



The Falls Initiative

The First Season

- Part 1 | Native Partnership Council
- Part 2 | Community Engagement
- Part 3 | Early Design Ideas
- Part 4 | Programming & Partnership

Adaptive Methods of Engagement

The Falls Initiative Community Engagement Plan outlined a framework for centering Native voices in discussions about the future of Owámniyomni (St. Anthony Falls) and property adjacent to the Upper Lock that is currently in federal ownership.

The Native Partnership Council sits at the heart of the engagement process. This group of elected Tribal officials, spiritual leaders, and culture keepers was convened to steer the planning process, shape priorities for *The Falls Initiative*, and ground the project in Indigenous worldviews.

Part 1 of the First Season Report details the process to convene the Native Partnership Council, stories shared, and the members' direction and vision for the project.

This section - Part 2 - describes the public meetings, online engagement tools, and outreach to key stakeholders employed as part of Phase 4: ENGAGE and Phase 5: ALIGN of *The Falls Initiative* Community Engagement Plan. These efforts broadened the conversation and brought the Native Partnership Council into dialogue with all members of the community.

In Phase 4, we sought 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 design and programming.

During Phase 5, the Council, public, and key stakeholders viewed a series of early design ideas developed for the site by landscape architects and designers from GGN. Individuals shared feedback in public meetings, interactive surveys, and at pop-up engagement events throughout the city.

Methods to Advance Equity

The Engagement Team challenged itself to facilitate a different type of planning process - one that stepped beyond the typical boundaries of public engagement. Rather than inviting the public to simply list personal preferences and vote on preferred outcomes, we developed a series of adaptive methods that honor Indigenous practices and values.

In this report, we describe efforts to ground conversations in Indigenous perspectives, “weave” together Native Partnership Council guidance and public input, use storytelling and art to convey public engagement outcomes, and come to consensus through dialogue. All of these methods are intended to uphold the principles of equity and inclusion throughout the life of the project.

Key Audiences

Across all phases of engagement, resources were allocated to connect meaningfully with key audiences:

- The diverse Native 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 systemic racism.



Members of *The Falls Initiative* team were honored to attend and witness the Tinta Wita Wacipi (Pow Wow) at Prairie Island Indian Community on July 9, 2022. Here, we shared our ongoing work and heard feedback from Prairie Island citizens and other Wacipi visitors.

Image Credit: Prairie Island Indian Community, via Facebook

Learning in a New Way

The most effective way to learn is often through experience - by living, or through storytelling - by seeing something through another's eyes.

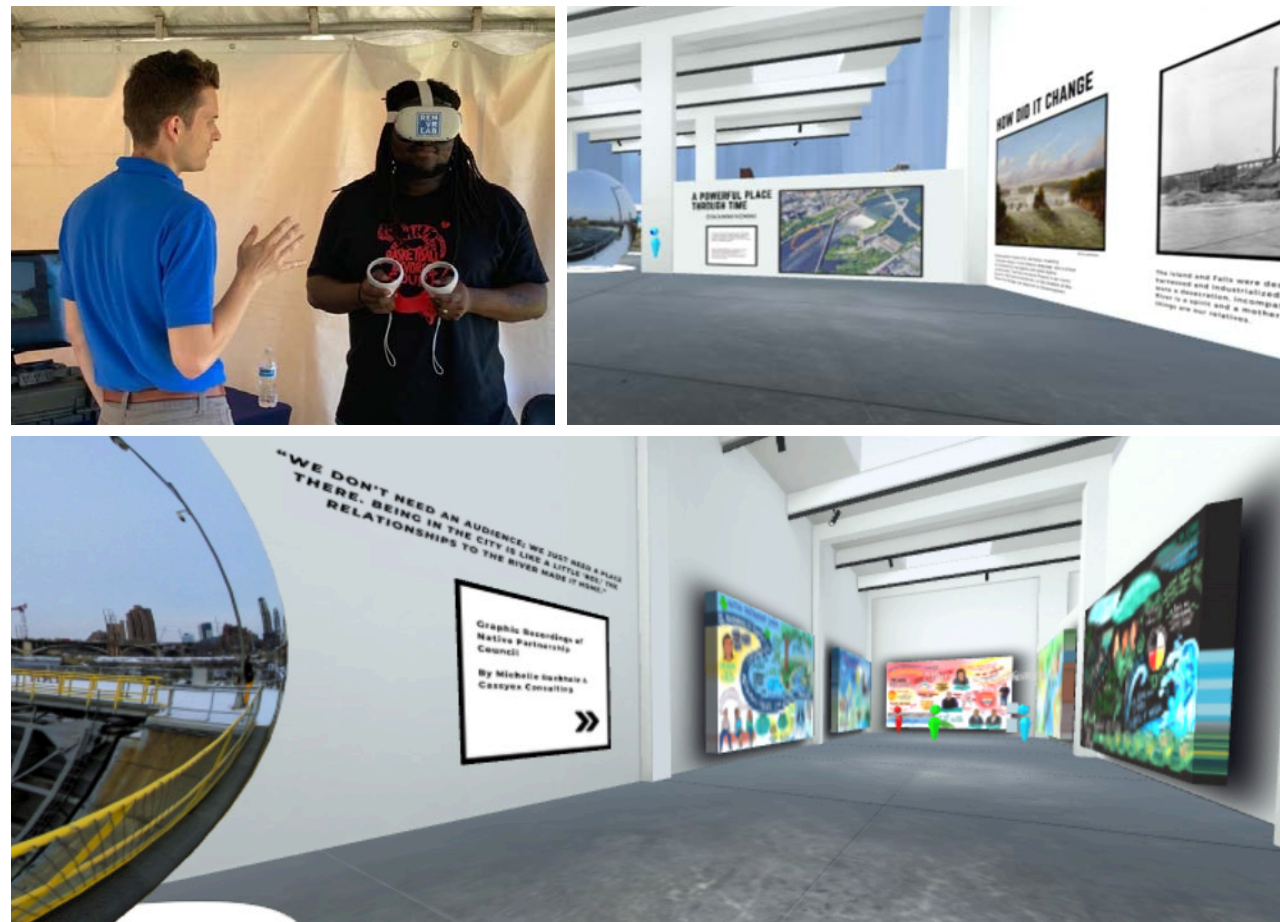
To that end, Friends of the Falls and NACDI launched an immersive exhibit titled *A Story Disrupted: Indigenous Perspectives*.

An immersive exhibit is a digital experience that simulates the real world. People can enter a virtual museum from their home computer or by using a VR headset, navigate a simulated gallery, and even converse with other participants.

The immersive experience was an effective tool for providing a thorough context of

Owámniyomni (St. Anthony Falls), introducing the broader community to members of the Native Partnership Council, and inviting visitors to participate in upcoming engagement events. Individuals could also “step-in” to virtual orbs, providing 360 degree views of the Upper Lock.

Project leaders hosted guided tours of the exhibit, meeting participants first on Zoom to answer questions and troubleshoot connection issues before leading guests through the virtual exhibit hall and answering questions about the project.



A participant exploring the immersive exhibit at the Stone Arch Bridge Festival. Image Credit: Friends of the Falls. Digital screenshots from the immersive exhibit *A Story Disrupted: Indigenous Perspectives*.

Connecting Communities

Phase 4: ENGAGE featured an intense period of public conversation informed by and interwoven with the groundwork and priorities laid by the Native Partnership Council.

Friends of the Falls and NACDI launched a five-part Community Conversation series in February 2022 to educate and engage the public on topics that would inform decision-making about programming and design.

These events were tools to expand awareness for *The Falls Initiative*, increase transparency into our community engagement process, create a bridge between Native and non-Native communities, develop a shared understanding of Indigenous perspectives, and solicit feedback about the future of the Falls.

In addition to the four Emerging Themes identified by the Native Partnership Council (see Part 1), Community Conversations and public engagement opportunities focused on the

following 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 access
- Business and Tourism: Financial sustainability and economic opportunities

In all, 842 people registered for the Community Conversation series and over 500 actively participated. The events were hosted in-person and in virtual format to increase accessibility and provide an alternative attendance method due to COVID-19. We selected venues in various Minneapolis neighborhoods, as well as outside the metro area on the sovereign land of the Prairie Island Indian Community.

Feb 15	Mar 16	May 19	May 21	June 28
Indigenous Perspectives Orientation & Beginning	Water is Life Project & Site Context	Restoring A Story Disrupted Ideas for Future	Building Connections Process & Govt Partners	Powerful Place for Partnership Design Concepts & Next Steps

Graphic depicting the Community Conversation meeting sequence. Image Credit: Friends of the Falls. Conversation #3 was rescheduled due to the death of an elder in the Prairie Island Indian Community. Conversation #5 was also postponed.

STRATEGIC OUTREACH

NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES & ORGANIZATIONS

- Prairie Island Indian Community
- Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- Lower Sioux Indian Community
- Upper Sioux Community
- Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors
- Little Earth elders
- American Indian Community Listserv

LOCAL, STATE, & FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

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

NEIGHBORHOOD

- Bottineau Neighborhood Association
- Cedar-Riverside Community Council
- Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association
- East Phillips Improvement Coalition

- Elliot Park Neighborhood Council
- Hawthorne Neighborhood Council
- Jordan Area Community Council
- LaRive Condos
- Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association
- Marshall Terrace Neighborhood Organization
- McKinley Community
- Midtown Phillips Neighborhood Association
- Nicollet Island East Bank Neighborhood Association
- North Loop Neighborhood Association
- Phillips West Neighborhood Association
- Sheridan Neighborhood Association
- St. Anthony Falls Alliance
- St. Anthony West Neighborhood Association
- Webber-Camden Neighborhood Association

ENVIRONMENTAL

- Friends of the Mississippi River
- Wilderness Inquiry
- Mississippi Watershed Management Organization
- Friends of the Riverfront

PARKS & OPEN SPACE

- National Park Service
- Mississippi Park Connection
- National Parks Conservation Association
- Minneapolis Parks Foundation
- Above the Falls Advisory Committee

HISTORIC & CULTURAL

- St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board
- Mill City Museum

SCIENCE & EDUCATION

- St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board
- University of Minnesota

BUSINESS, TOURISM & TRANSPORTATION

- Meet Minneapolis
- Minneapolis Downtown Council & Downtown Improvement District
- East Downtown Business Partnership
- Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce / BOMA
- Minneapolis Water Taxi

Friends of the Falls and NACDI conducted dedicated outreach to the above Tribes, government entities, organizations, and community groups to promote the Community Conversation series and other engagement opportunities.

