largely cleared to build a barge landing facility. Re-development ultimately removed the vast majority of residents.

This rich history has been lost to most Minnesotans. The site could tell the stories of hard working immigrants, exploitation of workers, or the fight of many residents to receive fair treatment during the period of industrial development. These stories have commonalities with many areas throughout Minnesota and the nation during this period. The underutilized site has potential to bring history back to light in an interactive way that could also enhance the Park and attract visitors. By improving basic facilities, more visitors could be accommodated to experience the history of the people, industry, and Mississippi River. By connecting the site to the surrounding communities and providing new uses, Bohemian Flats can become a destination for new visitors and groups to come together, tell their stories, relax, and recreate.
Site Through Time

Pre-European Settlement

Post Glacial Retreat -
A mix of Oak, Maple, Aspen, and Elm occurred along the River

Post European Settlement

1847 - Choctaw Ferry opens at the Bohemian Flats

1900's - Last known permanent residents at Bohemian Flats

1940's - Coal storage and shipping yard operations begin on site

1980's - Coal storage and shipping yard operations close

2000's - Bohemian Flats used for river boats and storage from 1939 bridge collapse

Post Evictions

1600's - First European explorers enter the midwest

1866-1874 - Construction of breweries at Bohemian Flats

1915 - First evictions of residents of the Flats under eminent domain

1960's - Final evictions of residents of the Bohemian Flats

1980's - West River Parkway constructed; Bohemian Flats now a park

Post Industrial

Present Day - Bohemian Flats is an unmonumented and unplanned park

Annual Occurrence -
Rivers in the Mississippi River water levels in spring months flooded homes and buildings in the Bohemian Flats every year while the Flats were inhabited.
**History of the Site**

**Geology and Ecology**
The area surrounding Bohemian Flats is composed of gently dipping sedimentary rock forming a plateau. The Mississippi River and its tributaries have eroded this plateau extensively through time. The Bohemian Flats site is located within the Upper Mississippi River Basin watershed of the Mississippi River and the floodplain in this basin varies from 1 to 3 miles in width. However, the Flats has a very narrow floodplain since it is located in the gorge. Although the river is much “cleaner” than it has been in recent decades, water quality is still a priority concern in regards to potential use.

As far back as 10,000 years, much of the land near Bohemian Flats was dominated by oak, maple, elm, and ash trees (Forsberg, 2003).

**Pre-European settlement**
The Pre-European history of Bohemian Flats dates back over 12,000 years when the last glaciers retreated (Forsberg, 2003). Although there is little physical evidence that Native Americans such as the Dakota occupied land in Minnesota, several artifacts have been discovered by amateur collectors, indicating Native American occupation of the area (Forsberg, 2003).

**European settlement**
Europeans came to the Midwest in the mid-1600s. With them they carried European values, lifestyles, ideas, technologies, and diseases (Anfinson, 2003). By 1907, Minneapolis, St. Paul, and other river cities built hundreds of dams, improved safety on hundreds of miles of the riverbank, and had plans to build two new locks and dams (Anfinson, 2003). Further, waterpower from St. Anthony Falls provided energy for lumber flour, and other industries, which fueled the growth of the surrounding areas.

Populations flourished with these improvements and attracted residents to the area. Immigrants from all over the world settled in Minneapolis hoping to make a better life and pursue the American Dream. One place that the immigrants with the least resources settled was along the Mississippi floodplain in the Bohemian Flats. These new immigrants developed the land, fought to keep it, and were ultimately evicted. The settlement of Bohemian Flats has a unique history and provides interesting stories about the daily lives of the families that lived on the Flats along the Mississippi.
The earliest known settlers on the Bohemian Flats were a Danish couple in the 1860s (Buell, 2015). Soon after they settled, immigrants from Ireland, Poland, Germany, Slovakia, Bohemia, and Sweden began to call Bohemian Flats their home (Buell, 2015). The population of the Flats grew to over 1,000 residents at its height (Hines, 2014). Due to proximity and affordability, settling on the Flats was an advantage to the immigrants who worked at the nearby mills and breweries. Residents were also able to retrieve lumber that fell into the river to build their homes or to sell for additional income (Buell, 2015).

**Industrial -**

Just downstream from the Bohemian Flats was a ferry service and landing site called Cheever’s Landing. This operated from 1847 until 1889 when construction of the Franklin Avenue Bridge was completed and service was discontinued. Steamboats could access the Flats during times of high water, which made certain rocky rapids passable. The financial panic of 1857 and the United States Civil War virtually ended steamboat traffic on the Mississippi and to the Flats. After the War, railroad traffic become the primary mode of shipping.

