

February 2015

## Restoration Protocol - Valhalla Park Restoration, Florence Township, MN

### Documents/Tools

2012 Park Plan

([http://www.florencetwp.org/Documents/Florence\\_Park\\_Plan\\_120918\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.florencetwp.org/Documents/Florence_Park_Plan_120918_FINAL.pdf))

McGhie & Betts Valhalla Restoration Design: Maps and written Report

(<http://www.florencetwp.org/Documents/ValhallaParkDesignMcGhieBetts2014.pdf>)

SchroederValhalla GIS Map

<http://www.florencetwp.org/Documents/SchroederValhallaMap2014.pdf>

DNR list of Invasive Species

(<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/terrestrialplants/index.html>)

McGhie list of Replacement Plantings

(<http://www.florencetwp.org/Documents/ValhallaParkDesignMcGhieBetts2014.pdf>)

Florence Township website

(<http://www.florencetwp.org/>)

Wabasha Tree Company - Approved Arborist

(<http://www.wabashatreecompany.com/>)

### Forms

Park Activity Application

(<http://www.florencetwp.org/Documents/PAArevised02152014.pdf>)

### Timeline

November 2011	Florence Township Parks Advisory Committee appointed by Florence Town Board
July 2012	Nancy Eustice and Bill Flies presentations on Valhalla Park history
August 2012	Park Commission Bylaws and Ordinances Finalized
September 2012	Park Commission established by Florence Town Board
December 2012	Presentations: Jeff Broberg and Bill Bleckwenn, McGhie & Betts, Inc Lynnette Nadeau and Kieth Hill, Goat Peak Ranch
January 2013	Presentation: Mary Vogel, The Center for Changing Landscapes, U of M
February 2013	Presentation: Gary Johnson, Department of Forest Services, U of M
May 2013	Presentation: Tim Schlagenhaft, Hiawatha Valley Audubon Society
July 2013	Presentation: Bill Bleckwenn, McGhie & Betts, Inc, Valhalla Restoration Design
Proposal	
August 2013	Presentation: Bill Bleckwenn, McGhie & Betts, Inc, Workshop - Residents' Vision for Valhalla
January 2014	McGhie Design Proposal Approved by Florence Town Board
May 2014	McGhie Design completed
October 2014	Dennis Dick, Wabasha Tree Service - approved as Arborist for Valhalla Restoration

### Introductory Comments

The goal of Florence Township is to restore one of its beautiful parks. A park that has fallen into disrepair through neglect. A park that represents a 150 year old legacy the township received from its founding fathers.

Through its restoration efforts, Florence will address an infestation of invasives that threatens Valhalla's viability. Over time it will employ sound forestry practices to reclaim an important Historic Vernacular Landscape, and create a sustainable habitat for both plants and animals. The township will seek to address current erosion issues as they are discovered, and to prevent new issues from arising. We have sought the advice from many professionals and in 2014 commissioned a consultant report that provided a roadmap for our restoration efforts today, and our maintenance efforts in the future.

Funding of the restoration will come from a variety of sources including public entities, foundations and endowments, and private individuals. Equal emphasis will be placed upon all steps of the restoration in the budgeting of contributions to ensure that the township achieves a true *Restoration*. The township is committed to not allowing the project to devolve into an exercise in brush cutting and tree removal. Smaller donations will be budgeted for smaller restoration areas to ensure adequate funds for both removal and replanting. Larger donations will allow for work to be completed on larger, or more challenging areas of the park. In each case, available funds will be budgeted to achieve both the removal and replanting stages of restoration.

Valhalla poses a forestry challenge in that its terrain and conditions can be very different. Large portions of it consist of steep slopes, with heavy infestations of buckthorn in close proximity to residential structures. Other areas are not so heavily infested, are on more level ground, and are farther away from structures. Florence recognizes the Park's diverse features and has enlisted the help of McGhie and Betts, a landscape engineering firm, to create a professional Design for the Park; and an Arborist to effectively implement the Design. The Park's diverse landscape precludes a uniform approach. With the help of professionals the township believes it will be able to address the unique needs of each portion of the Park. Some of these needs will be easy to anticipate, others will be discovered and addressed along the way by professionals.

Finally, as with many small towns, no two persons want the same thing. The planning stages of the process have at times been contentious. Part of the Design process involved working with a professional Public Communications Facilitator to make sure all residents had a voice in the process. The township has invested 3 years into meetings and discussions between stakeholders. As the township prepares to embark on the implementation of its restoration, it is confident that it has heard from its stakeholders, and is moving forward in a spirit of community-based compromise and commitment to Valhalla Park.