Voices of Leadership

Each Community Conversation was designed to educate as well as engage.

Leaders from NACDI, CDA Enterprises, and the Native Partnership Council taught non-Native community members about traditional Indigenous cultural practices, like smudging and decision-making through consensus. We invited Native and non-Native leaders to a shared stage to engage in dialogue from different cultural perspectives, and, in addition to presenting about site constraints and design ideas, we also introduced academic concepts like *parallel trauma*, a term that refers to the trauma carried by the perpetrators of violence, which runs parallel to the intergenerational historical trauma experienced by victims (see Part 1).

In sharing these lessons, we sought to make the sessions more familiar and accessible to Native individuals, and to warmly invite non-Native participants to join difficult conversations about truth, reconciliation, ownership, identity, and power.

Community Conversations were facilitated by NACDI President & CEO Robert Lilligren and Native Partnership Council facilitator Carrie Day Aspinwall (CDA Enterprises). Throughout the series, they were joined by Native Partnership Council members Shelley Buck, Juanita

Espinosa, Jewell Arcoren, Mona Smith, and Wakinyan LaPointe.

We were honored to learn from Native leaders Sharon Day and Karen Diver, and non-Native river experts Whitney Clark (Friends of the Mississippi River) and John Shepard (Hamline University, Center for Global Environmental Education).

Sharon Day, Ojibwe, is the Executive Director and a founder of the Indigenous Peoples Task Force (IPTF), formerly known as the Minnesota American Indian AIDS Task Force. She is an environmental activist and has led 20+ Water Walks since 2011, walking over 10,000 miles to offer prayers for these rivers. These extended ceremonies have occurred along the banks of the Mississippi, the Ohio, the Missouri, the Cuyahoga and Salt Rivers.

Karen Diver is currently serving as the Senior Advisor to the President for Native American Affairs at the University of Minnesota after previous roles at the University of Arizona and the College of St. Scholastica. Karen was also an appointee of President Obama as the Special Assistant to the President for Native American Affairs, and she served as Chairwoman of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa from 2007-2015.



Sharon Day, Robert Lilligren, Carrie Day Aspinwall.
Image Credits: NeDahNess Greene Photography, Drew Arrieta.

Community Conversation No1

Indigenous Perspectives

Objectives

At the first Community Conversation, our primary objective was to orient and introduce the public to *The Falls Initiative*, members of the Design and Engagement Teams, and this place: Owámmiyomni (St. Anthony Falls).

We sought to differentiate between land adjacent to the Lock, which can be conveyed as part of this project, and the remaining Lock infrastructure.

The session was also an opportunity to introduce members of the Native Partnership Council, share themes emerging from early Council dialogue, and reinforce that the engagement process would continue be centered on Native voices.

Messages

The panel discussion with Native leaders was grounded by the following key messages:

- This place includes sites sacred to Indigenous communities – the Falls and Spirit Island.
- The natural river and sacred places have been desecrated through industrialization, colonization, and construction of infrastructure like the Upper Lock.
- *The Falls Initiative* is an opportunity to restore public access to the river and to create a place of healing and celebration.

DATE	February 15, 2022
LOCATION	Virtual (Zoom)
REGISTRATION	200+
PARTICIPANTS	153

“When we reclaim those spaces, those stories, the spirituality that goes with these places... it builds our health, it builds our wellness, and we become a healthier community.”

- Karen Diver

“I’m really happy for the River. I know she totally loves the fact that her children remember her and will bring attention to her health and her wealth. Hopefully that translates to good things for her grandchildren and her great-grandchildren.”

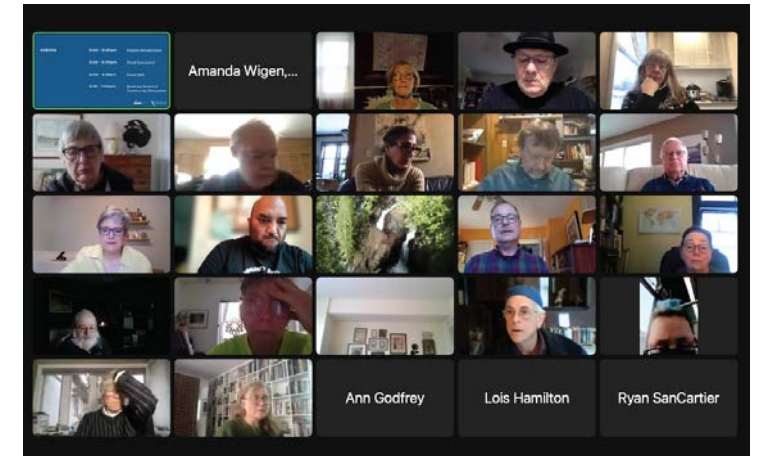
- Juanita Espinosa

Outcomes

Community Conversation participants were eager to ask questions and engage in Zoom breakout rooms. Attendees voiced support for centering the project on Native voices.

The following themes seemed to resonate:

- The River as a relation; Rights of Water
- Desire to touch the water
- Consideration of how people might experience Spirit Island
- Significance of place
- Language as a tool to connect people, place, and culture
- Cross-river connections
- Healing through ceremony
- How to be an ally to Indigenous communities



Zoom participants of Community Conversation #1.



Robert Lilligren and NPC Member Jewell Arcoren.



Graphic Recording by Studio Thalo, February 2022.

Community Conversation No. 1 sought to embed community engagement in Indigenous perspectives and worldviews. Karen Diver, Senior Advisor to the President for Native American Affairs at the University of Minnesota, spoke to the cultural disassociation endured by Native communities through colonization.

Digital Screenshot: Karen Diver, Juanita Espinosa, Robert Lilligren, Jewell Arcoren, and Wakinyan LaPointe.



Community Conversation No.2

Water is Life

Objectives

At every early meeting of the Native Partnership Council, members discussed the River's spirit, the power of the Falls, and the quality and cleanliness of water.

The theme Mní Wičóni, or Water is Life, became the focus of our second Community Conversation. With panelists Sharon Day, Wakinyan LaPointe, John Shepard, and Whitney Clark, we facilitated dialogue about ecology, history, and Indigenous perspectives of water.

With program hosts Carrie Day Aspinwall and Robert Lilligren, we continued to share insights from the Native Partnership Council and invite questions and comments from both Native and non-Native communities.

We also shared detailed site context and analysis of circulation, access, topography, structures, and scale prepared by the Design Team.

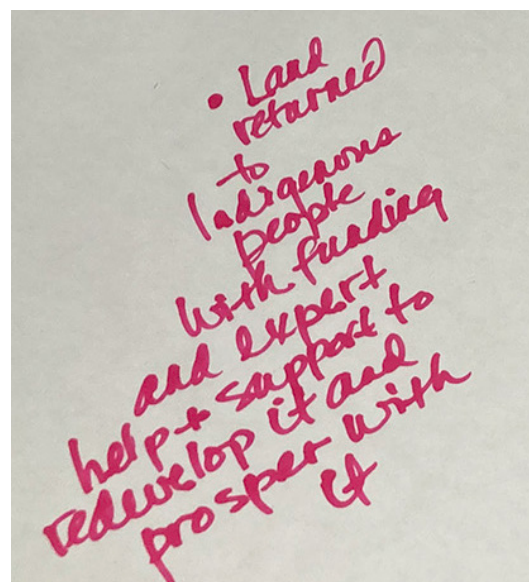
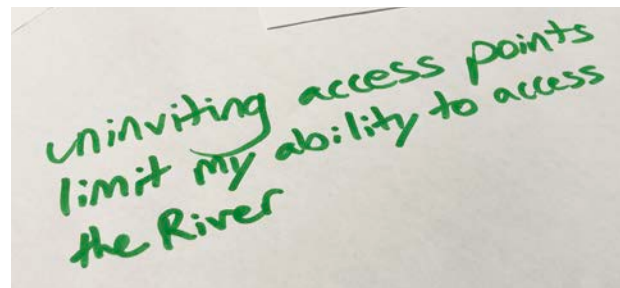
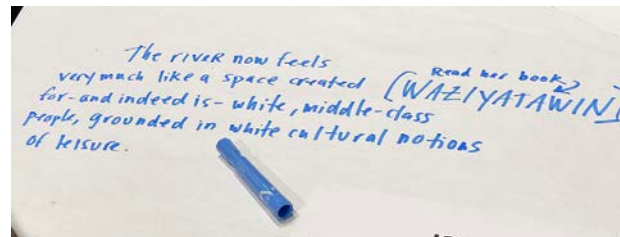
Messages

The panel discussion, Q&A, and small group discussions highlighted that restoring access to the River is a method to restore disrupted Indigenous narratives, history, and cultural connections to this place.

Furthermore, we must recognize that the River is a spirit that defines this place and gives it character. This project and engagement process should recognize the Rights of Nature, Rights of Water, and Personhood of Water.

We also emphasized that *The Falls Initiative* should not be about "building a project"; the Native Partnership Council endorsed the idea of creating a place for ongoing education and engagement. This should be a place of continual transformation.

DATE	March 16, 2022
LOCATION	Humphrey School of Public Affairs & Virtual (Zoom)
REGISTRATION	231
PARTICIPANTS	130+



Select comments from members of the public recorded during small-group conversations.

Outcomes

Community members voiced interest and support for formally recognizing the Rights of Nature and Rights of Water in this project, and for Indigenous water programming at the site. Native leaders called on government entities to establish formal, long-term relationships with Indigenous thinkers and organizations to advance these goals.

There was interest in improving water quality and creating habitats for plants and animals. Both Native and non-Native communities agreed there should be natural or park-like spaces to touch and access the water - for ceremony or for other uses.

Native community members reiterated that this type of dialogue must begin with truth and reconciliation. They asked non-Native speakers and participants to acknowledge the extent of historical trauma caused by colonization and to act as allies by proactively challenging institutional systems.

Some individuals voiced distrust in typical governmental procedures for land conveyance, ownership, and development.



Image Credit: NeDahNess Greene Photography.



Graphic Recording by Studio Thalo, March 2022.

Discussion during Community Conversation No. 2 bridged between Native and non-Native communities, creating safe spaces for vulnerability, tough conversations, and a diversity of participation.

Image Credit: Kjersti Duval, Studio Civic.



