

Our History

Friends of the Falls, originally Friends of the Lock and Dam, was founded in 2016 after the Upper Lock closed to commercial navigation. We sought to transform the lock into a destination visitor center, responding to comprehensive plans adopted by the City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board, among others.

In its launch years, Friends of the Falls convened a coalition of stakeholders from over two dozen local organizations. These entities came to acknowledge not only the site's ecological significance and industrial history, but also its cultural heritage as home of the Dakota people. We recognized the need to broaden project engagement and put this missing narrative at the forefront. Early visualizations of the project have been set aside to create space for the untold stories of this site.

Milestones

In December 2020, Congress directed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the current owner of the lock), to convey land surrounding the Upper Lock to the City of Minneapolis or its designee for public use. A disposition study regarding the remaining lock infrastructure is currently underway.

Friends of the Falls also initiated a partnership with NACDI - the Native American Community Development Institute. Friends of the Falls and NACDI lead engagement efforts for The Falls Initiative.

Engagement

Under the leadership of NACDI and Dakota Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, Friends of the Falls is working to create a Native partnership council to guide the planning process and counsel the project design team. Throughout 2021 and 2022, we will also engage with riverfront communities and the broader public.

Together, we will develop a true shared vision for Owámniyomni, the Falls.



