BERGER FOUNTAIN RESTORATION PROJECT

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
State Arts and Cultural Heritage Annual Report
7/01/2024 - 6/30/25

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Find more information about the Berger Fountain Reconstruction project:
www.minneapolisparks.org/berger-fountain

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Project Overview

The Berger Fountain, known as the “dandelion fountain” to most, was installed in 1975 by Benjamin Berger and has been a beloved neighborhood and regional landmark in Loring Park and a favorite location for wedding photographers and children ever since. Locals and tourists alike stop by Loring Park to see the fountain in all its glory. Ben Berger was a park board commissioner and, after seeing a dandelion fountain in Australia, fundraised to build a sister fountain right here in Minnesota. It has become a historic icon in Minneapolis and its park system – during several planning processes throughout the last many decades, the community has strongly communicated their desire to preserve, maintain, and restore the fountain for future generations.

The rehabilitation of Berger Fountain was identified as a priority in the Loring Park Neighborhood Revitalization Plan (NRP) Phase I Plan, the Loring Park NRP Phase II Plan, and the Loring Park Neighborhood Small Area Plan; all three plans were adopted by the Minneapolis City Council in 1995, 2008, and 2013, respectively. The Downtown Public Realm Plan, adopted in 2016, also identified the Berger Fountain as a priority in its planning. A Berger Fountain Task Force (Task Force) was formed in 2014 to work independently and collaboratively with the MPRB to improve maintenance and support for the fountain.

In 2017, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) adopted the Downtown Service Area Master Plan (DSAMP) which set goals for long-term development and improvements to parks

guided by extensive engagement from the communities that MPRB serves. After months of engaging with community, DSAMP outlined a high-level vision for Loring Park, including a vision for Berger Fountain and the surrounding park space. This vision included refurbishing and retaining the "dandelion" fountain alongside additional community amenities, such as considering a water feature, and adding a plaza and additional seating areas to increase community access (see pages 4-73 through 4-77 for DSAMP Berger Fountain content: https://www.minneapolisparks.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/MPRB_DSAMP_Nov2017_ch4.pdf.)

MPRB community partners, which includes Citizens for a Loring Park Community and Friends of Loring Park, have continued to fundraise identify funds for construction. The project has benefited from a large of support and grassroots engagement/funds from community members across the city and country who love the fountain and want to see it back in working order.

Duration of the project:

In summer 2020, the Berger Fountain ceased to operate because to deferred maintenance and capacity due to the pandemic, which heightened the need to move rehabilitation forward. In June 2022, landscape architect Damon Farber LLC was hired to complete a rehabilitation assessment and preliminary cost estimate for future work. Damon Farber's assessment informed next steps in the process. In 2023, MPRB hired Damon Farber again to engage the community further and complete a final design concept and initial cost estimate.

The Arts and Cultural Heritage grant has allowed MPRB to proceed forward to complete the design development work in 2024 and 2025 and begin Phase 1 of construction in Spring 2026. These elements were not funded previously, which has helped MPRB move forward to construction.

Project Budget Information

MPRB in partnership with the Berger Fountain Task Force, a community-led volunteer group working to help solidify funds for the Berger Fountain Restoration project.

MPRB originally requested $2M during the 2024 legislative session. Through the successful advocacy work of policymakers and community members, **MPRB was granted $200,000 from the Arts and Cultural Heritage grant.**

The initial breakdown of funds for the grant cycle include:

- $ 5,000 State administration costs
- $ 99,300 Cost of 60% Design Development work through Landscape Architecture firm
- $ 95,700 funds available for phase 1 construction

  $200,000 TOTAL

Actuals for July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025

	WHAT	AMOUNT	SOURCE
-	State administration costs:	$5,000	Arts and Cultural Heritage Grant
-	60% Design Development:	$98,684.50	Arts and Cultural Heritage Grant
-	90/100% Construction Documents	$22,383.63	Other MPRB funds/donations

The direct expenses and administration costs of the project(s): We haven't billed staff time to this project since 2023, however, we have documented over 250 hours of MPRB Planning Division staff time (Overhead) in reporting period.

The number of full-time equivalents funded under the project(s): The grant is funding no staff time on this project, the funds are going directly to design and construction of the fountain.

For pass-through, noncompetitive grants, the entity acting as the fiscal agent or administering agency and a point of contact for additional information: N/A

All frameworks developed for future uses of each fund: N/A

Project Outcomes

Original Proposed Outcomes

The proposed outcomes in the original grant application in 2024 included the following:

Quantitative

- 100 residents donate to the fountain project
- Fundraising and communication partnerships in the community increase by 50%
- Annual park visitors who visit Loring Park near and around the fountain increase by 5%
- Number of arts/cultural partnerships who share information about the fountain

Qualitative

- Increased awareness of the history of the fountain and its relation to the community
- Increased awareness of the LGBTQ+'s connection to the fountain/site

Original Project Timeline

- Completion of Design Development phase (60% drawings) (2024)
- Restoration of fountain complete (2025)
- Construction of improved and accessible plaza complete (2025)
- Number of culture and art events held at or near the fountain following construction (2025+)

The quantitative and qualitative outcomes and timeline were initially created with the understanding that the Berger Fountain restoration project would be completed by the end of the grant cycle. Once MPRB staff determined that the timeline would be delayed, it would inevitably delay many of the deliverables that cannot be measured until the

Updated Work Plan Outcomes

In May 2025, based on the updated construction timeline, MPRB submitted a work plan update, which changed both Qualitative and Quantitative outcomes. The majority of the initial outcomes were created with the understanding that much of the original outcomes would not be able to be completed by the end of the grant cycle.

