

Minnehaha Creek Meander - Methodist Hospital Project
November 12, 2010 @ 12:30PM
Methodist Hospital Boardwalk (east of Louisiana Ave.)



Project Description:

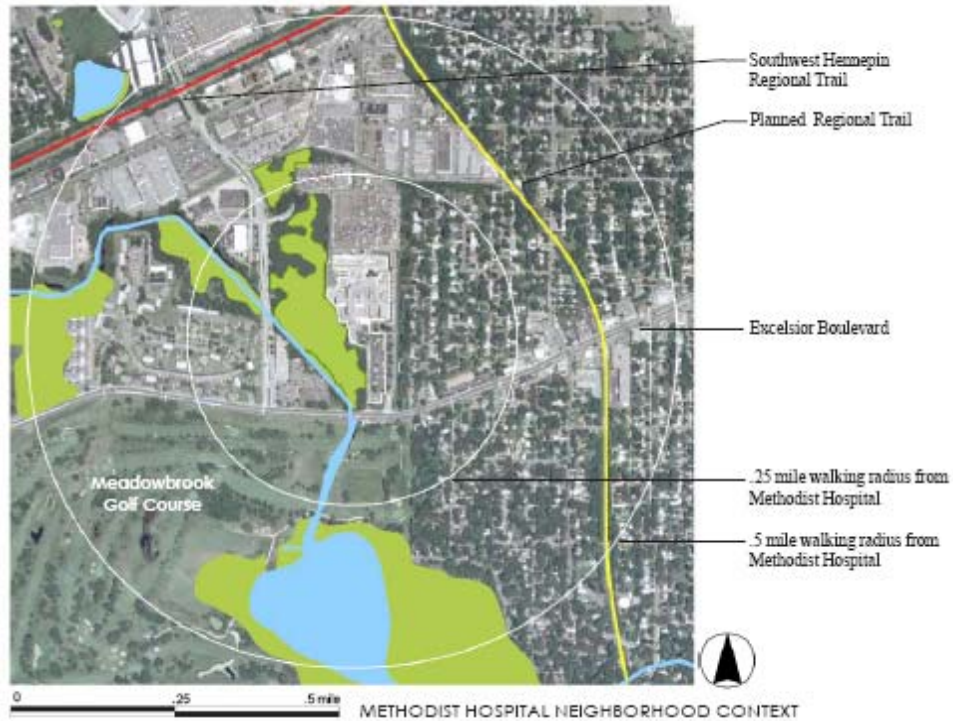
Methodist Hospital is located in the north east quadrant of Louisiana Ave. and Excelsior Blvd. in the City of St. Louis Park. A historically straightened and ditched reach of Minnehaha Creek travels through the site north west to south east under Louisiana Ave. and then Excelsior Blvd. into Meadowbrook Gold Course.

The concept for the Methodist Hospital – Minnehaha Creek Remeander gradually evolved during conversations between Methodist Hospital and Minnehaha Creek Watershed District.

In 2004, Park Nicollet, the administrative authority over Methodist Hospital, filed a Cynthia Krieg Grant Application with the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) for assistance in the construction of rain gardens on the Methodist Hospital property to improve the quality of stormwater runoff draining from the site into Minnehaha Creek.

The Methodist Hospital site currently comprises a number of parcels around and adjacent to Minnehaha Creek within the City of St. Louis Park. Given the proximity to the creek and the desire of the property owner to improve and utilize the natural site features for the benefit of the hospital patients and visitors, following review and

approval of the Cynthia Krieg Grant Application, the MCWD Board of Managers directed Staff to investigate other opportunities for partnership on environmental improvements between MCWD and Methodist Hospital in the future.



In the fall of 2004, MCWD hired a consultant to develop a concept plan of potential environmental improvements for the site to improve the existing conditions, restore natural features, provide amenities to the hospital and its visitors, increase public access and provide for educational opportunities. The consultant completed a concept plan illustrated below:



The project concepts included the restoration of a stream meander to the existing straight-line configuration of the creek, wetland vegetation restoration, construction of an elevated boardwalk and canoe landings to increase public access, and educational signage throughout the site.