The Bohemian Flats was also known as the Brewery Flats when the Kraenzlein and Miller (later known as Heinrich) Brewery was built into the bluff at the south end and the Zahler Brewery, to become the Noerenberg Brewery, was built into the cliffs at the north end. The Brewery complex contained outbuildings on the lower terrace, including warehouses, barns, and a brick dwelling for the head brewer. In 1891 these two brewers joined with others to found the Minneapolis Brewing and Malting Company. Then they built the Grain Belt Brewery in Northeast Minneapolis, which became a major local industry. Twelve years later, owners demolished the Brewery Flats breweries. Archaeological excavations in 1983 and 1989 uncovered extensive remains of the brewery. The eastern part of the site is now buried beneath West River Parkway. Cooling caves from the Noerenberg brewery can still be found in the sandstone bluffs.
Residential -
The Flats had three main streets where most of the residential, commercial, and religious institutions were located. Mill Street was furthest from the river, then Cooper Street, and finally Wood Street, nearest the river (Buell). Rent varied depending on the proximity to the River. Rents on Mill Street were roughly $25 per year and rents on Wood Street were about $15 per year, due to the higher threat of flooding (Buell, 2015). The majority of these residents earned money for their rent by hiking up the cliff to work at the nearby lumber and flour mills (Delegard, 2013). Furthermore, women and young children supplemented income with vegetable gardens that were nourished by the annual floods (Delegard).

In 1915, Minneapolis began its effort to evict residents of the flats through the use of eminent domain “with the intention of using same in connection with adjoining lands for wharfage and railroad purposes” (Buell, 2015). However, residents believed they had squatters rights and were entitled to their homes (Buell, 2015). In 1921, C.H. Smith, a real-estate operator, purchased the land and continued the process of eviction (Pobuda, et.al, 2008). Residents fought to keep their homes on the Flats; however, their efforts fell short. By 1925, one-fourth of the population was forced to move in order to accommodate the initial stages of development for barges along the flats. (Buell, 2015).

The City of Minneapolis conducted more evictions through the 1930’s and 1940’s to make way for coal storage and oil tanks. The last resident of the Flats remained until 1963 with the construction of the Washington Avenue Bridge; Joseph A. Kieferle had lived there for 50 years (Buell, 2015). By the late 1960s, all remainders of the residential history of the Bohemian Flats had ceased to exist.

In the 1980s, the entire infrastructure associated with the terminal was removed and West River Parkway was extended along the Flats. Prior to construction of the West River Parkway, parking or the storage of dredge spoil occupied the far northern portion of the flats, while the southernmost portion was largely abandoned.
Present Day Uses and History

Recreational-
Currently, the site provides users with a bike path, a walking path, and a garden. Bohemian Flats currently provides limited recreational amenities. This lack of recreational amenities provides a disincentive for recreational enthusiasts to venture down the steep slopes for use of the site.
I-35W collapse and materials storage-
The Bohemian Flats was the depository for the wreckage from the collapsed I-35W bridge of 2007. The debris from the bridge was stored at the Bohemian Flats until 2010. It couldn't be moved before then because it was still considered evidence in lawsuits against the companies involved with the bridge's design, inspections and repairs. Park officials estimated that the wreckage being stored on site cost them as much as $60,000 in lost revenue each year during that time period (Kaszuba, 2008). While the debris was still on-site, the Bohemian Flats was used as a staging area for materials and activities during construction of the new I-35W bridge.

In fact, the MPRB issued a permit in 2015 to store construction materials for the Franklin Avenue bridge on the Bohemian Flats. This use as a storage area serves to underscore the notion that the Flats is underutilized and underappreciated as a public park space.
Public Art-
Bohemian Day was a cultural celebration that began in 2005 and occurred for a few years. Lipa Slovak performers filled the air with their music and dancing at the Bohemian Flats. Bohemian Day was organized by artists and Bohemian Gera Pobuda to celebrate the immigrants who lived in the Bohemian Flats during the first three decades of the 20th century. The organizers wanted to remember the Bohemian Flat’s former residents and to talk about the American immigrant experience in general. According to event organizers, “We don't want this to be another heritage festival. We want to remember the Bohemian Flats and its residents, but we also want to talk about the American immigrant experience in general. We would like to distinguish ourselves as a festival that uses art to interpret immigration and find artists and creative Bohemian types that explore topics such as sense of loss, displacement, adjustment, alienation, creative living, and culture clashes” (Pobuda, et.al, 2008).

In 2012, a landscape art installation called ’Amber Waves’ was grown into the soil of the Bohemian Flats. It stretched for about a half a mile; three rows of wheat provided visual entertainment from the Washington Avenue Bridge and an end-of-season harvest to help provide bread food shelves in the Twin Cities. The installation was cultivated by artist Tom Henry, and was intended to be “The Art that Grows and Gives.” The harvest of the wheat generated 150 pounds of whole wheat flour which produced 250 loaves of wheat bread. This bread was donated to local food shelves.
**Connectivity:**
The Flats are currently accessible via West River Parkway, boat, an informal footpath from the U of MN West Bank, and the paved Mississippi River Trail (MRT). West River Parkway runs from Minnehaha Park in south Minneapolis, through downtown, to Plymouth Avenue North. The site can also be accessed via 22nd Ave South and 4th Street South, however there is no signage to direct people to the site. The parkway is over 7 miles long and provides access to numerous parks and trails, though a portion near the site is currently closed due to a landslide. Bohemian Flats is part of the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byways, a collection of 7 linked park byways in Minneapolis. A small, sandy beach exists on the north end of the site allowing launching access to small watercraft and limited parking for larger watercraft. The footpath from the U of MN is difficult to find and can be muddy and slippery at times. The MRT is a national trail which runs from the headwaters of the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico. Locally, it is walkable and bikeable moving north to downtown Minneapolis from Bohemian Flats or south to multiple parks and the Midtown Greenway.

