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## *Categorized* | IN OUR COMMUNITY

**Innovative water re-use system being built into Allianz Field Great Lawn**

Posted on 10 December 2018 by Calvin



*Field was making its permanent stamp on the Midway's landscape. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)*

*By the end of November the Allianz*

### **By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN**

When the Minnesota United FC soccer team takes their opening kick at Allianz Field next spring, nearly 20,000 fans and spectators will have walked across the Great Lawn to enter the new stadium. Coursing quietly beneath their feet will be an innovative stormwater and reuse system that, in its own way, is as exciting as the game.

Wes Saunders-Pearce, water resources coordinator for the City of St. Paul, said, “This project has been a partnership from the beginning with the Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD). We kicked off a visioning workshop almost three years ago, and the ideas that emerged have resulted in our most ambitious collaboration to date. We looked closely at how stormwater was managed at CHS Field (home of the St. Paul Saints) and along the Metro Green Line. Both of these systems are on a much smaller scale than what we engineered for Allianz Field, but they definitely helped inform the design.”

Anna Eleria is the planning, projects, and grants division manager for CRWD. She said, “The key question that drove this partnership was, ‘How can we change the mindset of managing stormwater as a resource—rather than a liability?’ We hope that once the public understands how it all works, they’ll start to look at how they can manage their own stormwater better.”

Allianz Field and the surrounding new developments will occupy approximately half of the 35 acre Super Block site. The masterplan is pedestrian-oriented and designates 2.6 acres of public, outdoor gathering spaces. The stadium will be ringed by three grassy plazas, and a fourth green space will be placed along University Ave., near the Snelling Avenue Metro Green Line Station. The largest of these green spaces, called the Great Lawn, is directly in front of the main stadium entrance.

All of the stormwater from Allianz Field and the surrounding new developments will be directed underneath the Great Lawn, where it will be captured in a state-of-the-art cistern system with a 675,000-gallon holding capacity. Stormwater will be treated with ozone after it has passed through a series of filters, and further purified with ultraviolet light. A water main that surrounds the stadium on the north side will distribute the clean stormwater to other properties for irrigation and non-drinking purposes.

Saunders-Pearce explained, “What we’re seeing with the Allianz Field and surrounding development properties is the first catalytic investment in the Super Block. As a water resource planner, there were a lot of things that were compelling about this project. When future developments come in, their

stormwater management system will already be in place. We hope that this will help move things forward because the blocks will be ‘development ready.’ We’re looking through both a sustainability lens and a development lens at the same time.”

The Great Lawn will be available for public use and was intentionally designed to be an open space. Saunders-Pearce added, “There will only be about 20 home games each year at Allianz Field. We anticipate that people will find this area (with its variety of commercial and mixed-use properties) to be approachable—and that they’ll use it well.”

The mission of the CRWD is to protect and improve the water quality of the Mississippi River. “We’ve always been concerned about the Super Block site,” Eleria said.

“Previously there was no treatment of the stormwater runoff there; it all just fed into the storm sewers and ran directly into the river. Now, stormwater that runs off half of the site will be treated, and we think it symbolizes the future for development in the area. CRWD doesn’t own any land. We rely on partnerships with other organizations that care about sustainable approaches. Part of the funding we were able to contribute to this project came from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources’ Clean Water Fund and the Metropolitan Council’s Stormwater Grant.”

Public Art Saint Paul will likely be another partner in the eventual ‘innovation celebration’ of this building site, but a decision was made to forestall the installation of public art until after the season opens in 2019. Saunders-Pearce said, “All of the site work is done, and it has moved very rapidly. We want to give the public some time to get used to using the space, and to see how the pedestrian traffic flows. We anticipate having public art near the Great Lawn, and also some interpretive signage that explains the water re-use that’s in place underground. All of the partners agree that we don’t want to use signage as the only tool for interpreting this innovative system; we want to have something that’s more powerful, and that’s better at accomplishing the job of place-making. This is going to be a tremendous area for St. Paul.”



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