

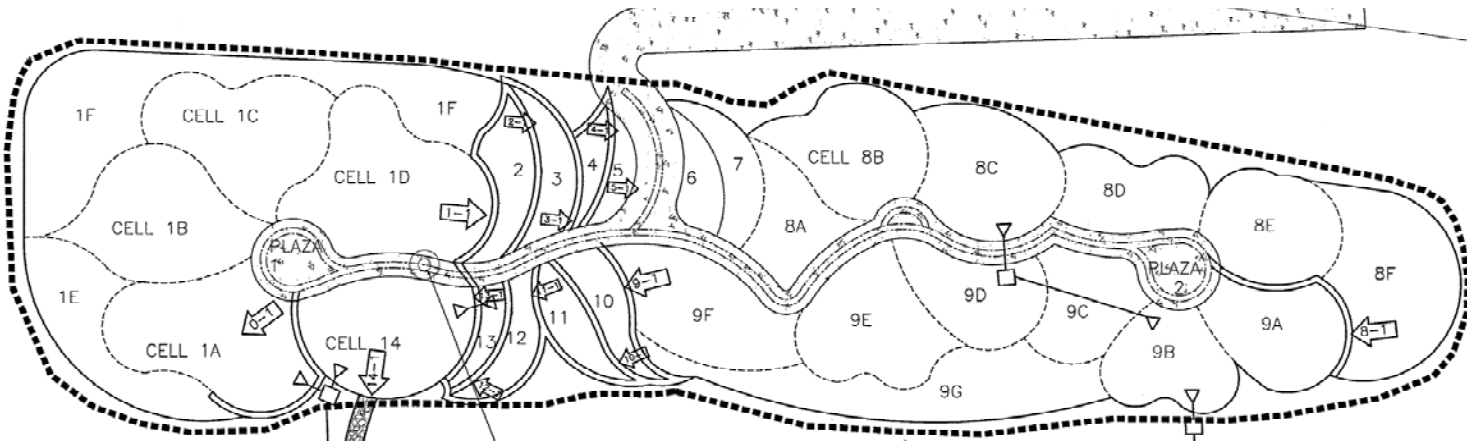
Fall, 2007

Volume 5 Issue 1

Sweetwater

A Newsletter of the Sweetwater Alliance

City Council Neither Approves or Rejects Stormwater Garden



On Monday, July 9th, 2007 the Duluth City Council defeated a resolution to remove the water garden from the Bayfront site, but took no action to approved either the ½ acre or 2-acre parcel of land for the Stormwater Garden project. Fifth district Councilor Stover had introduced a hostile resolution to remove the water garden from the Bayfront site totally; fortunately this resolution failed on a 4 to 5 vote. Thanks to Councilors Ness, Johnson, Reinert, Little, and Gilbert for their support.

The two plans (1/2 acre is displayed above) were designed by Patricia Johanson and engineered by Barr Engineering. Each cell will hold a different wetland plant species, with some cells arranged in the shape of the Swamp Rose (*Rosa plustris*). The leaves of the rose are waterfalls flowing in opposing directions. Walkways and interpretative signs will provide access and educate the public about stormwater, the plants and ecological processes taking place. The project will provide a link between the Munger Bike Trail, the walkway to the Depot and downtown Duluth, the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center, Canal Park shops, hotels and restaurants, and the Lakewalk.

During the City Council meeting it was suggested that Sweetwater Alliance bring the project back for discussion after the Mayoral election this fall. We will consider this and other options to expand the project on the Bayfront after the November elections.

What's not to like about this project?!

Jill Jacoby, Executive Director

Standing outside of city hall after the council meeting a colleague stated, "I don't know how you keep going". Later that night I wondered if the question was really how, or why?

Today I walked along Lake Superior with my dog friend. I often walk along the shore to ground myself, to think and gain clarity. I go to the beach to learn from my dog on the art of being fully present and committed to rock and water and stick! I thought about why I continue to do this work. Why it is important? I waded into the water, which was unusually warm. I stood looking for agates. I felt the current against my legs and feet as it moved in towards shore and then back out again. Why is this project important?