Community Conversation №3

Restoring A Story Disrupted

Friends of the Falls and NACDI were honored to host the third Community Conversation in partnership with the Prairie Island Indian Community as well as Native Partnership Council Member and Prairie Island Vice President Shelley Buck. The event began in ceremony with a blessing by spiritual advisor Nick Western Boy, followed by a community feast for Tribal citizens. We concluded with a Community Conversation hosted in-person and via Zoom.

Objectives

We aimed to create a forum for Prairie Island citizens and other Native community members to feel comfortable sharing their personal connections to this place, and collectively honor their historical and cultural ties.

We hoped to hear the community's early ideas about design, as well as strategic partnerships that would allow us to develop authentic programming and ensure sustainable operations.

Messages

While the majority of this session was dedicated to relationship building and hearing directly from Tribal citizens, the Design Team also took time to share an assessment of physical qualities of the Falls. This place can be thought of as being composed of three connected characters: Above the Falls (the Upper), Within (the Falls), and Below (the Lower). The quality of water, suitable activities, and experience of place varies between each zone.

DATE	May 19, 2022
LOCATION	Treasure Island Resort & Casino & Virtual (Zoom)
REGISTRATION	226
PARTICIPANTS	54

“After [the war] they exiled the Dakota out of the state. Here at Prairie Island we stayed here, we didn’t leave... I think it’s very important that non-Natives understand that history and understand that we’re still here and we still have a lot of our culture, a lot of our traditions, a lot of our language.”

- Shelley Buck, Prairie Island Vice President

“I really want these places to come back to life so that my other relatives and my other cousins can sit with their relatives and have them hear these stories about how these places are important for us... I don’t want them to go away... my only wish is that you give us this opportunity to let our ancestors be heard again.”

- Prairie Island Citizen

Outcomes

Participants affirmed that the River must be recognized as a spirit that deserves care and respect.

They also voiced a continued need for healing and reconciliation. We must acknowledge that is painful for Native individuals to engage in conversations related to elimination and desecration.

There was support for returning the land to tribal ownership and Native communities. Community members also encouraged the team to explore operating and funding partnerships with non-profit or governmental entities, like the National Park Service.

Regarding programming, the site should be conducive to private ceremonies and offer learning opportunities that benefit both Native and non-Native communities - specifically, hearing and seeing Dakota language, or developing an interpretive app.

The site should not be driven by economic interests, like retail or other commercial business.



Image Credit: Drew Arrieta.



Graphic Recording by Studio Thalo, May 2022.

Community Conversation No. 3 was held on the land of the Prairie Island Indian Community to honor the sovereignty of the Dakota people. It was a privilege to hear from community members at Prairie Island: elders and youth who are in touch with their history and language and were willing to share their space with us.

Image Credit: Drew Arrieta.



Community Conversation No. 4

Building Connections

The fourth Community Conversation was hosted in partnership with the City of Minneapolis as part of the Community Connections Conference. The annual event is designed to connect residents of Minneapolis, community groups, neighborhoods, and local government.

Preceding the event, we offered an on-site tour of the Upper Lock led by the Design Team and National Park Service.

Objectives

The Community Connections Conference was an opportunity to explain to community members how we partner with government entities (including Tribal Nations) and follow direction of the Native Partnership Council.

We explained the City's potential role as a short term landowner and, with a video statement from Mayor Frey, demonstrated the City's continued support for the project and willingness to return the land to Native communities.

In addition to the break-out session, Friends of the Falls and NACDI hosted an exhibit table to engage one-on-one with the over 800 conference attendees, hear feedback about our engagement process, and receive early ideas about design and programming.

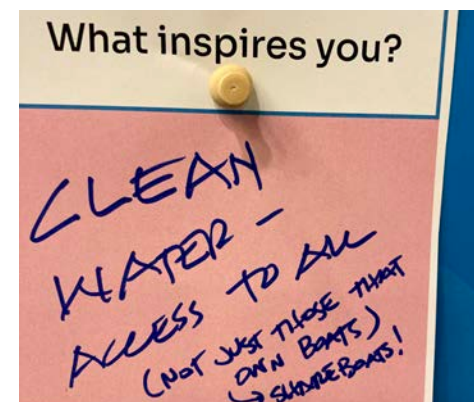
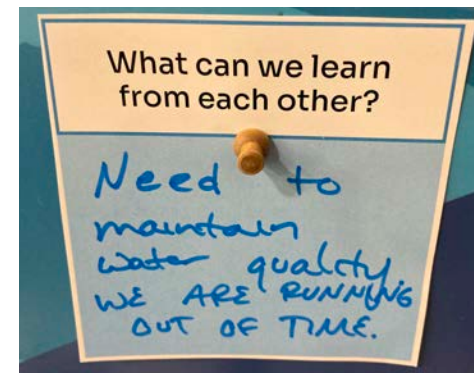
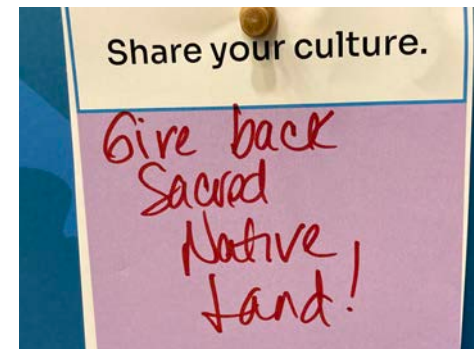
Messages

Members of the project team outlined how traditional planning practices prioritize economics and are often out of line with cultural values.

We emphasized how defining the role of the Native Partnership Council in the Engagement Plan and convening the Council first in the engagement process were crucial steps to ensure the project would be centered on Native voices.

Taking time to establish meaningful and reciprocal relationships is essential to building trust with Native and diverse communities.

DATE	May 20-21, 2022
LOCATION	Upper Lock & Mpls Convention Center
REGISTRATION	84
PARTICIPANTS	100+



Select comments from members of the public recorded during the conference.

Outcomes

Comments during the break-out session and at the exhibit table affirmed that the four themes identified previously by the Native Partnership Council were consistent with the public's vision for the project:

- A Place to Restore a Story Disrupted
- A Place of Power
- A Place of Connection / Mitakuye Owas'in (All Our Relations)
- The River is a Spirit / Mní Wičóŋi (Water is Life)

We also heard acknowledgement that Dakota and other Indigenous voices have been heard during the process; they must continue to lead the project in the future.

We discussed the transformative effects that can result from restoring relationships to the land and River. The project has the potential to advance issues related to climate change, social justice, and much more.

Native Partnership Council member Jewell Arcoren introduced the concept of healing from parallel trauma, a process which recognizes the trauma experienced by perpetrators of genocide as well as its victims, as a framework for what this place could become.



Image Credit: NeDahNess Green Photography.



Graphic Recording by Studio Thalo, May 2022.

In a tour of the Upper Lock which accompanied Community Conversation No. 4, visitors were reminded of the immensity of the Lock structure as well as the power and sound of the River. In holding conversation on-site, the group was able to consider how different design concepts might feel in this environment.

Image Credit: Friends of the Falls.



Community Conversation №5

A Powerful Place for Partnership

Objectives

At the final Community Conversation, designers from GGN shared sketches and drawings to give attendees a sense of how the Native Partnership Council and the project team had interpreted community conversation and feedback into early design ideas for the site.

We also introduced new team members from Interboro Partners, MIGIZI, and the Division of Indian Work, who will continue to have focused conversations with Native communities and Native-led organizations about potential partnerships and programs for the site.

We shared next steps for site conveyance and early enhancements to the site. Though this was the final of five Community Conversation events, engagement would continue and the project will grow and evolve over the course of many “seasons”.

Messages

Early design concepts presented by GGN included returning the flow of water to the site, softening the shoreline with plants and trees, utilizing existing lock infrastructure for art and interpretation, and honoring Spirit Island – though not rebuilding it.

Emphasized in these drawings was the idea that community feedback resulted in concepts that extend beyond the current site boundary. It would take many years and partnership with neighboring landowners, like the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, to advance them. Even then, this place is expected to continually transform.

The next season of work for *The Falls Initiative* will focus on identifying programming priorities and strategic partnerships, discussing ownership and operations, and planning for early enhancements to the site.

DATE	June 28, 2022
LOCATION	Open Book & Virtual (Zoom)
REGISTRATION	123
PARTICIPANTS	70+

“What do I want to see, what would be the perfect day [at the Falls]? That would be to rewind the tape. Rewind our minds and our hearts and our souls to 100 and 200 years ago. What would our ancestors see?”

- Community Member

“There’s a lot of restoration that I think people would love to get engaged in and a lot of education can be brought into it, too... the history of all our Indigenous relatives.”

- Community Member

Outcomes

Community dialogue reinforced that the following themes should be explored in a Programming & Partnership Study:

- Water is Life
- Arts & Culture
- Ceremony
- Knowledge Sharing & Language
- Indigenous Food Systems

The public came to understand that the Army Corps is not currently considering Upper Lock removal. The Native Partnership Council has supported utilizing the existing lock infrastructure to acknowledge the desecration of this place. Community members encouraged the project team to consider the possible future removal of the Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Lock No. 1, however, both of which would impact the water level and experience below the Falls.

We should continue outreach with the general public, in addition to focused conversations with youth and elders. We should also explore how different levels of activation and maintenance would impact visitor experience and the projected operating budget.



Image Credit: Drew Arrieta.



Graphic Recording by Studio Thalo, June 2022.

