

Parks Transform Human Life

Annual Report 2016-2017



Water Works, a RiverFirst signature project



MINNEAPOLIS
PARKS
FOUNDATION

The Minneapolis Parks Foundation transforms human lives through parks and public spaces by aligning philanthropic investment and community vision.

Dear Friends,

Together, we make more than six million visits a year to Minneapolis's amazing neighborhood parks, for softball games and swimming lessons, morning dog walks and evening runs, community meetings and free concerts and other callings so wide-ranging that there's no way to fit them into a single frame. That's why we asked photographer Stephanie Glaros, the street documentarian behind the popular Humans of Minneapolis project, to take a wide-angled view of our city's 160 neighborhood parks, sharing dispatches from the diverse community of people who depend on the city's best promise — providing a public park within walking distance of every resident.

As you can see from the portraits on these pages — or if you followed the full series on the Minneapolis Parks Foundation's blog — Minneapolitans have a deeply personal connection to their park system. While many of the stories Glaros shared through the summer of 2016 surprised us, moved us, and made us laugh — they also confirmed what we've known since the Minneapolis Parks Foundation got its start 14 years ago.

PARKS HAVE THE POWER TO TRANSFORM HUMAN LIFE.

Putting the lens on the people who use, enjoy and depend on our parks is more important than ever as we consider what shape and function the next generation of parks must have. In 2016, the Minneapolis Parks Foundation updated our mission statement to reflect that critical focus, leading with the people whose voices, values, and investments are essential to helping us fulfill the community vision we've been entrusted with preserving and advancing. Thanks to the foresight of some truly innovative early leaders, we are the inheritors of a world-class system of parks, with some of the most vibrant community and cultural programs you'll see in any city in the world, from the beautiful wildflower gardens Eloise Butler seeded herself, to the Music in the Parks series that's been showcasing free concerts since 1892, with programming that's adapted to reflect our evolving residents.

As the lead philanthropic partner leveraging community support for the RiverFirst Initiative, transforming our industrialized riverfront to parkland, we're as excited about the future of our parks as we are proud of their history. In 2016, your contributions helped us dig in deeper on a visionary plan to connect 11 miles of once industrial riverfront with the Grand Rounds, redefining how North and Northeast Minneapolis experience the Mississippi River. Last year, the Parks Foundation also helped secure a historic agreement between the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board that will guarantee an additional \$11 million for neighborhood parks each year, for the next 20 years.

As you'll see in these pages, our mission has evolved, but our work rests on the same three pillars — bringing leadership and voice to the high aspirations this community has always had for its parks and public spaces, inspiring philanthropic commitment to support our most innovative ideas, and leveraging private sector skill and experience to elevate the common ground where we all come together — our world-class park system. Your generous contributions make it possible. Thank you!

Sincerely,



Tom Evers
Executive Director



Sarah Harris
Board Chair



Parks for All

Meet some of the people who use, enjoy, and depend on our parks. To see and hear more about how parks-goers feel about our parks, visit MplsParksFoundation.org/category/Humans-of-Minneapolis.



HASSAN | Bethune Park

"I'm a coach. I've played soccer all my life, since I was ten years old back in Egypt. That's where I grew up. I'm originally from Somalia, but I left there when I was two or three years old because of the civil war. I've been here close to seventeen years. It's pretty much my hometown here in Minnesota. I love it. A lot of teenagers here are doing bad things. Smoking, being in gangs, all that stuff. Soccer is something that will keep you away from that. Soccer is a sport, but at the same time it will keep you with the community."



JESSE, ANIKA and baby ESME | Jackson Square Park

"We come here a couple of days a week because the pool is great and they have a free lunch every day. There's a page I follow on Facebook for Northeast moms. It's a neighborhood group of parents who decide what they're doing with their kids for the day. You can check and see where they're going in the morning and then you can all go to that park. There was a DJ here last week, the kids danced their energy off. It's just nice to be like, 'Oh, this is where some of the kids are gonna be.'"



JOHN | Columbia Park

"Archery gives me a reason to be outdoors. You have to be really mindful of your surroundings, so you absorb a lot more of your immediate environment. You've got to be aware of which way the wind is blowing, where the sun is, what's behind the target. And it's more than just the hunting part. It's what kind of birds are out, what other animals you might see. It's quiet. It brings everything a little bit closer to you."