Bohemian Flats is highly visible to hundreds or thousands of people each day due to its location under the Washington Avenue Bridge on the West Bank of the University of Minnesota. Although this visibility exists, access to the site from campus, the West Bank Green Line LRT station, campus bus stops, and the surrounding neighborhoods is far from straightforward and requires walking substantial distances out of the way or cutting through wooded areas down a treacherous slope.
Site Inventory and Analysis

Topography-
This topographical map displays slopes at 2 foot contours. The steep topography to the west of the site greatly limits pedestrian access. Enhancements, such as ADA accessible ramps or an elevator from the Washington Bridge, would greatly improve access. In addition the site slopes moderately towards the river, requiring grading to provide a flat space for recreational fields or other amenities.
**Land Use**

Bohemian Flats is situated below the West Bank of the University of Minnesota. In order to access the site, residents from the surrounding community must navigate their way through campus. From discussions with the Brian Coyle Center, this barrier may serve as a deterrent for people to visit the site as the University can be an intimidating area to access. Also, retail and other commercial uses may be too far away to serve park goers. This suggests opportunities for temporary retail/commercial during times of high use at the Bohemian Flats.

---

**Bohemian Flats Adjacent Land Uses**

- Single Family Detached
- Single Family Attached
- Multifamily
- Retail and Other Commercial
- Office
- Mixed Use Residential
- Industrial and Utility
- Institutional
- Park, Recreational or Preserve
- Major Highway
- Railway
- Undeveloped
- Bohemian Flats Site
Parks within one mile of Bohemian Flats-
This map was created to show nearby parks, large community gardens, and important areas of open space. The study of nearby amenities will help inform possibilities for Bohemian Flats.

Parks and Featured Amenities within 1 Mile of the Bohemian Flats

- Minneapolis Parks Within 1 Mile Radius
- 1 Mile Buffer
- Bohemian Flats Site

Data Source: Hennepin County GIS Open Data; Parks Package
Racially Diverse Areas

The purpose of this map is to show concentration of racial minorities in the neighborhoods surrounding the Bohemian Flats. This information is valuable when designing community engagement strategies. The map shows the high level of concentrated diversity surrounding the site and the need to think creatively about engagement. Different groups that could be engaged are Somali Americans from Cedar Riverside, American Indians from Ventura Village, and African Americans.
Commuting Distances –

The majority of people are generally willing to walk up to 0.5 miles to access a park on a regular basis. It has also been shown that people are willing to drive up to seven miles to access a park, given the proper amenities. The seven mile radius around Bohemian Flats contains a very large population, suggesting great potential for use.

Parks and Featured Amenities within 1 Mile of the Bohemian Flats

2012 National Survey of Bicyclist and Pedestrian Attitudes and Behavior

California DOT (1979). BART’s First Five Years; Transportation and Travel Impacts (DOT-P-30-79-I).

Bohemian Flats
7 Mile Car/Bike Distance

2012 National Survey of Bicyclist and Pedestrian Attitudes and Behavior

California DOT (1979). BART’s First Five Years; Transportation and Travel Impacts (DOT-P-30-79-I).
**Area Access Map –**
There is great walking, vehicle, and bike access from the north and south into the site. Access from the west is limited. A significant number of potential users from the University and adjacent neighborhoods have no straightforward and only very indirect access to the site. To remedy this, future connection enhancements are suggested. Foot traffic from the west is the highest priority.
Nearby Public Utilities Map –
There are two public utility corridors that intersect the site. A water line provides fire protection and possible future water access. A storm sewer tunnel passes through the site from the hill above and empties directly into the Mississippi River.
Ecological surface features-
Site vegetation consists of mowed grass, shrubs, and trees, with the majority of trees clustered near the center of the site. As the vast majority of the site has no trees, there is a lack of shade and no protection from wind. The site is not ecologically vibrant and has very little natural physical connection to the Mississippi River. Slope is moderate but consistent from West River Parkway down to the river, with some flat areas. The banks up to the bluffs are nearly vertical and form a natural barrier to site access.

Cultural and Man-Made Features-
The Bohemian Flats site is currently being used as a public park. Paradise Charter Cruises maintains a small trailer and boat docks for the operation of their business. Sheet pile walls were built between the Mississippi River and the park, resulting in an artificial interface between land and water. A fence runs the length of the wall next to concrete walking paths. One small pavilion provides shade for park users. lot. A large parking lot allows users to park their car for a fee. Storm sewer, water lines, and electricity are present though no sanitary sewer facilities exist on site.

