

For immediate release | February 24, 2025

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Award-winning Morningside neighborhood stormwater system expansion project reduces flood risk, enhances community amenities

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn., February 24, 2025—The [Morningside Flood Infrastructure Project](#) (MFIP) received a Grand Award and was the People's Choice Award first runner-up on Feb. 21 in the [Engineering Excellence Awards Competition](#), hosted by the American Council of Engineering Companies of Minnesota (ACEC/MN). Barr Engineering Co. partnered with the City of Edina to create an elegant, forward-thinking, and cost-effective flood infrastructure project that lowers the flood exposure of more than 160 homes and other buildings while enhancing a beloved community park in Edina's Morningside neighborhood. Nestled in a low-lying, landlocked area prone to flooding, Morningside had been experiencing increased vulnerability due to more frequent and intense storms in the region.

Barr worked with the city on a feasibility study to evaluate a range of options to reduce flood risk in Morningside, including small-scale best management practices, underground storage, berms and floodwalls, expansion of existing ponds, and large pipes to increase discharge. Barr determined that the best method for reducing flood risk without causing downstream impacts was to reroute stormwater away from buildings and add significant capacity to capture and store stormwater.

"Barr has been a longtime partner with the City of Edina on stormwater modeling, flood protection, and clean water reviews and projects," said City of Edina Director of Engineering Chad Millner. "They have been instrumental in developing the first flood risk reduction strategy."

Rerouting and storing stormwater in a fully developed, densely populated city neighborhood was a central design challenge. Barr saved the City of Edina \$10 million by avoiding expensive underground storage and instead expanding two existing stormwater storage ponds: Weber Pond and Lynn/Kipling Pond. Using a cutting-edge, proactive approach to flood management, Barr integrated a new pump station for Weber Pond equipped with real-time level-control pumping technology that lowers the pond level in

advance of large storms to make space for stormwater. The addition of predictive pumping—rather than relying on pond expansion alone—conserves precious space in Weber Park by making room for stormwater storage only when needed. Thanks to the combination of expansion and predictive pumping, Weber Pond can now store 150 percent more water during the one-percent annual-chance (100-year) storm.

Barr also seized opportunities to enhance biodiversity surrounding Weber Park and improve its amenities. The expanded Weber Pond—once tucked behind a chain-link fence and dense vegetation—is now a central park feature, with two boardwalks crossing the water and spaces used by nesting grebes. Over 2,500 native trees and shrubs, 9,000 native perennial plants, and nine acres of seeds have replaced invasive and disease-prone species. Ballfields are irrigated with shallow groundwater flowing toward Weber Pond. ADA-compliant paved paths make the park more accessible to all visitors.

Morningside residents were engaged from concept design to finished project, becoming allies along the way. The city prepared and Barr helped implement public-participation plans for both the flood infrastructure and Weber Park portions of the project. Listening closely to community input, Barr made several design alterations to preserve popular park features while adding new amenities. Ultimately, the Morningside community adopted the project as its own, asking the city and Barr to publicly celebrate its new park with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in July 2024.

The Morningside project achieved its main goals: mitigating flood risk and revitalizing Weber Park. Along the way, it also met scheduling and budget goals while ensuring worker and public safety. The project demonstrates how efficient use of dense urban space can offer greater stormwater storage and natural beauty while saving costs. Barr's design is paving the way for other cities and watershed organizations, including several in Minnesota's Twin Cities area, that are now exploring similar systems.

About Barr

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