WALTER | Harrison Park

"I bring my grandchildren down here on nice, warm days. It's close to the neighborhood. I like to see them out here playing in the pool. Sometimes I bring them down just to have a picnic. They give me a workout just sitting out here watching them, watching them grow up. They make my day."



Community Vision

From the vantage point of a bike and kayak, JXTA students learned how the community is connected – or disconnected – from its parks.

Creating Common Ground

Telling the history and human stories that connect us is a vital part of shaping the community vision for a transformed Upper Mississippi Riverfront.

Viewed from Google Earth, the future site of the Upper Harbor Terminal doesn't look very inviting. But approached from the Mississippi River, in a bobbing kayak, on a warm summer day, the perspective was just right for 17-year-old Tatiyana Gross to start imagining all the possibilities for remaking this industrial corner of her North Minneapolis neighborhood into an inspiring new public space.

"Looking at it on the computer, I've got to say, I just couldn't see it," says Gross. "But just being there on the water, that's when I got inspired. You could see how the whole thing could really come to life."



A first for many, kayaking showed apprentices how important the river is to Minneapolis.

Gross is a junior at North High School, and part of a team of young apprentice designers at Juxtaposition Arts (JXTA) the Minneapolis Parks Foundation commissioned in 2016 to take a fresh look at RiverFirst, the plan for connecting all of Minneapolis through a continuous riverfront park system. Along with their environmental design instructors, Coal Dorius and Samuel Babatunde Ero-Phillips, youth employed by this North Minneapolis social enterprise and education effort spent time studying the site, and surveying community neighbors about what they want to see from the growing effort to reengage with the Mississippi River.

Making their first trips to the site by kayak, bike and on foot, the Juxtaposition Arts apprentices also formed some first impressions of their own. "I'm all about nature," Gross says. "Right away, I was thinking about how to introduce more native plants and clean it up."

For Qadiym Washington, 17, it was finding a new world of graffiti in a forgotten corner of North Minneapolis that fired his imagination. "It's like the artists are the only ones who've been thinking about making the space better," he says. "That's a story that I'd want to bring out."

For Hussain Ali, 20, the connection between the city and the river made him think of the coastal city of Mombasa, Kenya, where he lived before moving to Minnesota in 2014. "People everywhere want to look out and turn toward the water," he says. "The thing that intrigues me is wondering why did Minneapolis wait until now to think about what this could be?"



Unearthing the Past at Water Works

In fact, Minneapolis's early leaders and city planners did debate how to make the most of the Mississippi River's raw power and natural beauty. And no one made a more forceful argument for turning the city toward its source than Horace Cleveland, the renowned landscape architect. The designer of Minneapolis's iconic Grand Rounds, Cleveland also envisioned a wreath of parks and parkways that would connect every compass point around the river gorge. As he told city leaders more than 140 years ago, "You have it in your power to convert its banks into the most attractive and most conspicuous ornament of the city."

Today's RiverFirst Initiative is a direct descendant of that original vision — with some transformative, 21st century updates. Where Cleveland envisioned an idealized natural landscape, today's urban designers see the beauty in the riverfront's hard-working history, as well. The ruins and reminders of the mills and industrial operations that put Minneapolis on the map tell a powerful story about the human geography of St. Anthony Falls — a narrative that will speak to the next generation in the latest design plan for the future Water Works park.

In partnership with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the Parks Foundation retained Damon Farber Landscape Architects and HGA Architects in 2016 to lead a multi-disciplinary design team tasked with taking the Water Works plan through to construction. Digging into the landscape's archeology revealed the remnant integrity of the Bassett sawmill and the Columbia flour mill, long-buried markers of Mill City history that will now be revived and reactivated for Water Works visitors.

"It's part of our mission to provide the extra measure of philanthropic support it takes to make the parks and public spaces of Minneapolis truly world-class, and the new Water Works design is a great example of that," says Tom Evers, Executive Director of the Minneapolis Parks Foundation. "It's also important to honor the past and the generations of human stories that have unfolded here, just as we make room for the next generation, giving voice to communities that may often be left unheard."

The Water Works pavilion will inhabit history.