Aesthetic factors-
From the Washington Avenue Bridge, impressive views of the Mississippi River and surrounding riverbank natural areas and parks can be seen. While on-site, many city features such as roads and buildings are hidden from view and natural features dominate. The buildings that can be seen from the Flats sit atop steep limestone bluffs, adding to the power of their architecture. Overall, Bohemian Flats has the potential to be among Minneapolis’ most beautiful parks.
Site Opportunities and Constraints

There are extensive views to the site from the Washington Avenue Bridge, as well as the Northern Pacific Bridge. The site is highly visible from these locations, but completely hidden from atop the bluffs. The slopes immediately adjacent to the site are very steep and erodible as evidenced by the landslide in the summer of 2014. The site itself is relatively flat, but moderately sloped toward the river, and could be host to many activities like organized sports and concerts. The sub-soil of the site is contaminated and compacted, which limits the types of vegetation that could be grown. These soil considerations could limit the amount of natural and engineered infrastructure that can be incorporated such as stormwater infiltration or sewer lines. The soils on the southern end of the site are of marginally better quality, but also consist of disturbed fill.

As the dominant vegetation on site is short grass, the Flats are very sunny for most of the day. This lack of shade lends itself to the possibility of harnessing solar energy. The Mississippi River has a relatively high velocity moving past the site, possibly limiting activities such as canoeing and raising safety concerns. Pollutants in the soil must be considered with any project consisting of moving soil or directing water as to not cause these pollutants to enter the Mississippi River.

According to Andrea Arts, Youth Program Manager at the Brian Coyle Center, many people with young children in the Cedar Riverside neighborhood do not use the Bohemian Flats Park on a regular basis. This is due to existing park amenities that are already in the neighborhood, and a desire for their children to stay close to home. The University of Minnesota also creates a social and cultural barrier that many residents are not willing to cross.
Opportunities-
The Bohemian Flats is greatly underutilized and holds significant potential to enrich the area in numerous ways:
- Enhanced ecological and aesthetic quality
- Opportunities to engage and include surrounding, historically underserved communities
- Representation of historical uses
- Opportunities to tell stories of immigrant experiences
- Social connections to existing neighborhoods
- Comfortable place to relax in a naturalized setting
- Organized outings with team-building programming
- Education related to river safety
- Representation of the multicultural nature of the area
- Highlight the river as a Dakota Place and engage other American Indians in planning the site

Constraints-
While the Bohemian Flats offers numerous opportunities for enhancement of the city, constraints may limit the ability to realize some opportunities:
- Soil contamination
- Highly compacted concrete-like layer underneath the topsoil
- Distance and isolation from neighboring areas
- Limited opportunities to provide connections to the site
- Lack of priority among other projects to undertake the park redevelopment
- The Flats lack a natural constituency or champion
- Use of the Flats as a staging area for construction
Meeting Community Needs for Today and the Future

Community Engagement
The quality and quantity of community engagement undertaken for a project is arguably the most important part of the planning and design process, because it allows varying viewpoints and ideas to be incorporated into the final product. Competent planners can create a plan which is technically sound and competent designers can design amazing places, but none of that matters if the plans and designs do not meet the needs of the community. Without effective community engagement, groups with legitimate rights to use the space may end up excluded, underutilized amenities may be implemented, resulting in wasted resources, and/or animosity towards government and business leaders can grow. There are many components which are necessary for an effective engagement plan. Outlined in this plan are some suggestions, which have worked in other places, and could be implemented when planning for greater utilization of the Bohemian Flats.

The Cedar Riverside Neighborhood has been largely disconnected from the University of Minnesota and its resources, with the exception of a few outreach programs and academic studies. Nevertheless, these programs should be consulted and may be valuable starting points in creating an engagement plan. In addition, the University is home to people from all over the country and world, many of whom have no idea that the Bohemian Flats exists. As the Somali population receives much of the attention, it is important to recognize that there are other ethnic populations in the area that should be represented in park master planning efforts.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has developed a Community Engagement Plan (CEP) for development of the Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park Master Plan. This plan could be an appropriate template to use as it is focused on engaging stakeholders for a similar project that is geographically close to Bohemian Flats. This template should be modified to take into account the unique and diverse types of people surrounding the Bohemian Flats.

Other community engagement initiatives include holding meetings in existing community facilities or the park itself, providing food and childcare at community meetings, and partnering with existing community organizations to hold meetings and gather input at already planned neighborhood activities. To facilitate communication between stakeholders, including interpreters and a brief team building exercise at the beginning of each meeting are key. The setting of group norms, respectful behavior expectations, and the communication of how outcomes will be used are also important to keep people invested in the process and working together.
Potential Area Stakeholders

- Paradise Crusie
- West Bank Business Association
- Minnesota Historical Society
- Sherman and Associates
- Brian Coyle Center
- Dar Al-Hijrah Mosque
- Riverside Somali Mall
- Cedar-Riverside Safety Center
- West Bank Community Center
- University of Minnesota
- Bluff Street Park Task Force

Bohemian Flats Stakeholder Analysis
Specific Community Engagement Strategies-

Creation of Project Community and Technical Advisory Committees
The main component of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board’s community engagement plan is the formation of a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) appointed by the Board. To add to this approach, the project team should work with the community to ‘elect’ representatives that span across age groups, gender, demographics, and experiences. The elected CAC should meet regularly and work directly with stakeholder groups to represent community interests throughout the planning process. The CAC would also serve as the main contact for the involved communities. Community engagement should be inclusive, extensive, and integral to every part of the planning process.