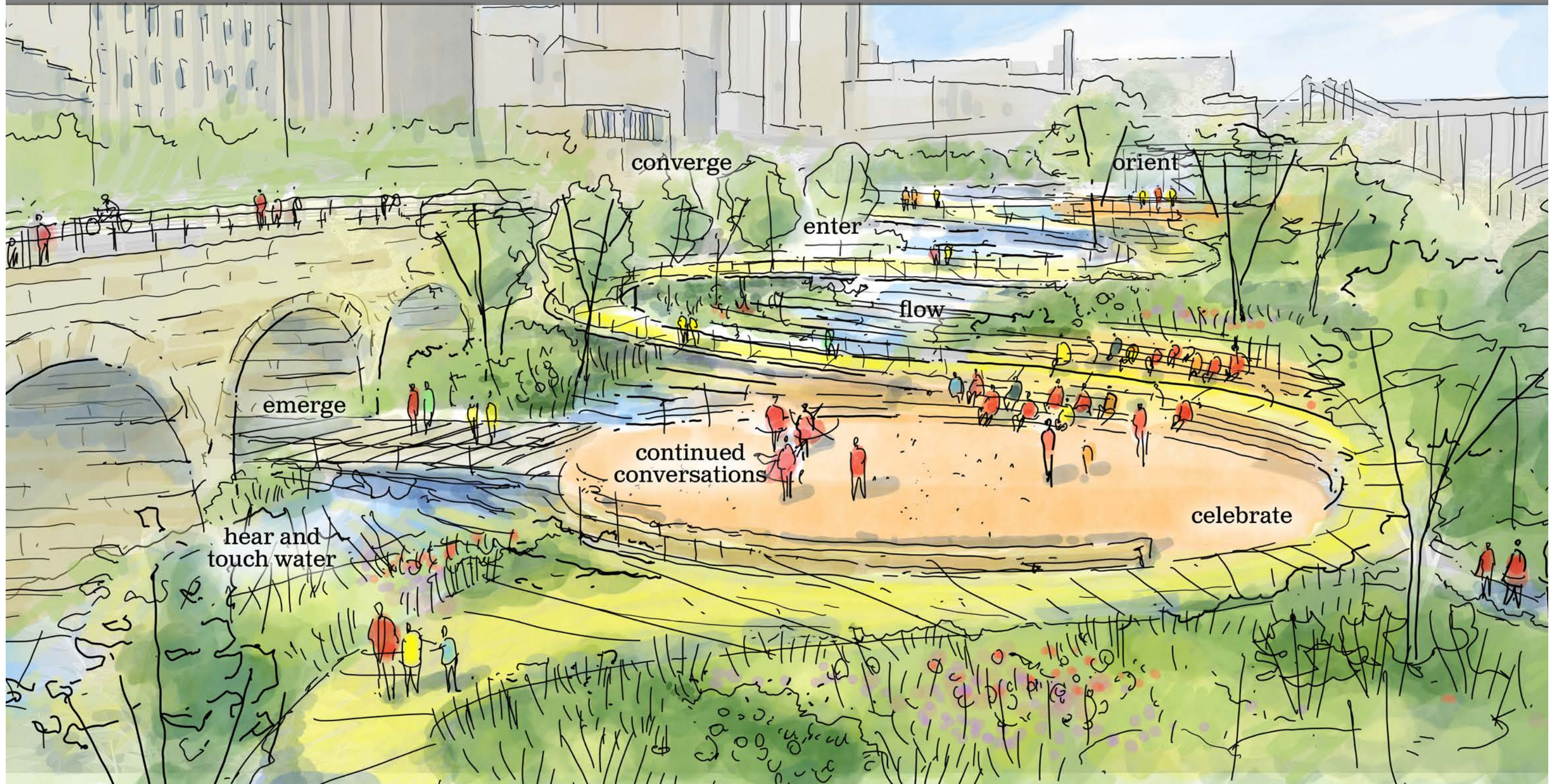
Though Community Conversation No. 5 began with early design ideas for the site, attendees nevertheless continued to connect with each other through storytelling and sharing unique perspectives.

Image Credit: Drew Arrieta.



Early design concepts previewed at Community Conversation No. 5 depicted flowing water, opportunities to interact with the River, a central gathering space, lush green spaces, and a place to honor and reflect on the story of Wita Wanagi, Spirit Island.

Image Credit: GGN.





Just as Michelle Buchholz of Cassyex Consulting bore witness to sessions of the Native Partnership Council, the artist collective Studio Thalo was engaged by Friends of the Falls and NACDI to document Community Conversations from a BIPOC perspective.

Artists Nell Pierce, Bayou (Donald) Thomas, and Olivia Levins Holden produced a large-scale painting encapsulating themes that were shared across the complete Community Conversation series. This painting was created in addition to the five digital artworks they created in response to each community event.

The Falls Initiative Community Conversations depicted in a painting by Studio Thalo, September 2022.

Survey No.1

People & Place

Friends of the Falls and NACDI released two interactive surveys in conjunction with the Community Conversation series. Rather than serving as standalone engagement tools, the surveys provide an opportunity for community members to continue the conversation and share their stories, thoughts, and perspectives in a unique format.

We utilized a platform called Maptionnaire, which allows participants to share location-specific comments, draw on the screen, and upload photos in addition to responding to more traditional survey prompts. These functions resulted in responses that were just as thoughtful and complex as the comments we heard voiced in dialogue at Community Conversations.

The first survey asked community members to show us the site through their eyes and help us understand their personal connections to the Falls.

- What places do you visit often?
- What places have meaning to you?
- What places do you want to learn more about?
- What story about the Falls has resonated with you?

We also asked individuals to identify their level of familiarity with locations near the Falls, the various historical and cultural identifies of this place, and *The Falls Initiative* project.

Survey No.1 received 186 responses between February through April 2022, aligning with Community Conversations No.1 & No.2.

Twelve people identified as an enrolled member or descendant of recognized Tribal Nations, including: Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, Leech Lake Ojibwe, Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe, White Earth Nation, and Cherokee Nation.

The results of select Survey No.1 questions are represented here. View complete results and a summary report at: TheFalls.org/resources/survey-1/

How do you identify as a stakeholder in this process?

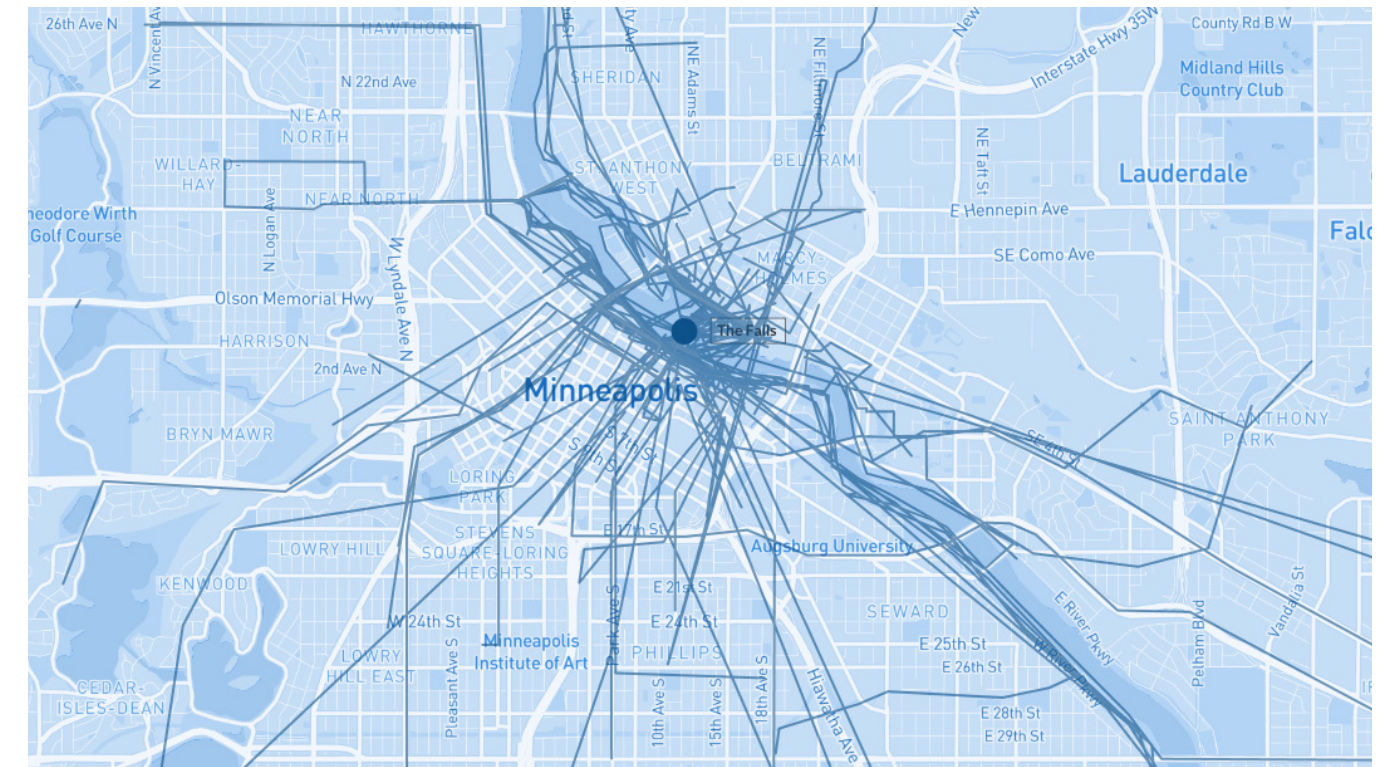
RESIDENT	141
ENVIRONMENTALIST	41
PARKS STAKEHOLDER	22
ORGANIZATION REP	18
EDUCATOR	16
HISTORIAN	14
INDIGENOUS PERSON	12
TOURISM STAKEHOLDER	9
BUSINESS OWNER	8
GOVERNMENT REP	4

What is your relationship to or interest in this place?