"Revealing and reusing the historic mill ruins that are now buried at Water Works is the most apparent change visitors to the downtown riverfront will see," says Minneapolis Parks Fellow Bruce Chamberlain. "But it's just one of many layers of innovation built into the effort, from reusing rainwater, to creating a public pavilion for year-round visits, an important feature for this popular stretch of the regional park system that already attracts more than 2.5 million annual visitors."

Reflecting the Future, Common Ground, cont.

For instance, when a series of community events and open houses revealed that neighbors in North Minneapolis liked the idea of swimming in the Mississippi River, JXTA's Enviro apprentices drew up a plan for a public swimming pool in the middle of a floating barge. Inspired by Webber Park's recent renovation, they came up with chlorine-free cleaning system, using biological filters and native plants.

As the apprentices examined possibilities for integrating the city storage silos at the Upper Harbor Terminal, they proposed a monumental piece of pop art: "We had the idea of turning the silos into giant spray paint cans, and instead of spraying paint, we could have light shining on the water," says Gross. "We thought that would look really pretty at night."

While outside-the-box ideas like this may never make it beyond the drawing board, Dorius says the experience pushed her apprentices to dream big. "We want them to see themselves as architects, artists, and designers of the future, so it's all about teaching youth the skills they'll need when they're ready to do this work," she says. "They understand the process now, they've seen the roadblocks, and so later in life, if they go into landscape architecture, if they go into city planning, they have this experience to help them push

the paradigms a little further, so they can start creating the kinds of public spaces they want to see. And that's a great lesson for the future."



From pop art to space aliens, students from JXTA took their design inspiration from many sources.

A New Vision for Vacant Riverfront Land

What's the best way to steward and protect riverfront parcels before they're ready to be activated in the RiverFirst initiative? That's the challenge the Minneapolis Parks Foundation put to Leslie Johnson, our 2016 Research Assistant in Practice, an innovative partnership with the University of Minnesota Department of Landscape Architecture that invites promising graduate students to gain practical design skills while bringing a fresh perspective to public sector planning.

"It was a great experience to work on a project that has such potential to positively impact the Twin Cities," Johnson says about the research she did exploring how Baltimore, Milwaukee, New York City and other communities have managed and protected vacant land awaiting development — and with minimal capital investment. The best practice solutions she discovered form the basis for an Interim Land Management Strategy produced in 2016, a 60-page policy framework that makes recommendations for everything from building public awareness about the plans for RiverFirst, to eye-catching native plantings that can signal the ecological evolution Minneapolis residents are about to see along the



Research Assistant in Practice Leslie Johnson sketched plans for bringing life to riverfront land.

redeveloped sections of the riverfront. "I got to consider a wide range of issues for an actual client — an exciting leap from typical studio work! Thinking about various users, continued maintenance, and forming a cohesive identity between these sites are skills I will certainly draw from as I go forward in my career. As the Research Assistance in Practice, I got to contribute to this vision that will continue being realized for decades to come."

To view the complete report, visit MplsParksFoundation.org/blog/Interim-Use-Strategy.

Envisioning the Future

Next Generation of Parks events introduced the Twin Cities to innovative designers and stirring stories, and helped the community picture our parks with new eyes.

LEILA ARAGHIAN: The Joy of Discovery

Leila Araghian was only 26 when she designed Tehran's Tabiat Bridge, a curving cultural centerpiece that's been earning awards and international acclaim for the young Iranian architect since it opened in 2014. In September, Araghian spoke at the Next Generation of Parks event series about the lessons she learned elevating a necessary piece of civic infrastructure into a community-building cultural destination.

"Most of the time, bridges are made out of necessity and they are designed in a straight way because that's the shortest path and also the most efficient way of doing it structurally. Here, we wanted to block the view and let the people feel that it's [they] who are discovering the destination. We all enjoy discovering things, but I think that also applies to spaces. Even though the joy of discovering a space may be very subtle ... it's very important that we give that possibility. There is a continuity in all these spaces so that there is no dead end. Wherever you go, there is another way to move forward or to go back.

"The point, which I think is very important, is social justice. The bridge is free for everyone. You don't have to buy tickets to come on it. I think it's very important for the citizens of all the cities to know that they deserve quality spaces and it's their right to have good quality spaces ...designed for humans and not for the cars."