The creation of a short-term technical advisory committee (TAC) would be comprised of business leaders, community leaders, students, staff representative of stakeholder organizations, and other interested parties. This committee would work with staff as a voice for the people of the community. They would provide recommendations for site designs that the community feels is most important. In addition, since the TAC is working closely with the community at-large, staff can spend more time on the engineering, programming, and other technical aspects of the project.

Geodesign
Geodesign is an emerging field which uses specialized Geographic Information Science (GIS) applications to envision the future of places in an efficient and collaborative way. According to Carl Stienitz, the leading expert in the field, geodesign “is a set of concepts and methods that are derived from both geography and other spatially oriented sciences, as well as from several of the design professions, including architecture, landscape architecture, urban and regional planning, and civil engineering, among others.” (Stientiz, 2012)

Great potential lies in the use of geodesign for community engagement and input, which is one of many applications of this tool. Once data is in the GIS and the various professions and community has provided their design input and other variables, specialized software allows designs to be modified on-the-fly. This allows designers, leaders, and community members to efficiently and productively collaborate, in real time, on any stage of design with a minimal number of meetings. Geodesign is fully compatible and could be combined with other engagement strategies.
**Community Dinner Meetings**
Bringing a community together for a mixture of work and fun has been shown to produce valuable engagement meetings (Livable Redmond, 2015). Multiple strategies have been used with success. These types of meetings provide ample informal mingling time with community and project leaders, sourcing food from the neighborhood, and providing education on the project or other matters at hand. An additional strategy involves organizing small group discussion with a provided facilitator and note-taker. After discussion, input and feedback can be aggregated and addressed to the larger group by project leaders. This combination of food, fun, and work has shown great success in bringing people together in a meaningful way.

**Collaboration with Existing Events**
Because it can be difficult to implement a single event that caters to diverse stakeholders, staff can engage significant portions of the community by partnering with existing events that are already planned. By merging with these events, the staff do not have to market the event, provide space for the event or ancillary services, and can focus on gathering information and the project itself. Therefore, large events that already bring the community together provide a tremendous opportunity for staff to spread information regarding varying site designs, other planning events, and more.

**Roadshow Presentations**
This concept partners with existing, established meetings at venues that are provided by neighborhood groups, the business community, and others. It is the responsibility of staff involved in the development phase to seek out these meetings, request to attend, and present information on the planning process and project status. Staff solicits feedback from the community regarding site design, preferences, and concerns.

This method can be more effective than traditional engagement strategies as many community members do not feel comfortable attending city meetings, have spare time, or trust the local government. Residents generally feel more comfortable in a group organized by their peers and may be more apt to provide feedback to project staff. As should always be the goal, but especially in this case, staff should be aware of cultural norms and attempt to tailor methods and information presented to the particular community.
**Trusted Advocates**

A trusted advocate is defined as “a member of a specific ethnic, racial, cultural, and/or other underrepresented group who is perceived by other members as trustworthy, approachable, and effective, particularly navigating distance between the group and the majority community” (Transit, More than a Ride, 2013). The trusted advocate model has been recognized nationally as a way to engage underrepresented communities and has been successful in Seattle, Washington, Oakland, California, and Minneapolis, Minnesota. The idea is to designate and work with a member of an underrepresented community to be the lead facilitator for engagement within their community. Trusted advocates are deeply connected within their communities and are better equipped to recognize and work with cultural and language differences.

Trusted advocates help gather and document information and feedback from their communities and report their findings back to planners and who then work together to ensure the voices of the community are heard. The Trusted Advocate model could be particularly useful in engaging underrepresented residents in the Cedar Riverside neighborhood because it would begin to build trust and open the door for long-term engagement. Experience with this model already exists in Minneapolis, adding to its potential benefit for use at Bohemian Flats.
Goals

Connectivity -
Bohemian Flats’ location holds great potential for access from a wide geographic area and by various modes. The streets provide adequate access to the Flats however it is hidden down the bluff and there is not adequate signage to direct people to the site. Installing signage at strategic intersections could draw more motorists and cyclists to the park. Boat access could be improved by constructing public docks, allowing boaters to easily tie off and exit their watercraft. A boat launch could also be constructed if ample parking is provided. With the many amenities on the Mississippi riverfront and the recent reduction in industrial traffic due to the closure of the Upper Saint Anthony Falls Lock in June 2015, a water taxi could be a possibility in the future. Bike access is already good, but signage along the MRT and visibility of the park on trail and park maps could increase visitation by bikers and other modes of transportation.