Following the development of conceptual plans (see attached), the District and Methodist Hospital worked on finalizing design and the development of a partnership agreement that specified the funding partnership for construction.

Why MCWD Chose to Partner:

Minnehaha Creek Watershed District is a special purpose unit of government charged with protection and enhancement of water resources within its 181 square mile jurisdiction (see background document on Minnehaha Creek Watershed).

The Methodist Hospital Project Partnership enabled MCWD to implement a project that enhanced a regional resource (Minnehaha Creek), provided benefit to its private partner and its clients while also providing for increased recreation and education within a heavily urbanized area of the Minnehaha Creek corridor. All of these project elements are mirrored in the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District's Mission Statement shown below:

Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Mission Statement:

The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District is committed to a leadership role in protecting, improving and managing the surface waters and affiliated groundwater resources within the district, including their relationships to the ecosystems of which they are an integral part, through regulation, **capital projects, education, cooperative endeavors**, and other programs based on **sound science, innovative thinking**, an informed and engaged constituency, and cost effective use of public funds.

Capital Projects

This project was constructed through the District's Capital Improvement Program which utilizes the District's ad valorem property tax levy to fund investments in the construction of water resource related improvements. This project met several of the MCWD's overarching goals to improve water resources directly and indirectly through education, improvements to recreational access, stormwater runoff improvements, and improvement in ecological integrity and habitat.

Education

MCWD worked cooperatively with the Hospital to integrate educational opportunities through the plan development process. Methodist Hospital is a significant resource within the community and is close in proximity to the Excelsior Corridor, the Southwest Regional Trail (future LRT) and Minnehaha Creek. For these reasons, the District was able to capitalize on public outreach opportunities. Interpretive signage and information explaining project elements are posted along the boardwalk trail.

Cooperative Endeavors

The project site is located on private property, which presented the opportunity for the District to work cooperatively with a private organization. Methodist Hospital draws visitors and staff from throughout the region to this location. In subsequent years the District has enjoyed several public-private partnerships modeled after the Methodist-MCWD project.

Sound Science

Scientific studies have shown that patients respond better and heal faster in situations where they have visual and physical access to natural areas. The patients of Methodist Hospital, which come from throughout the community, have the opportunity to safely access a natural area recreational amenity literally at their doorstep. Science also played a key role in the physical stabilization of the new stream channel which relied on several innovative techniques (highlighted during tour, see attached plan set).

Innovative Thinking

This project was innovative because it provided positive impact within the community on many levels. Channel sinuosity was increased promoting water to leave the banks in certain flow conditions and interact with the adjacent riparian wetland. Residents from the neighborhood will have a recreational amenity to enjoy nature throughout the year. Further, patients at the hospital will receive therapeutic benefits and safe access to a natural area.

Research shows that patients recover more quickly when they are able to experience the outdoor environment — directly or visually — while healing. The wetland and creek at Methodist Hospital are a way to increase the Hospital's connection to the outdoor environment in a beautiful way that goes far beyond the traditional "healing garden."

The boardwalk trail through the wetland at Methodist Hospital is envisioned as a safe and secure way for patients and their family and friends, as well as the surrounding community, to enjoy the diverse natural environment along Minnehaha Creek. Resting stations with seating and interpretive signs, access to the creek, wildlife habitat and observation, and the ever-changing palette of native grasses and wildflowers throughout the seasons will make it a rich sensory experience.

The concept was inspired by Methodist Hospital's new Heart and Vascular Center. Like the human heart's four chambers, the trail design is composed of four spaces: three trail loops and an area designed to attract wildlife. A new meander in Minnehaha Creek, which restores the channel more closely to its original morphology, is the hydrologic circulatory system that ties the entire design together.

Presentation Details:

During the tour of the site on Friday November 12, MCWD staff will provide additional detail on overall and individual project costs, highlight innovative streambank stabilization practices and discuss the benefits of the meander, wildlife pond, boardwalk and educational signage.

If you have questions in advance of the tour, please contact Renae Clark at Rclark@minnehahacreek.org