Minneapolis Foundation president and Parks Foundation board member R.T. Rybak (left) and Parks Foundation executive director Tom Evers (right) also welcomed Araghian (center) as the keynote speaker for the Sunrise on the Mississippi breakfast benefit, September 8, 2016.

MAURICE COX: Rekindling Respect

"I think people are often a little surprised to see planners in their neighborhood," city planner Maurice Cox recently told the Detroit Free Press about the robust revitalization effort he's driving in the Motor City. "And they are even more surprised that we're there to listen."

A national leader in the public interest design movement, Cox shared the vision and the community values guiding Detroit's own effort to reimagine the city's riverfront at a Next Generation of Parks event in November 2016. Good city planning, Cox says, is about "rekindling a little respect. A respect for nature, as fundamental to our wellbeing. A respect for beauty and the desire we all have to be surrounded by beauty. A respect for mobility, a wide range of ways of moving around the city. A respect for the history, these kind of stoic buildings that we're stewards of. A respect for local entrepreneurs that are the folks who we want to populate these main streets. A respect for work, the dignity that work gives you. Most importantly, a respect for the community's voices as we try to guide and remake and regenerate our neighborhoods."

Known as the "Champion of Neighborhoods," urban planner Maurice Cox shared lessons from Detroit's urban renaissance at Northrop Auditorium, November 4, 2016.

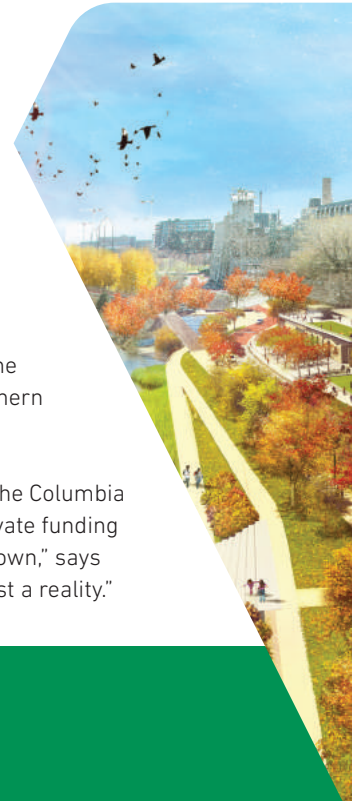


Fulfilling a Community Vision with Philanthropic Investment

The Minneapolis Parks Foundation is proud to be the lead philanthropic partner behind the RiverFirst Initiative, a community-wide capital campaign that will transform the city's relationship to its greatest source of strength — the Mississippi River. While creating a continuous riverfront park system will fulfill the original vision Minneapolis leaders had more than a century ago, RiverFirst's signature projects are also driven by a 21st century focus on innovation and sustainable design.

"The chance to complete this important piece of the city's legacy at the same time that we're reimagining what's possible for our parks is a very compelling opportunity to foundations, corporations, and people who want to make Minneapolis the best it can be," says Jennifer Downham, Chief Development Officer of the Minneapolis Parks Foundation. "It's clear this is a once-in-a-generation moment that will have an enormous impact on our economy and quality of life, and it's definitely helped mobilize some important new partners in our work." Following a lead gift from General Mills in 2015, a new \$2 million challenge grant provided by the Pohlad Family Foundation has helped the Minneapolis Parks Foundation secure more than \$12.3 million in private funding for Water Works and the Great Northern Greenway River Link.

Now with a new concept plan for Water Works that will unearth and reactivate the ruins of the Bassett Sawmill and the Columbia Flour Mill, the goal of the Minneapolis Parks Foundation's capital campaign is to secure a total of \$17.9 million in private funding to provide the extra resources needed to preserve this important link to Minneapolis's early history. "Our goal has grown," says Downham, "but so has the excitement we're seeing from the community of partners who can't wait to make RiverFirst a reality."



RiverFirst Supporters

As of June 2017

We are grateful for the significant philanthropic support of the following individuals, corporations and foundation who share the Parks Foundation's vision for creating a continuous riverfront park for future generations.