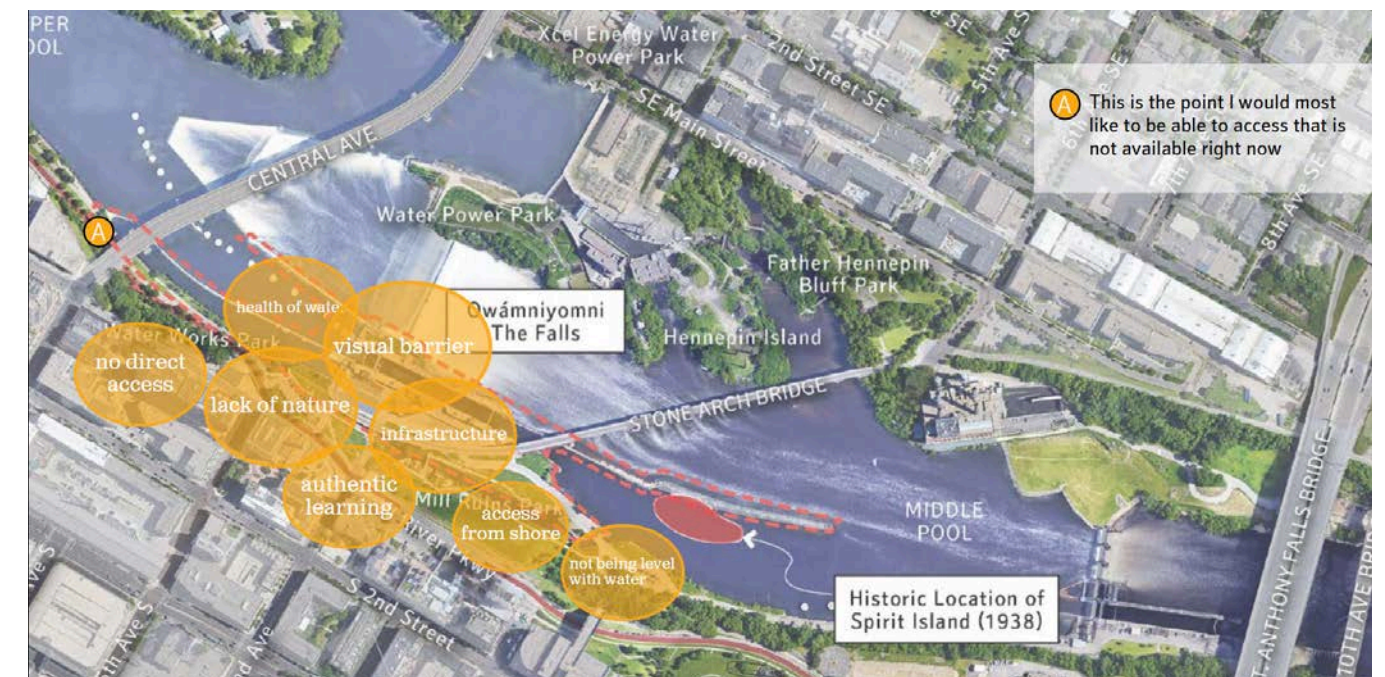
CULTURAL CONNECTION	10
SPIRITUAL CONNECTION	10
LIVE OR WORK NEARBY	7
WANT TO LEARN MORE	6
CEREMONY	4

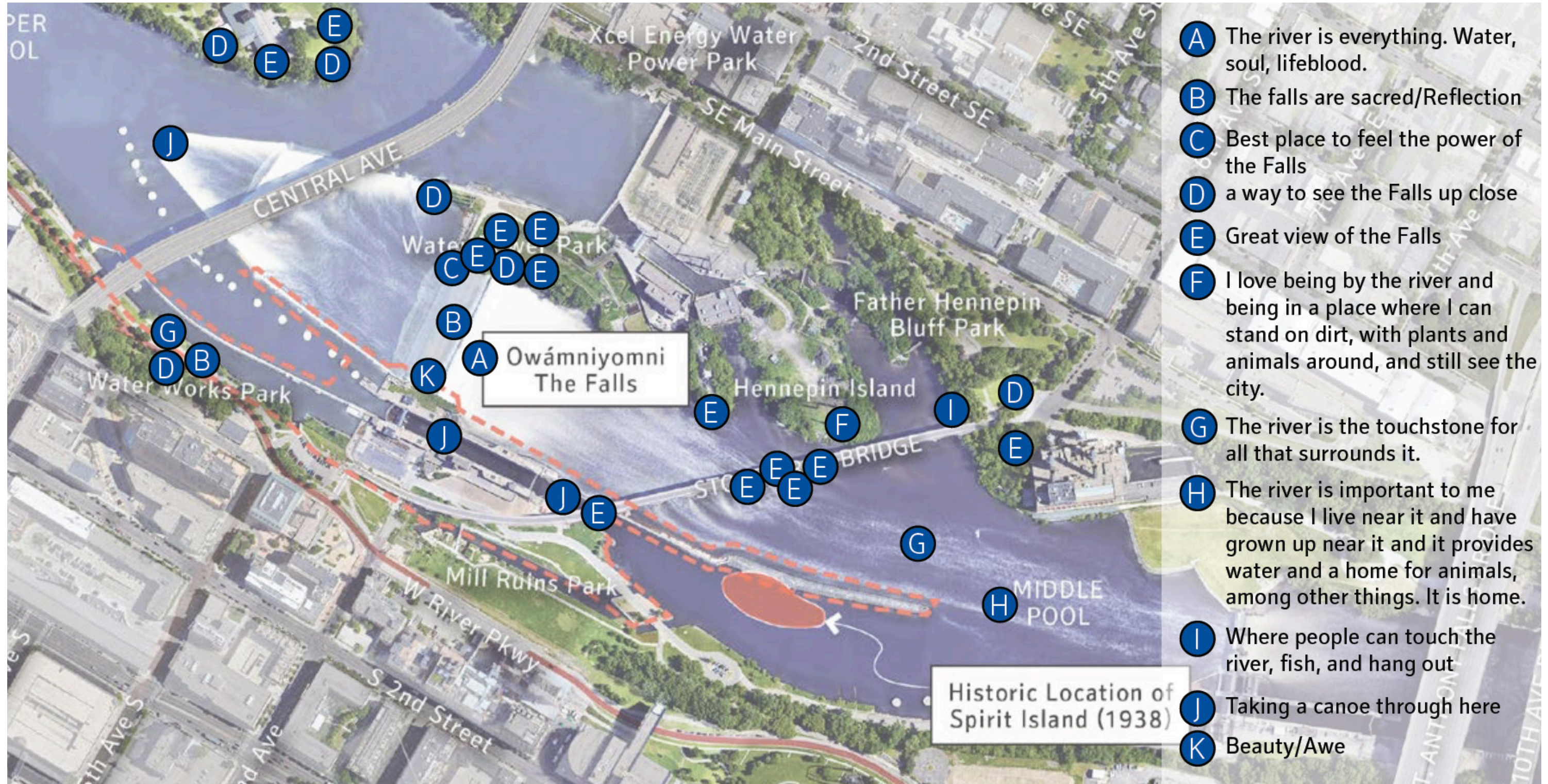
“[Learning about] Spirit Island as a birthplace, which was basically ignored in development, [is a story that resonated with me]. This injustice speaks to where we are at the moment, and recognition may have a healing effect while allowing us to create a more humane and healthy future.”

How do you get to the Falls?