The greatest potential improvements to connectivity of the Bohemian Flats would be in its walkability from the top of the bluff. As discussed earlier, this would better connect the site to neighborhood residents, the University of Minnesota, and public transit riders. The most effective improvement would be a vertical staircase, ramp, or elevator from the Washington Avenue Bridge. Another option would be to build a staircase or ramp down the face of the bluff. The least expensive option would be construction of a trail that may be longer but follows a flatter path to the bottom. All of these options would require sufficient signage to make the route to the Flats apparent and easy to find.

Environmental-
Water Quality
Due to the high levels of soil contamination and compaction on site, it would be challenging to increase water infiltration, enhance natural hydrologic processes, or install irrigation. During the design of park amenities, the harvest and storage of rainwater falling on and above the site should be integrated to provide for irrigation needs. Some level of soil remediation is likely to be necessary when designing water systems.
Plant Species
Establishment of a more diverse ecosystem, including trees, native species, flowering plants, and edible species is necessary to the long term viability of the park and is consistent with the broader goals of the City of Minneapolis. Vegetation can be used to provide beautiful and comfortable places to have meals, study, and congregate. For instance, benches and tables placed within small groves of trees would provide shade and relief from wind. Establishment of areas of native species could provide educational opportunities, reduction in turf and maintenance requirements, wildlife refuge, and a host of other well-studied ecological benefits. Growing low maintenance flowering plants provides forage for pollinators and aesthetic value to the landscape. From a financial perspective, long term cost savings, mostly through reduced maintenance requirements, eventually offset increased upfront costs.

Potential partnerships with the University of Minnesota could include the horticulture and forestry departments to build a food forest as well as the public affairs and social science departments to study usage by and effects on the local community. Food forests are showing potential as a supplement to the food needs of low income residents. Further study of soil health would be needed before establishment of any plants intended for human consumption.

Due to the potential of petroleum and other industrial impacts on site, establishment of specific, deep-rooted plants and fungi could remediate the soil over time (EPA, 2015).

Soils
As noted previously, the soils on site at the Bohemian Flats are currently contaminated and compacted. Depending upon what designs are carried forward, soil could remain in place under the topsoil cap, be remediated, or be excavated and removed. Ultimately, improving soil conditions will allow for a better environment, and could foster partnerships with the University of Minnesota’s Soil Science and Natural Resource Management departments for the purpose of studying remediation techniques. Further study of the condition of soil impacts is necessary before much design work can begin.

Habitat
Owing to its location along the river the Bohemian Flats used to provide shelter for a variety of animal and plant life. Increasing the biodiversity of plant material at the Bohemian Flats would better provide food and shelter for a variety of species. This is an important goal for the site, especially due to its location along the Mississippi Flyway, the largest bird migratory path in North America. It is also important to provide pollinator habitat when possible due to the recent decline in bees and other pollinators to ensure a healthy ecosystem on site and beyond.
Societal-Active Uses
The Bohemian Flats Park has the potential to provide a host site for a number of active recreational uses. Sports have the ability to connect people across a variety of cultures, demographics, and backgrounds through the power of play. The site is situated in a prime area to encourage active play, being in close proximity to the densely populated Cedar Riverside neighborhood and the University of Minnesota, as well as a relative lack of sizeable sports fields nearby. Such active uses could include: biking, canoeing or kayaking, fishing, swimming, soccer, cricket, basketball, frisbee, etc. An important safety consideration is the appropriate siting of active uses in regards to the Mississippi River.

Passive Uses
The Bohemian Flats Park has the potential to provide a number of passive recreational opportunities as well. Activities such as meditating, gardening, bird watching, educating, etc. allow people a respite from busy day to day lives and an opportunity to reconnect with themselves and their environment. Often, people feel the need to escape the city and seek ‘natural’ environments and ‘wilderness’ to feel peace and relaxation. Many people do not have the resources to do so due to differing economic, demographic, and social reasons. Therefore providing passive park uses and experiences is an important consideration for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, especially in the urban core. Many people consider water to be an important part of what constitutes a regenerative or healing space, making Bohemian Flats perfectly situated to offer such an opportunity.

Historical and Cultural Interpretive Uses
In order to properly interpret the history of Bohemian Flats, many questions need to be answered. Who should tell the story of the Bohemian Flats, and what story should be told? Who is the audience? What, if any, assumptions can or should be made? The river has always been a gathering place for things not fully acceptable “up above”, in the parts of the community that aren’t marked by the physical presence of the river. There is a larger story as well, one that speaks about the journey from our history to our future. Organizations that include Minnesota Historical Society, National Park Service, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and the U of M River Life Program are likely the most qualified to help begin to answer these questions as they have completed extensive research on the history of the Flats.