My first, almost knee jerk response, focuses on the environment. The wetland plants and the animals that rely on those wetlands are important. The fact that Minnesota once had 18 million acres of wetlands and now barely has 8 million – this is important. Wetlands play a crucial ecological role, yet we fill them in and build over them as if they were nothing more than wastelands.

But it is more than the environment that makes this project important.

The location of this project is important. We have been criticized for the location of this project, and I have heard many times that the Bayfront is valuable land. That is precisely why this project needs to be on the Bayfront. Not only is the project about water and the environment, it is also about education. Visibility and connection to the water; the very same reasons the aquarium is located on the waterfront, is why we have been adamant about the Bayfront location. Some detractors have gone as far as saying that the Bayfront is not a naturally wet area therefore we should go elsewhere. To this I wish to gently remind the public, that before there was an industrial port, a tourist district, roads or buildings – there were wetlands along the shore of what is now the Bayfront. Those wetlands have been drained and filled long ago to make room for development. Our location allows us to bring native wetland plants to a habitat where they once grew, while simultaneously teaching people about their beauty and ecological functions.

Of all the reasons why this project is important, one stands out the most. It's simply a cool project! With the merger of art, education, and water treatment, this project will be unique, dare I say a tourist attraction, which will contribute to the economy in the same ways that the rose garden and lakewalk do.

So, why I keep trying to move this project forward has no one simple answer. It's a cool project, what's not to like about it?

Sweetwater Alliance welcomes our newest board member - Amy Wicklund



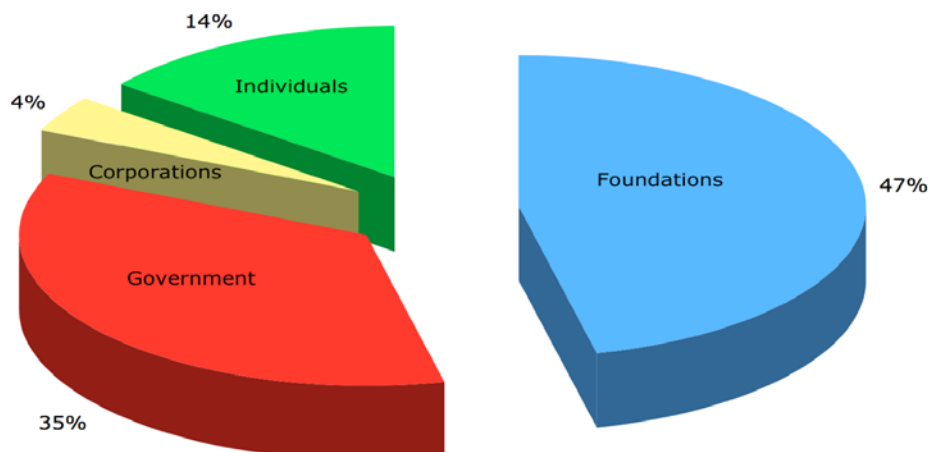
Born and raised in Duluth, I lived several other places in the US. I used my undergraduate degree from Harvard in economics and my graduate degree from the Humphrey Institute in public affairs and urban planning to create a commercial real estate career in several of the country's largest markets before returning to Duluth. As a career real estate developer, I recognize the value of the public space Sweetwater Alliance will create as the stormwater garden.



Sweetwater Alliance Funding Sources

Between the years 2002 – 2006 Sweetwater Alliance has raised \$180,000 from a variety of supporters (see chart below). Sixty-seven percent of those funds have gone towards design of the Stormwater Garden, with the balance funding education and outreach, operating expenses, and part-time executive director salary. Thanks to all the individuals and foundations that have helped us with money, donations, time, and support!

Funding Sources 2002-2006





Please help support our work by sending a donation in the enclosed envelope.

American Toad Photo: Jay Jacoby

If you support us...now is the time to support us!



PO BOX 3100
Duluth MN 55803
218-728-5392
www.sweetwateralliance.org