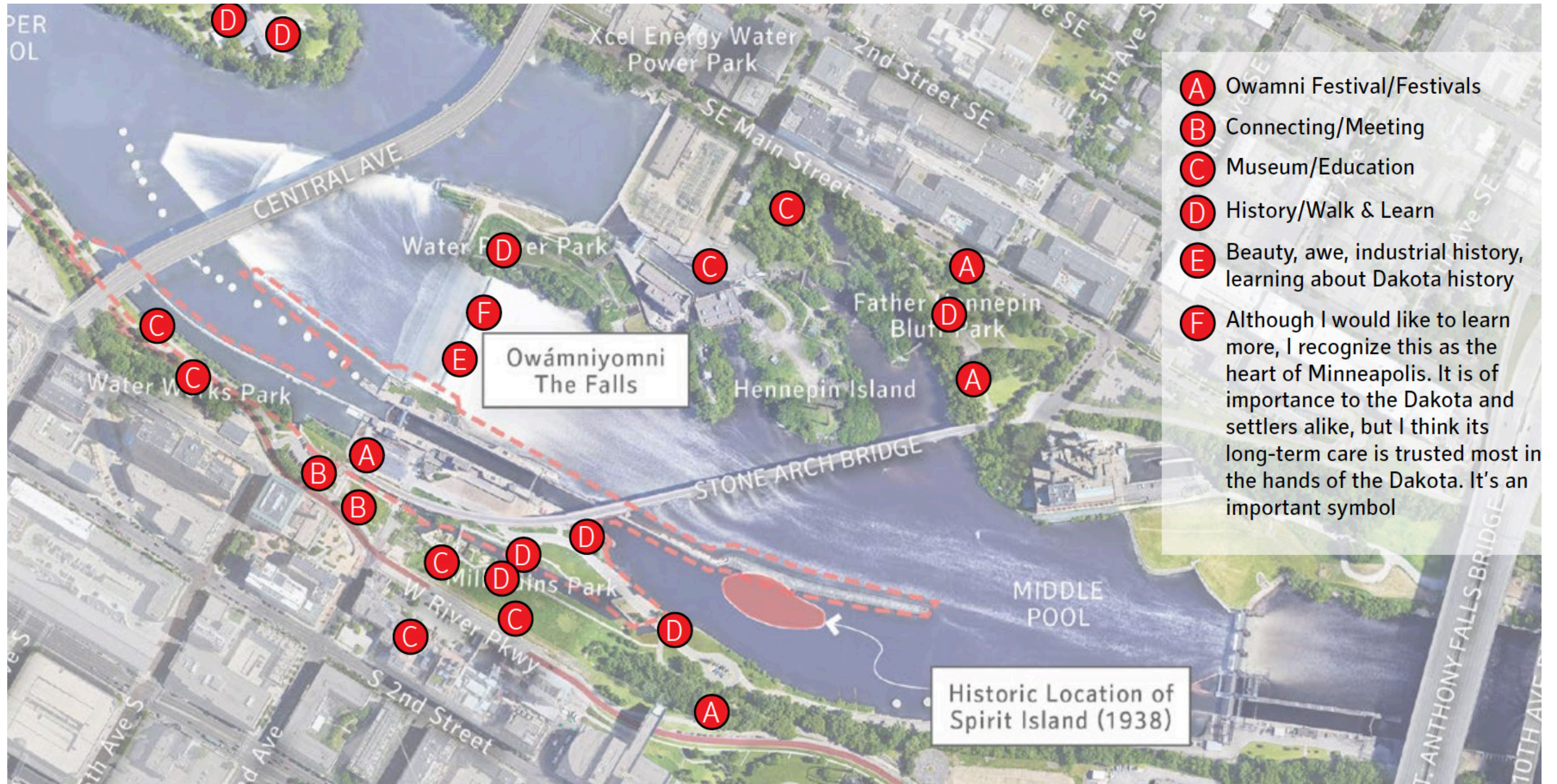


Barriers to Access

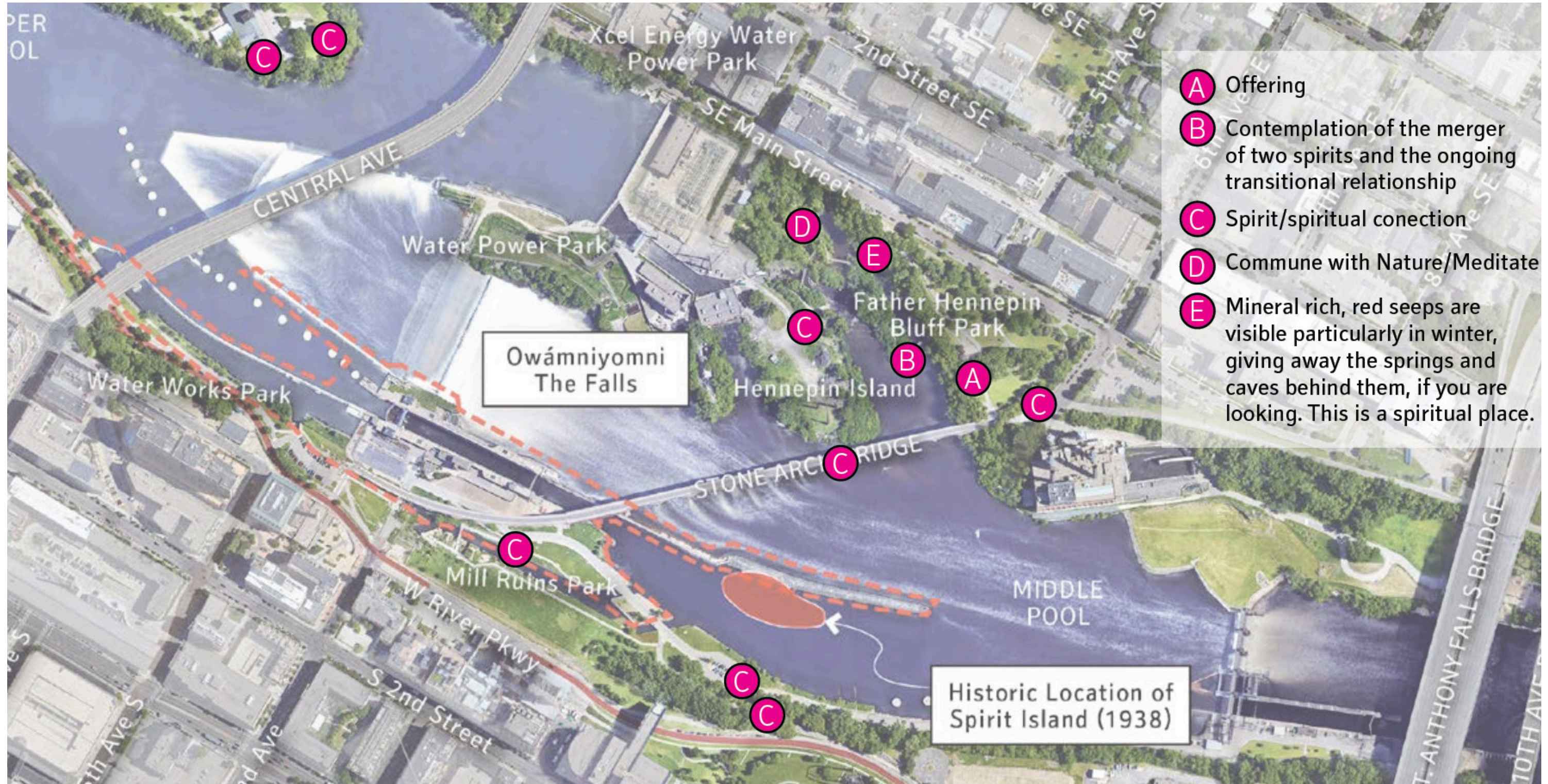


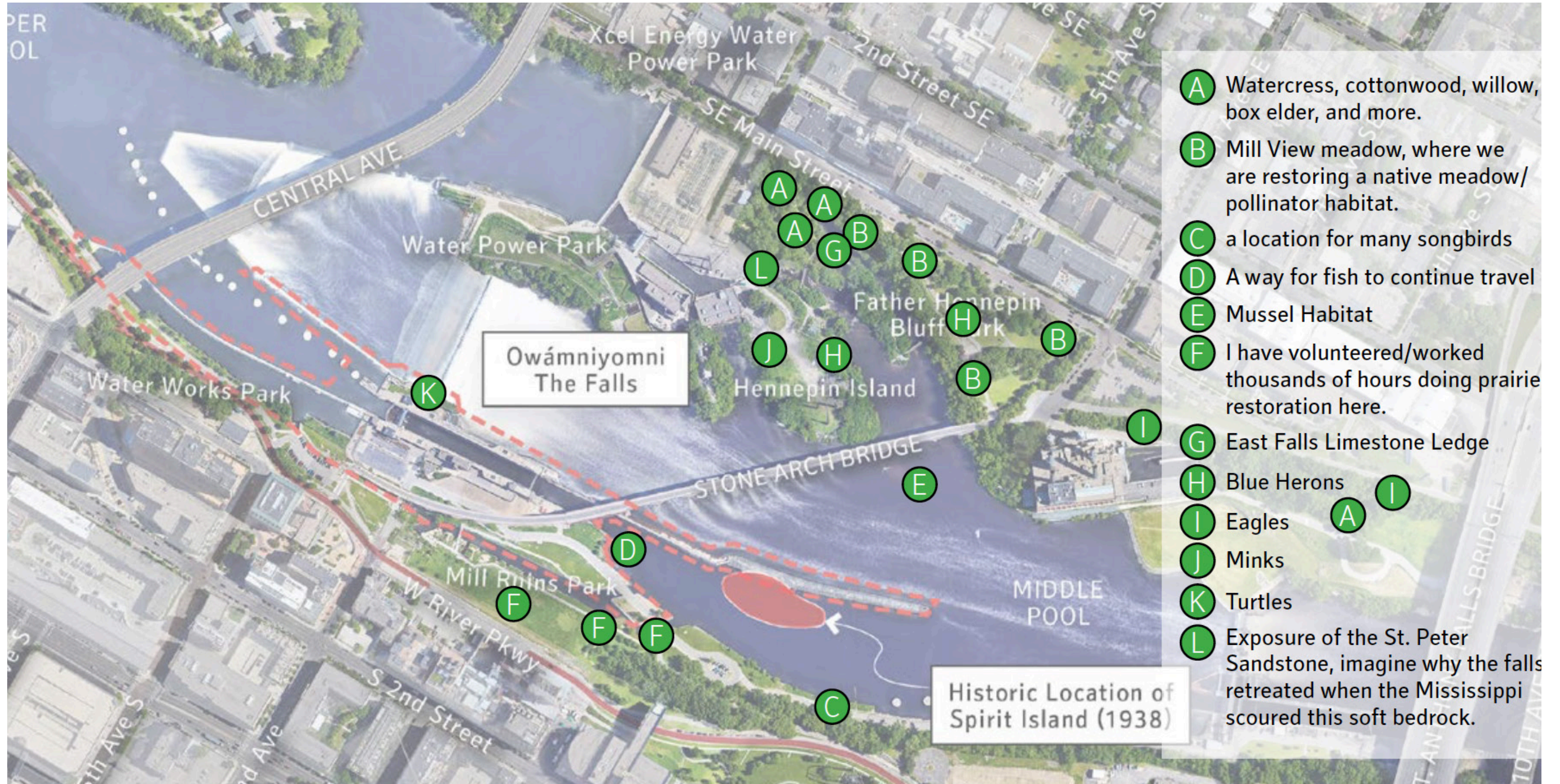


- A** The river is everything. Water, soul, lifeblood.
- B** The falls are sacred/Reflection
- C** Best place to feel the power of the Falls
- D** a way to see the Falls up close
- E** Great view of the Falls
- F** I love being by the river and being in a place where I can stand on dirt, with plants and animals around, and still see the city.
- G** The river is the touchstone for all that surrounds it.
- H** The river is important to me because I live near it and have grown up near it and it provides water and a home for animals, among other things. It is home.
- I** Where people can touch the river, fish, and hang out
- J** Taking a canoe through here
- K** Beauty/Awe



- A** Owamni Festival/Festivals
- B** Connecting/Meeting
- C** Museum/Education
- D** History/Walk & Learn
- E** Beauty, awe, industrial history, learning about Dakota history
- F** Although I would like to learn more, I recognize this as the heart of Minneapolis. It is of importance to the Dakota and settlers alike, but I think its long-term care is trusted most in the hands of the Dakota. It's an important symbol





- A** Watercress, cottonwood, willow, box elder, and more.
- B** Mill View meadow, where we are restoring a native meadow/pollinator habitat.
- C** a location for many songbirds
- D** A way for fish to continue travel
- E** Mussel Habitat
- F** I have volunteered/worked thousands of hours doing prairie restoration here.
- G** East Falls Limestone Ledge
- H** Blue Herons
- I** Eagles
- J** Minks
- K** Turtles
- L** Exposure of the St. Peter Sandstone, imagine why the falls retreated when the Mississippi scoured this soft bedrock.

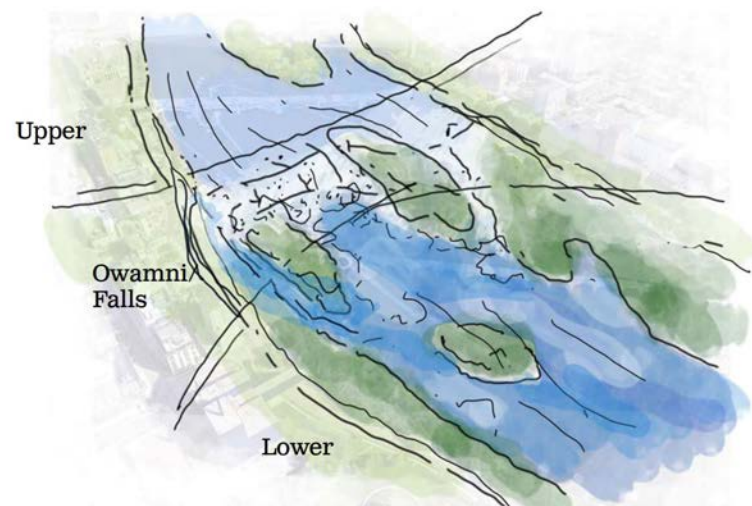
Survey No.2

What Can This Place Become?

Survey No.2 was released in May and received 76 responses through August 2022. The questionnaire prompted community members to envision the future of the Falls, aligning with the themes of Community Conversation No.3, No.4, and No.5, as well as summer field engagement and the launch of the Partnership & Programming Study.

Seeking to educate, as well as engage, Survey No.2 included text about the history of this place - Owámníyomni as a site for ceremony and connection, the destruction of Spirit Island, the imprisonment of Dakota at Fort Snelling, and forced abduction of children to attend Christian- and government-run boarding schools.