\$1,000,000 and above

General Mills Foundation
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Paul and Mary Reyelts Margaret and Angus Wurtele

\$250,000 to \$999,999

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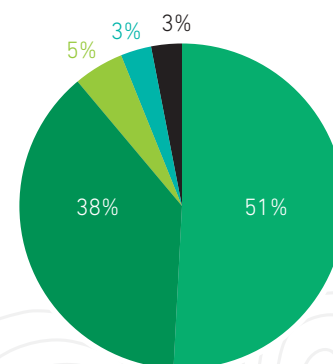
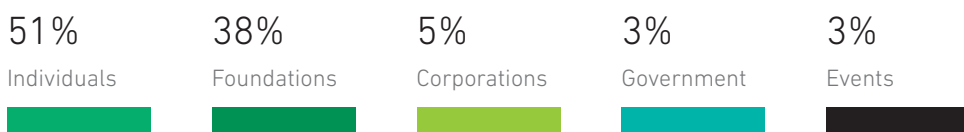
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JOIN US

To learn more about RiverFirst signature projects, visit MplsParksFoundation.org. To make a campaign pledge, planned gift, or other major contribution to the RiverFirst Campaign, contact Jennifer Downham at 612-822-3401.

For the Years Ended December 31, 2016 and 2015	2016		2015	
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total	Total
Support and Revenue				
Contributions	\$206,322	\$103,750	\$310,072	\$691,254
RiverFirst Program Support	644,151	—	644,151	620,988
Special Event Income (Net of Expenses of \$25,625 in 2016 and \$24,304 in 2015)	37,829	—	37,829	46,356
Government Grants	2,825	25,000	27,825	73,760
Miscellaneous Income	43,902	—	43,902	16,777
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	385,694	(385,694)	—	
Total Support and Revenue	1,320,723	(256,944)	1,063,779	1,449,135
Expense				
Program Services	623,016	—	623,016	511,837
Support Services:				
Management and General	157,612	—	157,612	160,374
Fundraising	138,455	—	138,455	143,763
Total Support Services	296,067	—	296,067	304,137
Total Expense	919,083	—	919,083	815,974
Change in Net Assets	401,640	(256,944)	144,696	633,161
Net Assets – Beginning of Year	930,584	386,194	1,316,778	683,617
Net Assets – End of Year	\$1,332,224	\$129,250	\$1,461,474	\$1,316,778

Sources of Revenue 2016



A Renewed Focus and a Fresh Look



In 2016, the Minneapolis Parks Foundation updated our mission, vision, and value statements to better reflect our evolving role in Minneapolis. We believe that parks and public space transform human life and we realize that potential by aligning philanthropic investment and community vision.

Building on our newly affirmed mission, we completed a visual rebranding that we're debuting in this annual report. Our new logo, like a park, can be interpreted and adapted for many perspectives. The curving lines can be interpreted as topographical, tree rings, fingerprints, or ripples. The color palette represents fields, forests,

and waterways. And much like the role of the Parks Foundation, the imagery brings together several elements to make a whole and represents the intersections within our community where good ideas are made better: public and private; land and water; active and receptive.

A brand is only as good as the people and activities supporting it. And that is our commitment with the new mission, vision and values — to remain an effective and valued partner and leader in the community that connects resources and innovative ideas for the benefit of everyone who visits Minneapolis's world-class park system.

Thank You Donors

The following individuals, families, foundations and corporations gave generously to support the Minneapolis Parks Foundation in 2016, through direct donations, capital campaign contributions, and support for the Foundation's annual event. Your contributions are helping to create parks and public spaces with the power to bring our community together on common ground. **Thank you!**

Horace Cleveland Circle

Recognizing the significant contribution of donors who have made cumulative general operating support gifts of \$50,000 or more.

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Julia Dayton
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Elizabeth Redleaf
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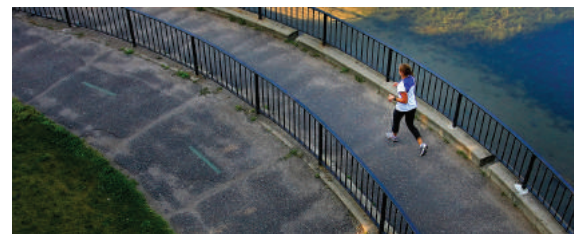
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