“A website, built on a spatial framework such as that offered by Google Earth, allows an almost unlimited amount of information to be stored, retrieved, and understood in spatial relationship to each other. With the Internet increasingly available to people through portable, handheld devices, it is feasible to imagine that visitors to Bohemian Flats could go to a website, click through to Bohemian Flats on the map, and call up texts, photographs, audio, video, and a host of other materials. Currently staff at the University of Minnesota are coordinating a ‘Telling River Stories’ program, but there are literally dozens of other organizations that could be involved.” - Patrick Nunnally (Atkins, 2010).
Equity-
The location and history of Bohemian Flats presents a great opportunity to provide a comfortable place to have historically uncomfortable conversations across a wide social spectrum. The neighborhood around the site is still a place where new immigrants to the country and state call home. Therefore, it is important to ensure that all people, no matter the color of their skin, age, income level, or ability, have access to the benefits of local parks and recreation programs, facilities, places and spaces that enhance their lives and communities.

The Bohemian Flats could offer people an opportunity to connect with one another and build bonds that last a lifetime. Parks and recreation truly build communities – communities for all. This philosophy of social equity and access, which is upheld by all public parks and recreation opportunities, is a foundation which allows people to realize benefits such as improved health and restorative green space.

The benefits of social equity and universal access to public parks and recreation are many, including
- Public enjoyment and engagement. Where parks and open space are plentiful and recreation services are strong, residents enjoy the closest attachment and engagement within their communities.
- Quality recreation time with family and friends. Services provide a space and a reason to partake in enjoying quality time, relaxation, and fun among family members and friends, thus strengthening the social and familial bonds that provide balance and satisfaction in life.
- Improvement of mental and physical health. Parks and recreation can reduce the impacts of chronic diseases, especially in such vulnerable populations as children, seniors, and other underserved groups.
- Measurable decreases in rates of crime and other detrimental activities. Communities are safer as a result of a wholesome atmosphere created by well managed parks and recreation services through healthy activities and programming for all people.

The following demonstrate support for social equity as it relates to parks and recreation
- Living close to parks and other recreation facilities is consistently related to higher physical activity levels for both adults and youth.
- Adolescents with easy access to multiple recreation facilities are more physically active and less likely to be overweight or obese than adolescents without access to such facilities.
- Organized park programs and supervision may increase use of parks and playgrounds and may also increase physical activity, particularly among youths.
- People’s perception of their community’s performance in social offerings, openness and beauty, which includes the availability of parks and green spaces, has a greater impact on their emotional bonds to a place than their demographic characteristics (Soul of the Community, 2015)

(National Recreation and Park Association, 2007)
Economic Implementation

An important consideration for the goals and outcomes of this Master Plan is sustainability, which includes economic and financial sustainability. As public spaces are developed, opportunities to include partnerships for fundraising to aid in implementation and maintenance should be examined. The incorporation of ‘Friends of’ organizations, in-kind donations, and operating partnerships will be increasingly critical as public dollars must be conserved anywhere possible.

Income Generating Services

Bohemian Flats has the potential to generate revenue to supplement public investment. One avenue would be a partnership with other businesses that provide tours of Minneapolis. These groups could include the Fit Tourist, City Running Tours, Magical History Tour, Minneapolis By Bike Day Tours, Paradise Cruise, and Mobile Entertainment Segway Tours, to name a few. This would increase the site’s profile and number of annual visitors.

Large groups could host events on site. The application of use fees could be a source of income for the park. Events could consist of weddings, neighborhood block parties, and winter sporting events. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board could use a variable pricing model, charging higher fees in the summer months, and lower in the winter months to ensure the most revenue is generated and captured.

There are other parks in the region, on rivers and near downtowns that generate a substantial amount of revenue through the summer months with festivals and concerts. One example is the highly successful Bayfront Festival Park in Duluth, MN.

Maintenance

Maintenance of the park and its features is an important consideration during the planning, design, and implementation phases of the Bohemian Flats. For the site to successfully transition from one of underutilization to one of dynamic and higher use, it will be important to select materials that are sustainable and easy to maintain. These materials should also reflect the unique location of the site and its natural processes.

The inclusion of native and naturalized plant material along with the minimization of turf grass will reduce the need for irrigation and fertilizers. This also would provide habitat for birds and insects and sequester carbon. Other considerations could include using composted wood mulch rather than rocks in planting beds, crushed gravel pathways, limestone walls and edging, rain cisterns, composite benches, LED lighting, etc. Where feasible, these materials will lessen the environmental strain from developing the site, while also reinforcing a sense of place.
Recommendations

It is important that the Bohemian Flats become a community gathering space that reflects the history of the site, incorporates the community’s current wants and needs, and plans for the future. Although this can be difficult to accomplish, several recommendations will be provided to aid the design process for the site. Through in-depth community engagement, innovative interpretation of the history, and providing basic amenities, the Bohemian Flats can become an asset to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board’s Park System and the greater Metro Region.

Community Engagement-

Issue
Current engagement methods may not fully engage all stakeholders.

Recommendation
It is recommended that a multi-tiered community engagement strategy be implemented using the methods detailed in this report. By incorporating multiple methods, staff will ensure that a broad array of community members and stakeholders are involved in the planning process. Further, by using the outlined methods, community members can provide valuable insight from their local knowledge that will make the Bohemian Flats a valued community asset. Although an in-depth community engagement process may be long and arduous, it is important to provide community members and stakeholders with ample opportunities to provide input. The groups that are involved are more likely to feel invested in the park and use the park upon completion.