## Restoration Protocol Steps

### **Step 1**

Objective:

Create a platform for subsequent steps by removing invasives and low-priority trees, e.g. green ash, most black locust, box elder, sumac, and some hackberry.

Outcome:

This step will result in a thinning of the woods and enable Step 2 to proceed. It will also reveal existing erosion and sedimentation issues that have arisen due to neglect of Valhalla.

Resources:

Wabasha Tree Company will perform this Step.

### **Step 2**

Objective:

Gradually implement portals consistent with the McGhie & Betts, Valhalla Restoration Design (VRD). Trees greater than 6" dbh will be marked for removal with colored ribbons. The community will have 7 days to review the marked trees and provide feedback to the Park Commission. Marked trees that are reasonably contested will not be removed and will be discussed at the following Park Commission meeting. No removal work will be performed before the 7 day review period is completed. Trees marked will include hazard trees that threaten humans or other priority trees, and some trees that interfere with view portals indicated on the VRD. This step will avoid creating erosion or sedimentation issues.

Outcome:

The portals will provide views of Lake Pepin from the east side of Valhalla. They will vary in size, both in width and height, and in degree of thinning. Consistent with the McGhie and Betts VRD, some views will be open with primarily underbrush for vegetation, while other views will include trees that partially obscure the view, to preserve desirable hard-woods. This step will observe the importance of this park's role as an Historic Vernacular Landscape.

Comment:

McGhie's Design focused the location of portals where they already existed for the most part. Their Design is biased to preserve hard-woods, and avoid creating erosion issues. The consideration of canopy is a priority. In areas that require more extensive ground cover to prevent erosion, as in the case of steep slopes, canopy may be thinned to facilitate the growth of ground cover. In other areas where erosion is not a large concern, canopy will be preserved to provide desirable habitat for animals. Improving and preserving animal habitat is especially important for birds, on this important stop along the Mississippi flyway.

Stipulations:

Priority hardwoods listed in the VRD will be trimmed, not removed in non-view zones. Priority hardwoods may be removed to thin canopy to promote undergrowth for erosion control, or to implement VRD view zone goals. Heritage trees, defined as trees greater than 24" dbh in the VRD, are candidates for trimming but not removal except where the heritage trees pose a hazard according to professionals employed by the Township.

Resources:

Wabasha Tree Company will perform this Step.

**Step 3**

Objective:

Address erosion and sedimentation issues in both existing and potentially new at-risk areas. WTS will provide onsite risk assessments of current and potential erosion areas before, during, and after Steps 1 and 2 are completed. They will draw on the expertise of both private and public resources to complement their replanting work.

Outcome:

This step will result in a healthier park with better habitat for vegetation, fewer erosion and sedimentation issues, providing more beautiful views from the east, and sustainable animal habit.

Stipulations:

A variety of replantings will be employed depending upon the needs of the area involved. Candidates for species to be used in replanting include:

Native, fruit-producing shrubs:

Viburnum trilobum (aka, American Cranberrybush Viburnum, American Cranberrybush, Kalyna or Highbush or High Bush Cranberry), scarlet elder, pagoda dogwood, hazelnut, common elderberry, serviceberry, downy arrow wood, nannyberry, choke cherry, and wild plum,

Grasses:

cool season grass mixtures initially, then inter-seeding native grass mixtures once slopes are well vegetated in some areas. Erosion control blankets and turf reinforced mats will be used in concentrated areas where seed establishment is at risk of being washed away.

Resources:

Wabasha Tree Company will perform this Step.

**Step 4**

Objective:

To avoid Valhalla falling back into a state of disrepair in the future.

Resources:

Valhalla will be monitored by the Park Commission and maintained by the community through the PAA process, and arborists on an ongoing basis. All future maintenance is required to comply with the VDR.

**Step 5**

**Stipulation:**

Upon review of completed work in all the previous steps, fines will be levied on individuals responsible for removing trees without Park Commission approval.

Conclusion

Restoring a park like Valhalla with its history, its beauty, and its passionate neighbors is a challenge. Florence Township believes that it is up to the challenge, and has worked hard to develop a reasonable, environmentally responsible, community-based plan to restore a parkland at risk. Florence looks forward to recovering and caring for this important community resource as it embarks on the next steps in the process.