The original ask for grant funding was for $2M and with the granted $200,000, it was clear that the Arts and Heritage Grant would be able to help us complete Phase 1 construction and design work, setting up the agency to begin Phase 2 construction soon after, but would definitely change the outcomes of this specific grant cycle. MPRB Board of Commissioners has included a Phase 2 funding request in the 2026 legislative agenda to help construct Phase 2 and be able to measure those original outcomes that were laid out.

However, our community fundraising partner was not able to solidify sufficient funds to begin bidding for the full construction project this fall as anticipated. So, rather than fold the remaining State Arts and Cultural Heritage funding into the full construction costs, we propose completing Phase 1 of construction by June 2026. Phase 1 may include:

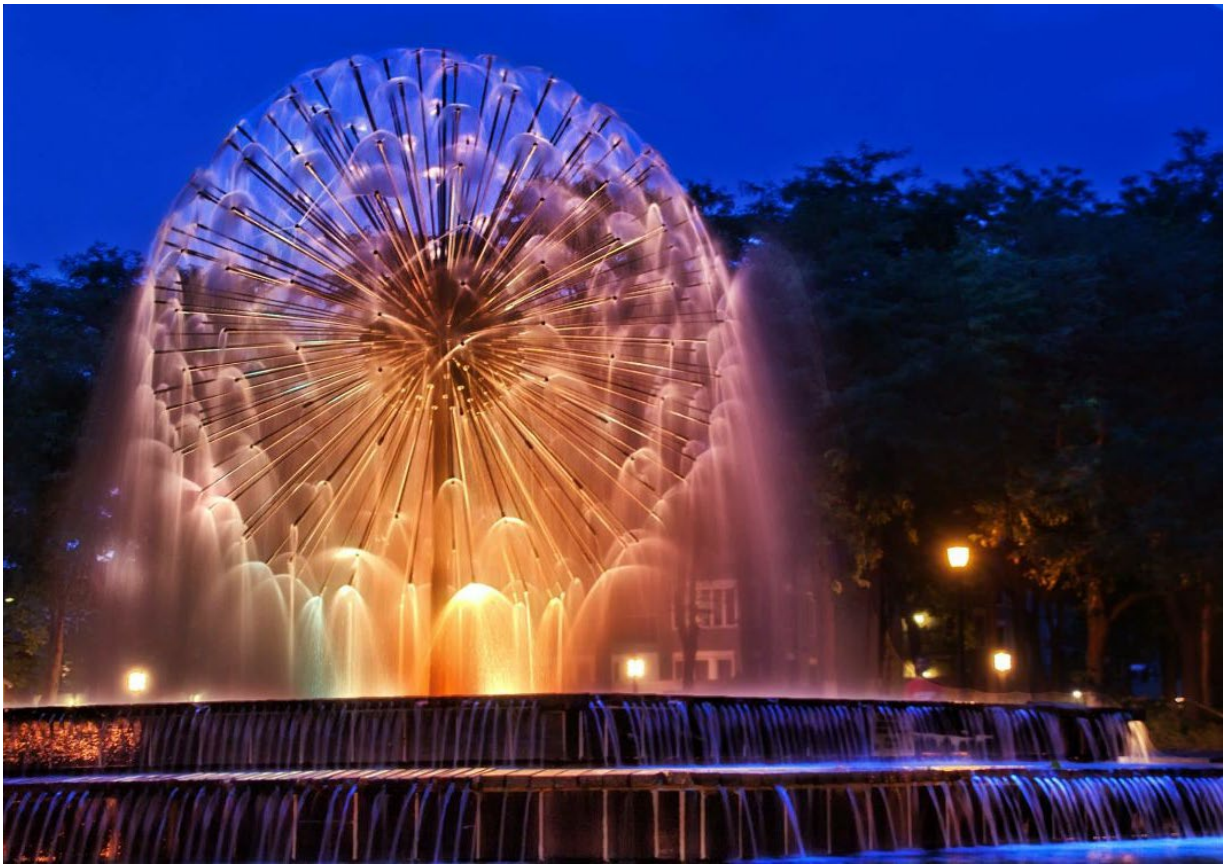
- Completion of the Design Development phase, which includes 60%, 90%, and 100% construction drawings
- Removal of old mechanical equipment in existing vault space under fountain;
- Purchase of fountain spindles/spray arms and/or site furnishings (benches) that will be needed during phase 2 or
- Seasonal fountain cover

Actual measured outcomes and evaluation of projects as required under 129D.17, subdivision 2

By June 30, 2025, MPRB has completed the 60% Design Development work as proposed in our original application and begun design work for the final 90/100% design drawings. The 90/100% design drawings will be paid for with other MPRB funding and donations.

Education about the areas and issues the projects address, including, when feasible, maps of where projects have been undertaken:

Between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025, MPRB staff worked closely with the Berger Fountain Task Force, hosting monthly meetings between volunteers, MPRB staff, and design team representatives to share updates on the Design Development process, and support fundraising

efforts for Phase 2 construction. During this time, the Berger Fountain task force led a formal fundraising campaign, in partnership with MPRB, which elevated the history of the fountain, the new design, and the need to complete restoration. Fundraising efforts have included participation and engagement at major events in Loring Park and the Loring Park neighborhood, an email communication campaign sent to thousands of people, and community partnerships to host fundraising events in the Loring Park neighborhood.

Methods by which members of the public may apply for project funds under any of the constitutionally dedicated funds (if applicable): NA