



Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

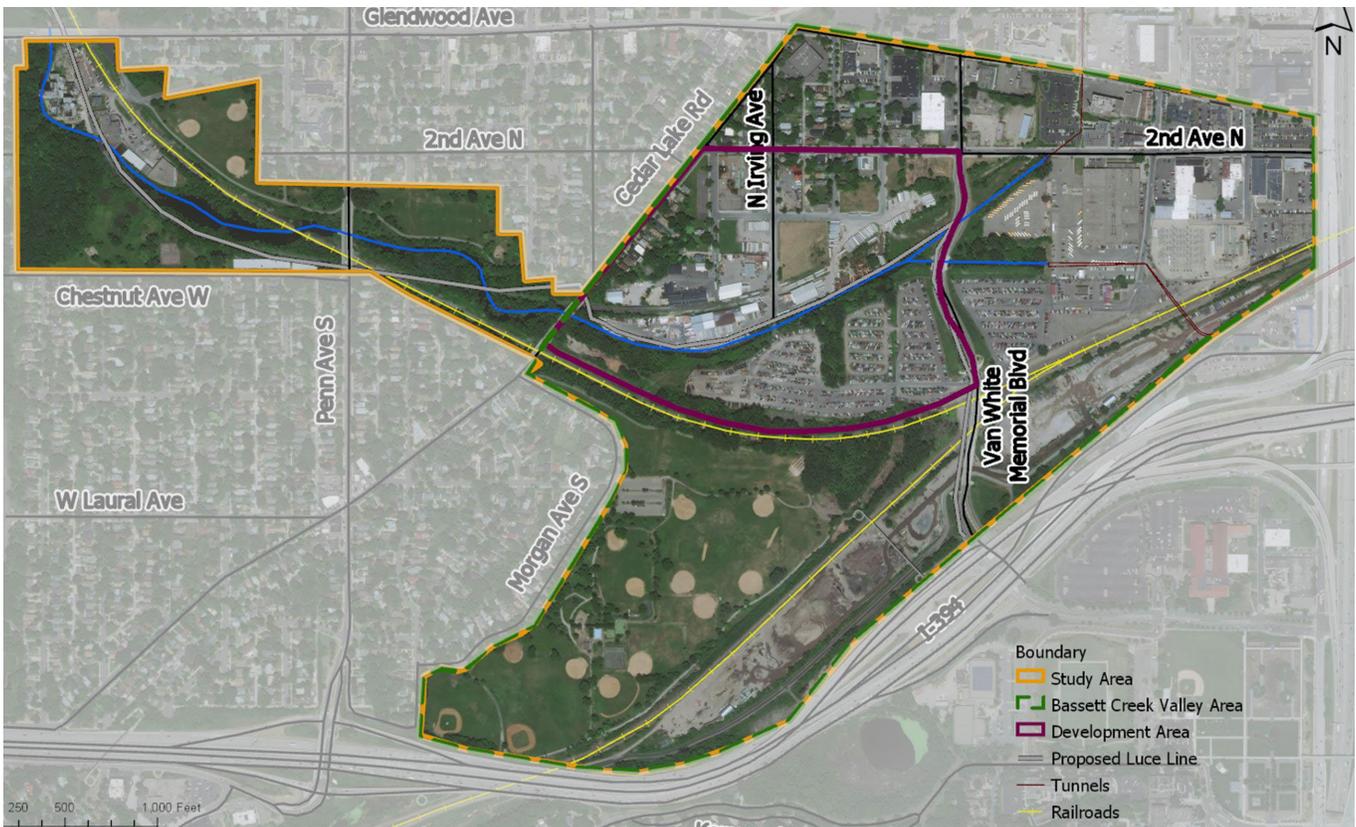
MEMO

To: BCWMC Commissioners and Alternate Commissioners
From: Administrator Jester
Date: April 9, 2024

RE: Recommendations and Update on Bassett Creek Valley

Background:

The Bassett Creek Valley (BCV; shown below) is the section of the creek extending from Cedar Lake Road to the entrance to the tunnel and is adjacent to Bryn Mawr Meadows Park, the Minneapolis Impound Lot. There are commercial, residential and industrial properties within the creek's floodplain in the valley. Recognizing increased redevelopment demand and potential, and the myriad of challenges in the area, in 2019 the BCWMC and the City of Minneapolis collaborated on the Bassett Creek Valley Floodplain and Stormwater Management Study to assess the potential for developing regional approach to stormwater and floodplain management, as well as improved aesthetics and accessibility for the creek.



The complete study and related documents can be found under “Bassett Creek Valley” at www.bassettcreekwmo.org/projects.

An excerpt from the study’s background section summarizes the challenges in the area and goals for the study:

The Bassett Creek Valley Development Area in the City of Minneapolis currently contains the city’s Impound Lot, Pioneer Paper, abandoned CP rail lines, vacant lots, other older industrial properties and rental housing properties. The area has begun to redevelop, and several challenges and opportunities have emerged. Bassett Creek flows through the study area though it is hidden from view, which limits opportunities for serving as a natural amenity and focal point for public use and adjacent redevelopment.

More problematic, Bassett Creek’s flood stage encompasses much of the potential redevelopment area and site conditions include contaminated soils, unstable soils, limited opportunity for storm water quality treatment and infiltration, and existing utilities. These large-scale challenges are difficult to address on a site by site basis, which is the approach typically used in areas with multiple and varied uses and ownership.

Seeing the potential for redevelopment in this area while also recognizing the advantage of a systematic and comprehensive approach, the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission, City of Minneapolis Public Works and Community Planning and Economic Development Departments, and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board worked together to strategize regional solutions to integrate floodplain and stormwater management into the Bassett Creek Valley to facilitate redevelopment.

Hennepin County Involvement and Bassett Creek Valley Stakeholder Meetings:

In collaboration with Hennepin County (particularly Commissioner Fernando’s office) in March and September of last year, BCWMC convened stakeholders to learn about the potential for significant improvements in the BCV, challenges presented by the hydrology and history of the area, and options for moving forward collaboratively. Hennepin County suggested that it could fund and lead a Community Works program in the BCV to convene partners and develop plans for improved floodplain and stormwater management, ecological health, climate resiliency, access to the creek, and community amenities. (Community Works is a multijurisdictional reinvestment program authorized by state law that unlocks potential for significant funding and capacity.) At the commission meeting last October, the commission authorized me to submit a letter of support to the county for a Community Works program for this purpose.

Recommendation:

As the county considers developing a Community Works program, we have recognized the need to convene neighborhood groups (Harrison Neighborhood and Bryn Mawr neighborhoods), the Redevelopment Oversight Committee, and key Minneapolis and county officials to advance the discussion on this issue and provide input on the proposed path forward.

I recommend that the BCWMC convene a meeting of these groups. The role of “convener” is a good fit for the commission due to the commission’s past involvement in this issue and its vested interest in ensuring that redevelopment in the BCV proceeds in a way that best manages resource impacts and provides flood protection and climate resilience. The meeting could be held this spring or early summer and may help speed up the process of developing a Community Works program by the county. The commission should discuss the appropriate level of involvement in this activity.