Acknowledgements

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- The General Public
- City of Minneapolis
- Hennepin County
- University of Minnesota
- National Park Service
- Friends of the Mississippi River
- Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Minnesota Historical Society
- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Mississippi Watershed Management Organization
- Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

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More information about this plan and the planning process is available here:

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Notes about this document

This DRAFT Above the Falls Regional Park Master Plan (ATF Park Plan) is for public review and comment. Following a 45-day public comment period, a final draft will be presented to the Park Board for approval. Following this, the ATF Park Plan will be presented to the Metropolitan Council and its committees for approval. Each stage will include opportunity for public comment.

This ATF Regional Park Plan was developed by the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board in parallel to the Above the Falls Master Plan Update led by the City of Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development in collaboration with the City of Minneapolis Department of Health and the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board. The ATF Park Plan's chapter divisions and content are intended to fulfill Metropolitan Council requirements for regional park master plans. Also referenced are guiding principles and vision goals that are related to the City’s plan but not central to this regional park master plan. These are described here as “Connected Actions,” in recognition of their importance as context to Above the Falls Regional Park.
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For more information about the Above the Falls Regional Park Master Plan and the planning process, please visit:

The **Above the Falls Regional Park Master Plan** (2019 ATF Park Plan) will guide park land acquisition, development and management for the areas along both sides of the upper Mississippi riverfront in Minneapolis between the Plymouth Avenue Bridge and the Camden Bridge. This 2019 ATF Park Plan is based on two plans previously adopted by the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board (MPRB) and on extensive public engagement over many months. The plan describes a sustainable balance of recreation, ecology and culture within ATF Regional Park. Strategies for project implementation and park management are presented, including costs and maintenance practices.

Eventually, ATF Regional Park will connect North Mississippi Regional Park and the Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park, creating a continuous regional park system along the upper Mississippi River. This 2019 ATF Park Plan shows how land acquisition and parks development can create new destinations for park visitors, expand access to the river and enhance natural resources. As Because ATF Regional Park is an urban-infill park, acquisition of park land will occur incrementally over time, depending on funding and as purchase and easement opportunities arise through MPRB’s engagement with willing sellers.

### NEED FOR PLAN UPDATE

ATF Regional Park was established in 2000 with the **Above the Falls: A Master Plan for the Upper River in Minneapolis** (2000 ATF Plan). In 2007, MPRB implemented ATF Phase I on the west bank from Plymouth Ave. North to 22nd Ave. North. In 2011, the City of Minneapolis began a process to update the 2000 ATF Plan. Finally, in 2012, MPRB approved the parks vision in **RiverFirst: A Park Design Proposal and Implementation Plan for the Minneapolis Upper Riverfront** (RiverFirst), a long-term vision for the upper river. This 2019 Above the Falls Park Master Plan was updated to reflect these plans and other evolving opportunities and priorities.

The 2019 ATF Park Plan renews the vision of the original 2000 ATF Plan and integrates elements of ATF Phase I and RiverFirst, both of which share the original plan’s focus on “developing the Mississippi riverfront into a regional park amenity.” The revised plan casts long-term parks goals centered on an exceptional recreational and environmental resource – the Mississippi River. ATF Regional Park will be a catalyst for the revitalization of the upper river area by creating a framework of recreation and restored ecological function. Eventually, the regional park boundary will encompass continuous public parks and trails, an extended West River Parkway, riverfront access points, significant park components and habitat and water-quality enhancements.

One key difference between the 2000 ATF Plan and this 2019 ATF Park Plan centers on the west bank. The 2000 ATF Plan envisioned a dense neighborhood of new high-rise, mixed-use buildings with a formal, hardened promenade along the river’s edge and a separate West River Parkway inland from these blocks. Implementation was to come via massive public buyout programs and eminent domain, making way for simultaneous public infrastructure investments and large Tax Increment Finance-funded private redevelopment projects.

This 2019 ATF Park Plan recognizes that such sweeping implementation strategies are not viable given the funding and tools available to MPRB and the City of Minneapolis. Instead, this plan adopts the RiverFirst parks vision for the area and returns to the model championed by H.W.S. Cleveland at the creation of the Minneapolis park system: to secure public access to natural amenities such as lakes and rivers by surrounding them with parks, and to allow private economic development to evolve independent of yet strengthened by the

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**Much of the parks development vision is based on RiverFirst, a competition-winning design that was enriched by deep community engagement in 2011.**

**MPRB’s purchase and cleanup of the Scherer Bros. site was facilitated by Metropolitan Council Regional Park funds and Hennepin County Emergency Response Funds, combined with MPRB capital funds. Such partnerships are critical to implementing the regional park vision.**

**Parks programming and access to the river are enhanced through collaboration with the National Park Service, Wilderness Inquiry and other organizations.**
amenities that such parks create. Implementation of the 2019 ATF Park Plan will be a long-term, incremental prospect requiring patience and consistent policy-making. Property and easement acquisition for parks and trails will require the ongoing cooperative efforts of the MPRB, the City, private land owners, non-profit partners and especially the Metropolitan Council.

ATF REGIONAL PARK PLAN PRINCIPLES

• Retain core parks-related Above the Falls Master Plan Guidelines and integrate RiverFirst principles and parks projects
• Create continuous parks and trails along both sides of the Mississippi, drawing people from all neighborhoods and backgrounds to the river
• Focus land acquisition and trail easement efforts on engagement with willing property owners, including interim trail easements
• Integrate stewardship of natural and cultural resources with parks and trails design
• Foster cooperation among public agencies as well as partnership with private sector organizations and institutions

NEAR-TERM REGIONAL PARK PRIORITIES

In the near future, MPRB will focus resources on properties it already owns, including but not limited to the following:

• Continued programming and stewardship of existing park land
• Continued development of Graco Park on the Scherer Bros. site and establishment of habitat on the new Hall’s Island
• Partnership with the City of Minneapolis to transition the 48-acre Upper Harbor Terminal from industrial uses to new parks and other uses, including phased development of West River Parkway
• Continued improvements to Sheridan Memorial Park
• Continued development of ADA-compliant Public Water Access points

LONG-TERM PRIORITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Some long-term priorities in this 2019 Park Plan fall outside regional park lands currently owned by MPRB, will require much more stakeholder engagement, and will depend on partnerships and resources still in cultivation. These include:

• Extension of West River Parkway between 22nd Ave North and 41st Ave North along the west bank, requiring acquisition of many privately and publicly owned parcels
• Development of Northside riverfront parks with connections to northside neighborhoods
• Continued coordination with the City and County to improve Marshall Street NE as a parkway-like corridor for pedestrians and bicyclists
• Development of Northeast riverfront parks and trails, as land acquisitions and funding allow
• Pursuit, with the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County, of acquiring the BNSF rail bridge for a non-motorized trail connection across the river

MPRB’s strategy for property acquisition is to engage only with willing sellers, incrementally adding parkland along the river. One key property is the 48-acre, City-owned Upper Harbor Terminal. At other large industrial properties, MPRB will pursue interim trail easements in the near-term.

Improving existing riverbank access points, such as at Marshall Terrace Park, is a modest yet important near-term priority of the Regional Park plan.

The long-term vision includes improved river crossings. One example is acquisition and conversion of the BNSF rail bridge, a specific goal shared by the City of Minneapolis.
Property shown within the regional park boundary is targeted for eventual acquisition by MPRB to be included in ATF Regional Park. MPRB will continue its practice of negotiating property acquisitions only with willing sellers.

Path and parkway alignments shown here are conceptual only. Final alignments will be determined by land availability, funding and community engagement during design phases.