We also described three connected characters of the Falls, as interpreted by the Design Team: Above the Falls (the Upper), Within the Falls, and Below the Falls (the lower). Each of these characters lends itself to different design and programming opportunities.



The results of select Survey No.2 questions are represented here. View complete results at: TheFalls.org/resources/survey-2/

Survey Images: GGN.

“In terms of reconnecting communities to the River, I believe this location in particular represents an opportunity for that to mean more than just river-side access, but to mean actual engagement in, on, and WITH the river. She is so powerful at this point - dropping nearly 100 ft. In nature, this would be a place of power. A place where the force of the river is truly appreciated. Urban communities tend to be disconnected from the water. Native American communities as well. This is an opportunity to think about how the story of the river means more than just riverside views, but a place to learn to respect what SHE can teach us.”

Above / Upper



Open character with calm, passive water and a soft shoreline.

Within / The Falls



A place of connection and disruption. We experience water, light, and sound.

Below / Lower



An immersive experience, with varied edges and multitudes of diversity.

Which opportunities for each area resonate with you most? TOP RESPONSES:

- Shoreline habitat restoration
- Restoring health of water
- Walking paths
- Water ceremonies
- Experiencing Native language
- Restoration of dry prairies & cottonwood trees
- Restoring health of water
- Stprytelling
- Education about desecration of sacred places & impact of industrialization
- Rest areas / restrooms
- Ceremony space
- Observation area
- Habitat enhancement
- Restoring health of water
- Restoration of lost/buried banks & islands
- Education about river ecology & biology
- Restoration of rapids & flow
- Honoring Spirit Island

How do you identify as a stakeholder in this process?

RESIDENT	25
ENVIRONMENTALIST	15
HISTORIAN	8
EDUCATOR	8
PARKS STAKEHOLDER	8
INDIGENOUS PERSON	5
ORGANIZATION REP	5
TOURISM STAKEHOLDER	2
GOVERNMENT REP	1

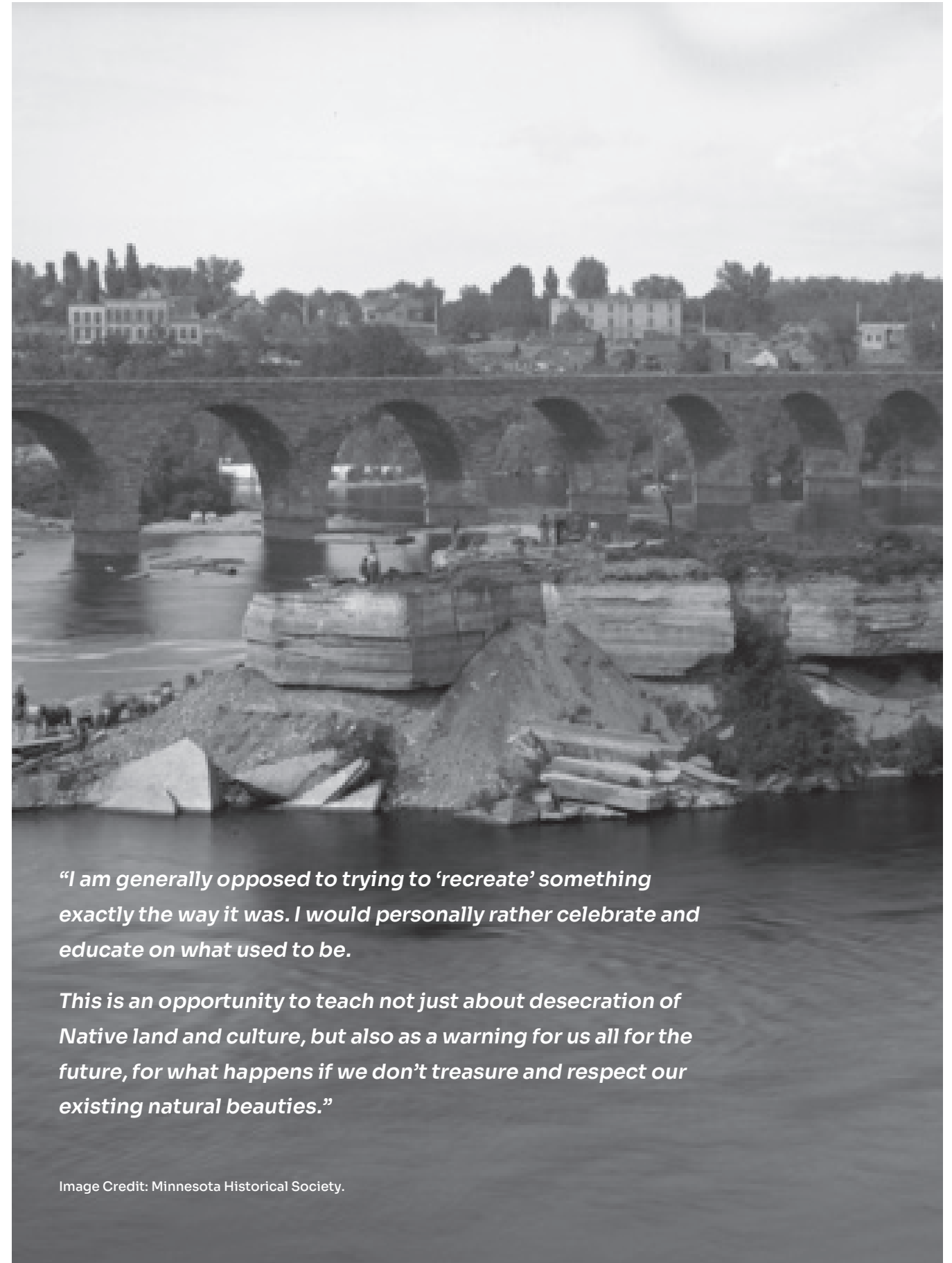
“This is a place of power with a history of diplomacy, among other things.

With Dakota people taking the lead, and other Native people contributing to the process, I believe some of the things/stories/people that have been violently excised from this place can support healing.”

“The Twin Cities are full of Eurocentric museums, history centers, and events. This place should be uniquely focused on Indigenous history in relation to natural history (e.g., geology, the river, native plants, birds and other wildlife, all seen through an Indigenous lens.”



Image Credit: Christopher Sticha Photography.



“I am generally opposed to trying to ‘recreate’ something exactly the way it was. I would personally rather celebrate and educate on what used to be.

This is an opportunity to teach not just about desecration of Native land and culture, but also as a warning for us all for the future, for what happens if we don’t treasure and respect our existing natural beauties.”

Image Credit: Minnesota Historical Society.

Seeking Alignment

Throughout the summer, Friends of the Falls and NACDI hosted pop-up engagement opportunities in communities throughout Minneapolis and on sovereign tribal lands.

We introduced the project to new audiences, shared the history of this place and its significance to the Dakota people, and heard feedback about early design and programming ideas. The comments, questions, and reactions we received positioned the design team to further refine the design concepts and align the public's goals with direction set by the Native Partnership Council.

1,187 participants across 27 events lent their time and perspectives to this process.

We heard support for the role of the Native Partnership Council, water flowing at the site, wildlife habitat, dedicated ceremonial space, and water activities like kayaking, portaging, and boat trips.

Most participants preferred landscape improvements rather than built structures. We also heard that the public needed more clarity about the stakeholders involved, logistics of land conveyance, and expected costs.

POP-UP ENGAGEMENT

ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES HOSTED AT PUBLIC EVENTS, INCLUDING:

- Prairie Island Wacipi (Powwow)
- Four Sisters Farmers Market
- East Phillips Carnival
- Open Streets: Franklin
- Open Streets: East Lake
- Open Streets: West Broadway
- Owamni Falling Water Festival
- Prospect Park National Night Out
- Stone Arch Bridge Festival
- Water Works Park Music & Movies Series
- Mill City Farmers Market
- Weekends at the Upper Lock Visitor Center

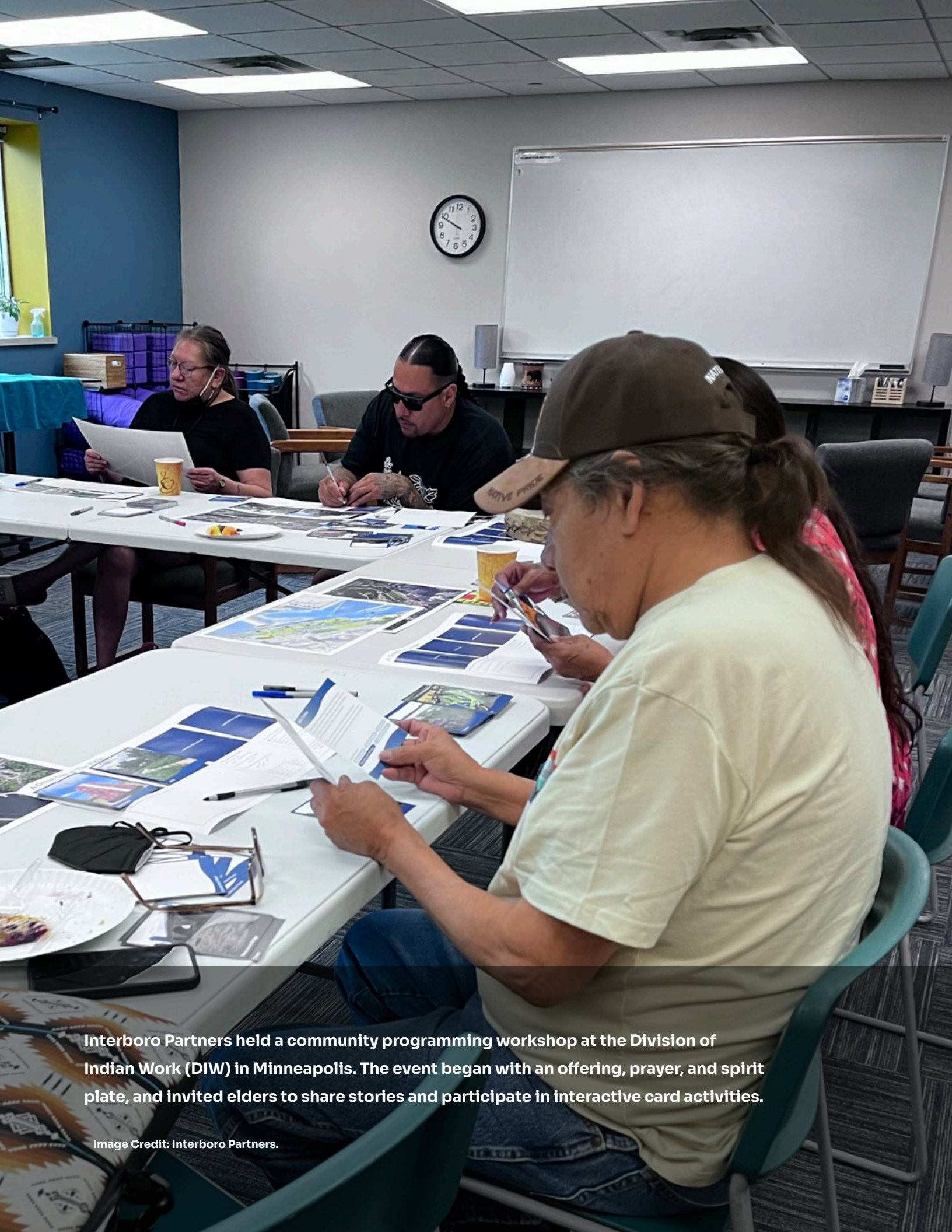


Pop-up engagement hosted by Friends of the Falls and NACDI
Image Credit: Friends of the Falls.



Throughout the summer, Friends of the Falls and NACDI hosted pop-up engagement opportunities in communities throughout Minneapolis and on sovereign tribal lands.

Image Credit: Friends of the Falls.



Interboro Partners held a community programming workshop at the Division of Indian Work (DIW) in Minneapolis. The event began with an offering, prayer, and spirit plate, and invited elders to share stories and participate in interactive card activities.

Image Credit: Interboro Partners.

Authentic Partnerships

As dialogue progressed around design, community members voiced how they imagined the site would be activated. This place should celebrate the living history of the Dakota and other Indigenous communities, continuing to educate, as well as engage, Native and non-Native communities alike.

Feedback received in Community Conversations, interactive surveys, and during field engagement reinforced that we should develop programs and partnerships aligned with the following themes:

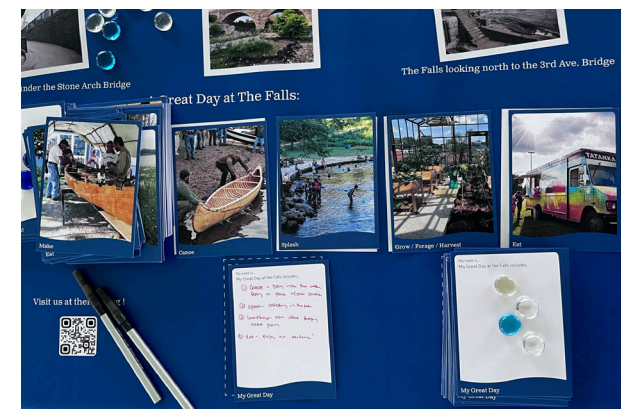
- Water is Life
- Arts & Culture
- Ceremony
- Knowledge Sharing & Language
- Indigenous Food Systems

Friends of the Falls and NACDI engaged the urban planning and community engagement firm Interboro Partners to launch a Partnership & Programming Study focused on these topics.

To connect meaningfully with youth and elders, Interboro thoughtfully teamed with local partners MIGIZI - a non-profit that nurtures the educational, social, economic and cultural development of American Indian youth - and Division of Indian Work - which supports urban American Indian people through culturally-based education, traditional healing approaches, and leadership development.

Together, the firms are hosting listening sessions, on-site focus groups, mobile engagement stations, and one-on-one interviews with the Native community and identifying potential partnerships.

The Partnership & Programming Study is included as Part 4 of the First Season Report.



Engagement events and workshop activities hosted by Interboro Partners, with MIGIZI and Division of Indian Work. Image Credit: Interboro Partners.

In partnership with the Minneapolis Water Taxi, Interboro Partners invited local community members and elders onto the water above the Falls to share stories about the River and consider potential programs and partnerships for *The Falls Initiative*.

Image Credit: Friends of the Falls



Creating A Shared Vision

Throughout the engagement process, we aimed to build consensus and “weave” together the guidance of the Native Partnership Council with comments heard from other key audiences.

The Council returned to circle after each Community Conversation to reflect on the dialogue, as well as comments received through surveys and field engagement, and ensure there was alignment with the project’s core values.

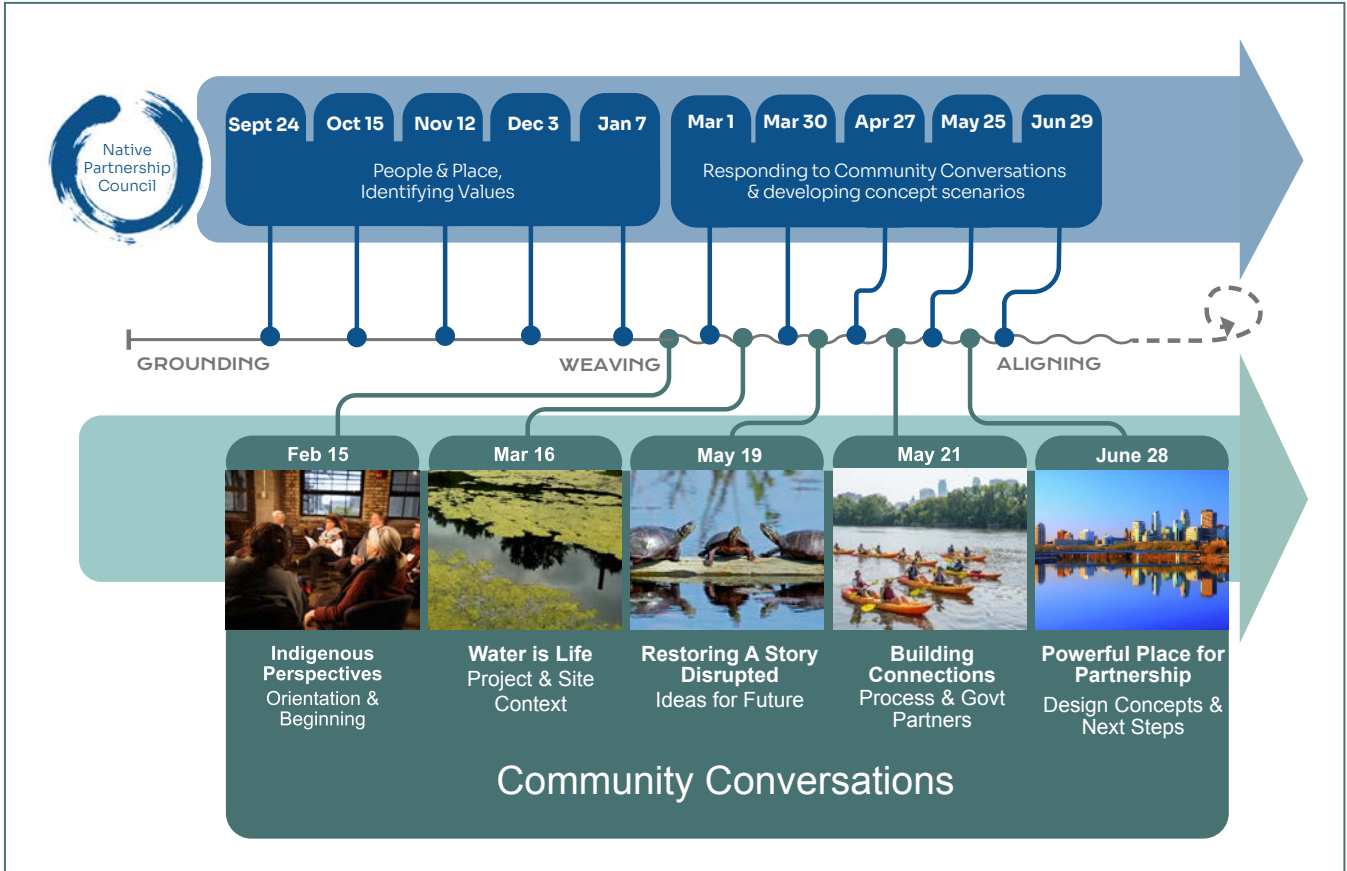
This positive feedback loop informed how stories and conversations could be translated into early design ideas and programming priorities for the site.

By first grounding the engagement process in Indigenous perspectives, then taking time to weave together community stories and sentiments, and, finally, finding alignment, we have been able to begin creating a shared vision for the future of this place.

Read more about the vision of the Native Partnership Council and early design ideas for the future of the site in Parts 1 & 3 of the First Season Report.



Image Credit: Drew Arrieta.



Graphic depicting the Native Partnership Council & Community Conversation meeting sequence. Image Credit: Friends of the Falls.

The Next Season

The first season of work for *The Falls Initiative*, September 2021 through December 2022, might be considered “winter”, a time for connection, storytelling, and preparation for what’s to come.

The first season of work included the initial convening of the Native Partnership Council, broader community engagement defined as Phases 4 and 5 in *The Falls Initiative* Community Engagement Plan, and development of a early design ideas for this place.

We also imagined how programming rooted in Native values can enliven this place and make it feel distinctly welcoming to the Dakota and other Indigenous communities.

We now approach our next season of work. In this “spring” season, as the flora and fauna come alive again, we move closer to implementation.

We consider models of ownership and operations - particularly Native ownership - and the technical considerations for securing land ownership from the federal government.

And we explore the collective impact of this work - asking ourselves how *The Falls Initiative* can support and reinforce the work of other projects amplifying Native voices, locally along the riverfront and on a national stage.

The early design ideas presented in Part 3 are just that - first interpretations of how we can visualize the vision put forth by the Native Partnership Council. In this next season, we will bring additional Native voices and experts to the table to analyze their impacts, identify priorities for early enhancements to the site, and advance this shared vision further.



“The vision of the Native Partnership Council is to create a place of healing at Owámniyomni that restores connections to Haha Wakpa, Dakota culture, and language; teaches us to honor and care for all our relatives, including the land and water; and addresses the parallel trauma of colonization by recognizing the transformative power of this place.”

Wókizi. Ihdúwitayapi. Waúŋspekhiye. Wówaš'ake. Wówakhaŋ.
Heal. Connect. Teach. Strength. Power.



TheFalls.org @TheFallsMpls



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