It is important that staff be educated on the cultures and customs of those they are attempting to engage. “Fitting in” will improve results and make interactions worthwhile. Knowing holidays and avoiding actions which may be offensive are two examples of knowledge which should be known about cultural groups.
Interpreting History-
Issue
The Bohemian Flats’ rich history is not programmed into the site in an interactive way.

Recommendation
Ecological Design
Through landscape design, original streets could be planted and the old neighborhoods of the Flats could come to life. This could include a mix of hard landscape and plantings that would suggest the landmarks of the neighborhood, such as streets, churches, bridges, breweries, while at the same time providing ecological benefits.

Daily life
One family, whose lives were well documented, could be chosen to tell a story of Bohemian Flats. Some basic neighborhood and yard layouts, where they ate, recreated, drank, and worked on-site could have stations which visitors experience as they walk through the Flats.

Public Art
The story of the Flats could also be told through interpretive artwork. The Park Board can place a Request for Proposals (RFP) from local artists to interpret the site. By providing information on the stories that should be told, artists are granted freedom to create pieces that interpret the site. The sculptures (or other types of work) would be loaned to the site for a one-year period. Once yearlong loan has expired, new RFPs can be placed. This continual process ensures that the interpretation does not become stagnant and the site continually has new artwork to attract visitors. Artwork could be for sale, with commissions benefitting the park to provide site maintenance and other site needs.
Necessary Amenities-

Issue
The Bohemian Flats does not provide basic amenities to accommodate large groups.

Recommendation
The Minnesota Historical Society has stated that a structure with shade, restrooms, and seating for 60-90 could support interpretive programs that could be delivered by a number of organizations, including MNHS, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the National Park Service, and others. These numbers should be sufficient to handle normal day to day use as well. It is recommended that a 60 foot by 30 foot pavilion be constructed.

Due to the steep slopes to the west of the site, it is nearly impossible to provide sanitary sewer services to the site. This makes the cost of standard bathrooms with running water unfeasible. Composting toilets are recommended for this site. These toilets require less maintenance, less emptying, smell better than portable plastic toilets, and are more environmentally friendly as less waste is generated and no chemicals are used. A building would need to be constructed as with standard bathroom facilities.

City water is piped to the site. Although a large quantity of water could not be handled, this means that access to drinking water can easily be provided for with basic fountains and faucets which run directly on to the ground.
Example Site Plans

Several potential site designs were created to depict potential uses of the Flats. These designs could be used as a starting point in the community engagement process. To determine potential uses, an image board and “Idea Brain-Dump” were created to generate ideas for the site which is located in the Appendix.

Interpretive Themed Site Design
Active Themed Site Design

Integrated Themed Site Design
Conclusion

The Bohemian Flats is well situated to become a valued asset to the surrounding community and the City of Minneapolis. This potential can be realized through an inclusive and engaging master planning process. The geographic location, natural beauty, and rich history of the site provide opportunities to create a space for new immigrants, visitors, and long time residents of the City to come together and have a better understanding of one another. Innovative community engagement strategies will provide valuable insight as to what important park elements to include as well as societal and cultural needs. The creation of an adaptable master plan for the park will ensure that it stays relevant through time and grows with the community and City.
Appendix

History of Bohemian Flats Links

UMN River Life, Living with the Mississippi: The Bohemian Flats
http://riverlife.umn.edu/2014/12/living-with-the-mississippi-the-bohemian-flats/

Bohemian Flats Day
http://bohemianflatsday.com/history

Matthew Buell, The Bohemian Flats
http://matthewbuell.com/bohemianflats/

Mill City Museum, Bohemian Flats Exhibit April 30 - November 1, 2015
http://www.millcitymuseum.org/remembering-bohemian-flats
**Idea Brain-Dump**

Viewing telescope of site on Washington Ave Bridge
References landowner who used to look down upon flooded residential Bohemian Flats from bridge

Large image of historic aerial photography and reference points from Washington Avenue Bridge

Urban Camping
rentable tiny houses, yurts, campground available at rates similar to other regional or national parks on a lottery system
revenue generator, increased awareness & tourism

Urban Agriculture
Partner with Homegrown Minneapolis, PRI Cold Climate, Beez Kneez, etc.
Revenue generator, maintenance partnerships, educational opportunities, pollinators

Riparian Fractal Geometries for Site Layout
A nod to the natural ebbs and flows of rivers

Water Taxi
From Bohemian Flats to Gold Medal Park, Stone Arch Bridge, Northeast Minneapolis, East Bank, Minnehaha Falls, etc.
Revenue generator, increased visitors, enhance awareness of Mississippi River

Canoe/Kayak Launch & Rentals
Revenue generator, increased visitors, enhance awareness of Mississippi River

Swimming Beach
No swimmable lakes nearby

Ice Skating Pathways

Cross Country Skiing Pathways

Stairs from West Bank to Park

Music Venue

Festival Park

Dog Park

Public Boat Dock

Sculpture Park

Large Art Canvas
Work Cited:


