



ATF public forum, October 16, 2013

SECTION 3

Public Engagement



RiverFirst community engagement event

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

As with all park development projects by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, community engagement has been an integral component of the ATF Park Plan process. While this plan has its foundation in the 2000 ATF Plan, it has been shaped significantly by the RiverFirst vision for the upper Mississippi Riverfront. The carefully planned and executed public engagement process for the ATF Update and the ATF Park Plan was an extension of the RiverFirst planning process, which engaged an exceptionally broad range of stakeholders in the year preceding the regional park planning process.

RIVERFIRST COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The RiverFirst vision substantially informs the ATF Park Plan, particularly in terms of parks development recommendations and through the overarching idea of recreation within a functioning ecological framework. RiverFirst emerged from an international design competition hosted by MPRB. The goal was to reinvigorate community energy and imagination around the upper riverfront. In the spring of 2011, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board established the Minneapolis Riverfront Development Initiative (MRDI) as a special project to transform the winning proposal from the Minneapolis Riverfront Design Competition to a visionary plan and implementation strategy for development of parks and open space along the Minneapolis upper riverfront. The RiverFirst design team refined the vision through extensive community engagement anchored by three stakeholder committees (Steering, Technical and Advisory) which hosted six large public meetings. The design team and MRDI representatives also met with over 100 individuals in key communities and half as many organizations with relevant expertise and regulatory oversight.

Additional MRDI/RiverFirst engagement included the following:

- A community input survey taken by more than 600 people
- Promotion and participation in more than 30 community events throughout Minneapolis
- Three additional public meetings held in association with the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership
- A website documenting competition entries as well as all public outreach and participation
- More than 40 presentations and meetings with neighborhood associations, community-based non-profit organizations, agencies and other stakeholder groups; seven paid part- and full-time “youth ambassador” interns represented the MRDI at more than 35 community events
- The debut of “River Is...” a figurative gathering of people’s thoughts about the Mississippi today and for the future

MPRB APPROVES RIVERFIRST

At the Park Board’s meeting on March 14, 2012, following this engagement process and a standard 45-day comment period, the Board approved the

RIVERFIRST INCLUDED:

- Community Input Survey by more than 600 people
- Participation in more than 30 community events
- Three joint public meetings
- More than 40 presentations

RiverFirst vision and authorized staff to pursue next steps, including contracting with the design team for further work on select RiverFirst projects.

Significantly, the Board also directed staff to use RiverFirst as a basis for the ATF Regional Park Master Plan, as well as the ATF Master Plan Update in coordination with City of Minneapolis staff.

ABOVE THE FALLS UPDATE PLANNING PROCESS

The Above the Falls planning process was a collaboration among several agency departments and groups, including the following:

- Staff from MPRB, the City of Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development department, and the City of Minneapolis Department of Health
- The Above the Falls Citizen Advisory Committee, a standing committee since 1999 that represents neighborhoods, businesses, organizations and other stakeholders affected by the Above the Falls plan
- The Riverfront Technical Advisory Committee, a long-standing staff group that guides and coordinates planning and implementation along the river
- The Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership; which facilitated public forums and assisted with outreach to stakeholders

ATF planning outreach activities in 2012 included the following:

- Between June and December, each of 3 large public forums were attended by approximately 70-80 people
- Web postings and informational articles in community newspapers
- More than 60 outreach meetings with stakeholder groups (community organizations, churches, schools, seniors, etc.)
- At least one outreach meeting conducted in Lao and at least one conducted in Spanish

Draft ATF plan documents were presented for public review at the third public forum in December of 2012. MPRB solicited public comments on the ATF Regional Park master plan during a 45-day comment period in June-July 2013.

In 2012, community engagement was enhanced by participation from Minneapolis Health Department staff as part of a parallel Health Impact Assessment (HIA). The HIA process spurred many community meetings, a survey and over 100 "River Cards" expressing stakeholders' hopes for the plan area. For example, among survey respondents, 72% stated "more pedestrian and bicycle trails to access the river" should be a plan priority.

After Upper Harbor Terminal ceased operation and the Saint Anthony Falls Lock and Dam was closed, engagement about the future of the Upper Harbor Terminal site continued. An emphasis was placed on outreach to North and Northeast Minneapolis residents, especially inclusion of diverse races, ethnicities, classes, ages, abilities and national origins. For a detailed report on community engagement between 2015-2018, see the Upper Harbor Terminal Appendix at the end of this document.

2012-2013 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- Three large public forums
- More than 60 community outreach events
- Multi-lingual outreach including Hmong, Lao and Spanish
- Inter-agency coordination
- 45-day comment period





Collaboration with staff from the Minneapolis Health Department, a Community Advisory Committee and several non-profit partners significantly enhanced community engagement throughout the planning process.



Public meetings for the ATF Regional Park master planning process were well-attended.

PUBLIC INPUT

To date, several letters of comment have been received as part of the planning process, including letters from:

- St. Anthony West Neighborhood Organization
- Friends of the Mississippi River
- GAF corporation
- Above the Falls Citizen Advisory Committee (AFCAC), the MPRB-designated Community Advisory Committee for the Regional Park master planning process

In general, these letters focus on the City's land-use planning efforts. Where they do reference parks planning, comments generally are supportive of the ATF Park Plan's retention of principles from the 2000 ATF Plan, including continuous parks and trails along the river, improved access to the river for all, and integrating environmental stewardship with park development.

Below are comments typical of those received during the ATF Regional Park master plan process.

People want to EXPERIENCE and ACCESS the river

- Continuous and looping trails, with connections to neighborhoods
- Boat access and gathering places, picnic shelters etc.
- Amenities and active destination points at major urban nodes
- Recreation activities for all ages (walk, bike, ski, fish, swim)
- Safe parks, "eyes-on-the-street," and surrounding activity at all hours

People want to RESTORE and IMPROVE the river

- Natural and open spaces with restored habitat for ecological health
- Native plantings and gardens
- Clean water, stormwater management and shoreline restoration
- Mitigate impacts of Asian carp and other aquatic invasive species
- General concerns about proximity of existing industry to parks

People want EQUITABLE development

- Equitable distribution of park access points and park development
- Design for a diverse population to access the public health benefits of parks
- Benefits to North and NE Minneapolis
- Draw regional park visitors while respecting existing neighborhoods and zoning
- Careful, phased implementation using a wide range of funding sources

EQUITY ANALYSIS

The Above the Falls Regional Park Master Plan is rooted in equity as the fundamental goal is to provide parks and access to water in an area of the city that currently lacks these opportunities. Areas around the park in north and northeast Minneapolis are characterized by high poverty rates, a higher than average rate of negative health issues, and a high percentage of minority, and youth, populations. Transforming the land from industrialized shoreland to ecologically rich, publicly owned park will improve the quality of life in an underserved urban area and have profound benefits for residents and visitors.

The regional park will address a serious regional recreational deficiency. The residents of northeast and north Minneapolis have advocated for more public land and green space along the river. Based on the Hennepin County 2010 Survey of the Health of All the Population and the Environment (SHAPE) survey, perceptions of walkability and sense of community were lower among north Minneapolis residents compared to residents in other parts of the city. Adults living near the ATF project area were more likely than residents elsewhere in the city to report fair or poor health (20.0% vs 10.6%); be classified as obese (30.3% vs 18.7%); and fail to meet moderate exercise guidelines (27.6% vs 21.5%). Households in these communities were more likely to include children (27.7% under age 18 vs 20.3%) and members of ethnic minorities [African American (35.4% vs 16.7%) Asian (10.5% vs 5.5%); and multi-racial (4.8% vs 3.3%)]. 50% of survey respondents felt that additional parks would improve their health.

The Above the Falls park will provide amenities for some of the region's highest concentrations of impoverished and minority populations. The short term goals are for individual projects to support affordable and easily accessible opportunities for outdoor recreation where they will make an immediate positive impact. The long term benefits are that the park will contribute to sustainable regional growth, support private investments, and foster a healthier and more livable urban environment beyond its physical boundaries. As noted in the City of Minneapolis's ATF Master Plan Update, the existing mix of land uses along the upper riverfront are not capitalizing on the riverfront's potential for recreational amenities and ecological value. Many adjacent neighborhoods struggle with disinvestment and lack of positive economic activity.

In the Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan the City defines environmental justice as the right to a clean, safe, and healthy quality of life for people of all races, incomes, and cultures. The City of Minneapolis has also passed an equity ordinance (Title 2, Chapter 21) with the goal of eliminating socioeconomic disparities that are currently predictable by race, and changing a legacy of discrimination. As MPRB continues implementation of the ATF Plan, collaboration around the Green Zones and Promise Zones are two areas where staff between the agencies can coordinate efforts to maximize equity through park development.

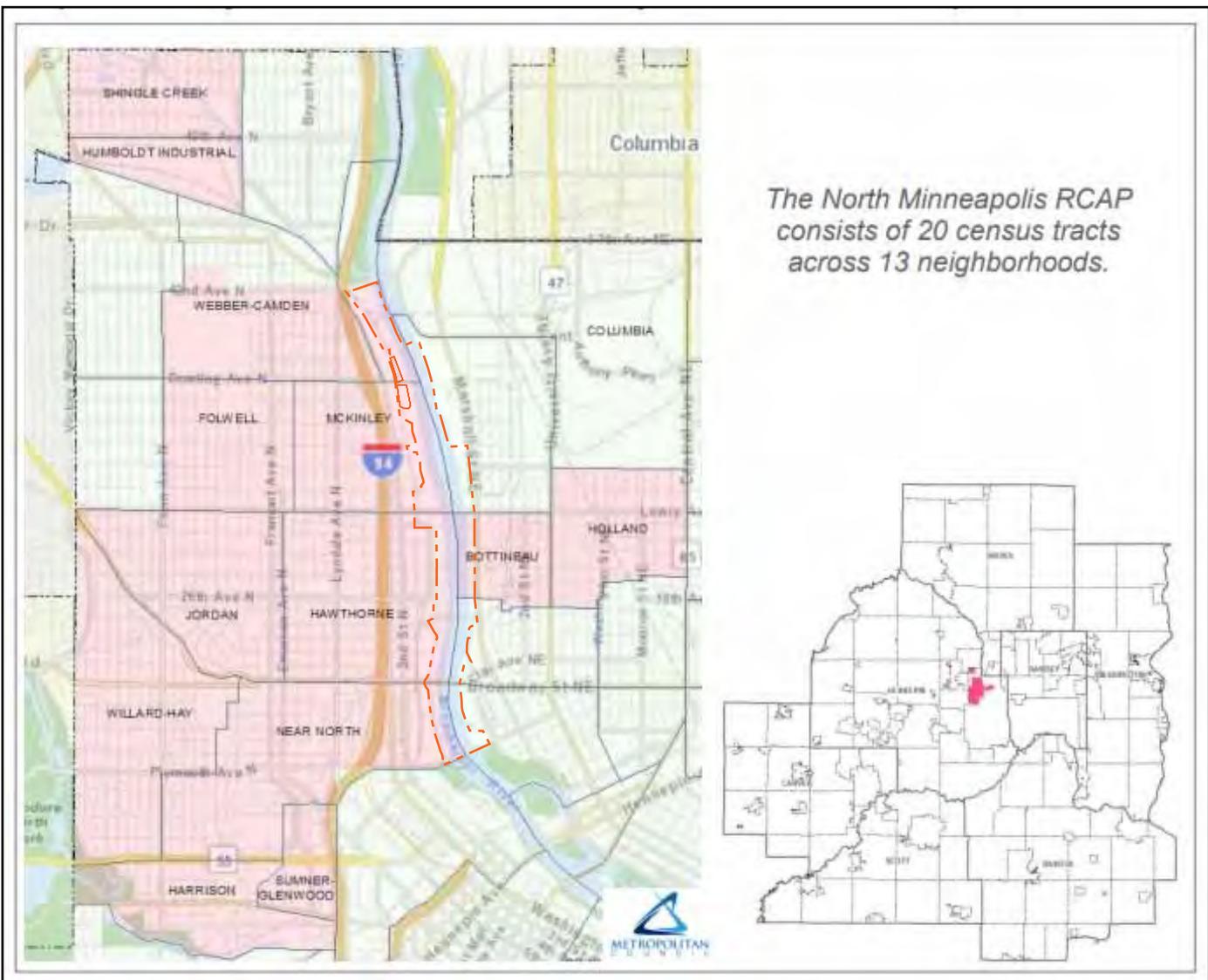


Figure 3.1 Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty around Above the Falls Regional Park (2007-2011 Metropolitan Council)

ALIGNMENT WITH THE NORTHERN GREEN ZONE AND PROMISE ZONE

Since the 2013 Above the Falls Regional Park Master Plan process, the City of Minneapolis has established a Northern Green Zone and Promise Zone that overlap with the Above the Falls area. These plans and initiatives can supplement and enhance each other as their general goals are aligned, and the different agencies and departments can more broadly address community needs and leverage resources. This appendix outlines the key ways that the Above the Falls Regional Park can help fulfill the wider Green Zone and Promise Zone objectives.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE NORTHERN GREEN ZONE

The Minneapolis Green Zone is a place-based policy initiative aimed at improving health and supporting economic development using environmentally conscious efforts in communities that face the cumulative effects of environmental pollution, as well as social, political and economic vulnerability. Defined by the City of Minneapolis, the “Green Zone is an environmental and economic development tool that targets new green infrastructure and retrofits to an area in a comprehensive manner.” Low-income communities, Indigenous communities, and communities of color in Minneapolis experience unequal health, wealth, employment, and education outcomes. These communities also are overburdened by environmental conditions such as traffic and stationary pollution sources, brownfield sites, blight and substandard housing. The ATF Plan will help address these inequities through the transformation of the riverfront from industrial land to public green space.

Green Zones are a local initiative, with a currently dedicated City staff member and a Northern Green Zone Task Force. Given the extensive collaboration done with community members in developing the goals, MPRB staff can use the framework as an evaluation tool for park development. Staff should invite City staff and Northern Green Zone Task Force members to help consider alignment with the Green Zone goals, particularly in areas highlighted, from the time planning processes are initiated through ongoing management of parks. The chart below shows areas where the Green Zone goals have the most overlap with park development.

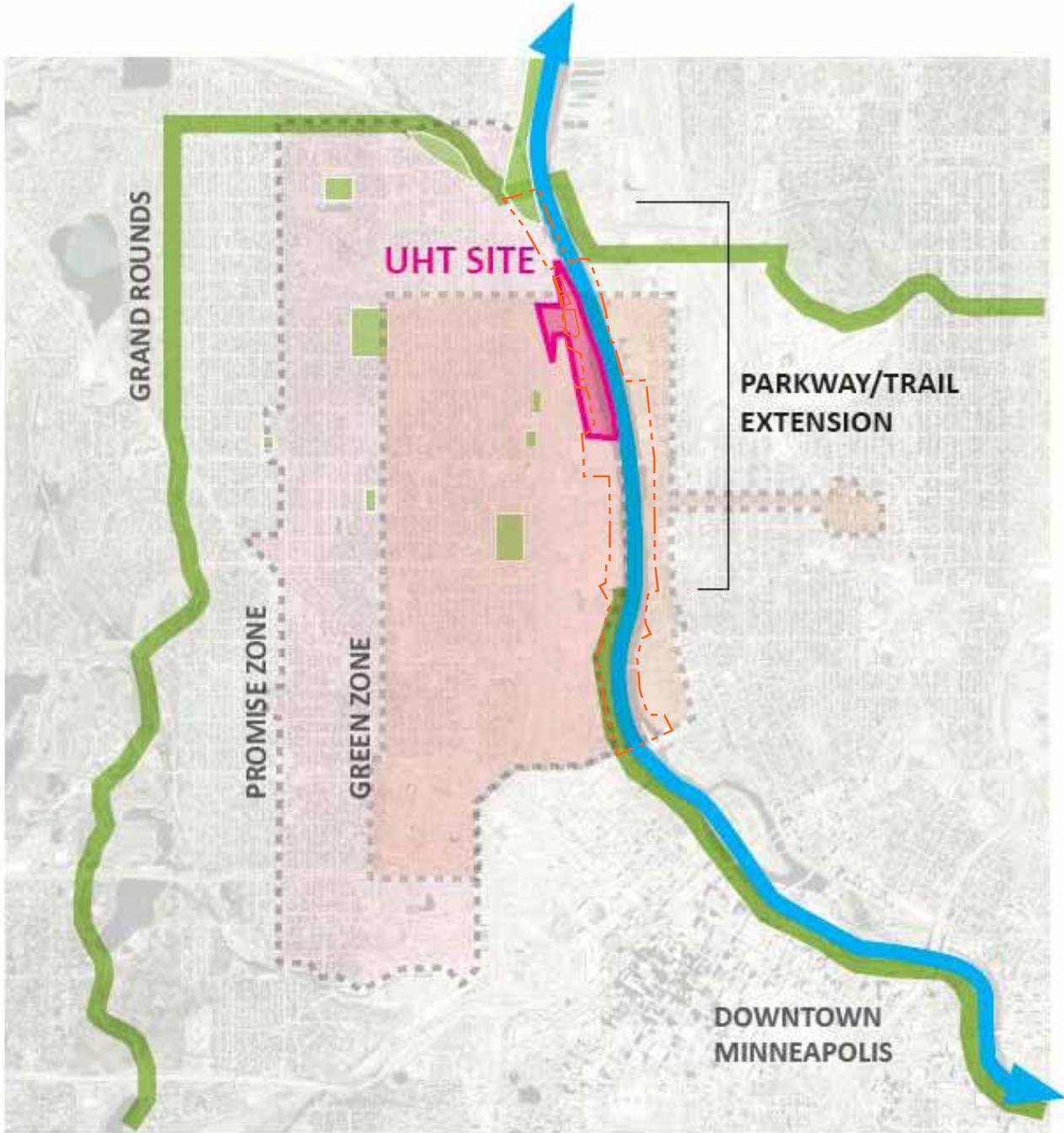


Figure 3.2 Green Zone, Promise Zone, and Upper Harbor Terminal Boundaries

Green Zone Goals	Park design and planning	Park development and implementation	Park programming, operations, and management	Impacts of parks on surrounding land
Clean up soil and water contamination and redevelop brownfields				
Improve air quality, livability, and pollinator habitat through vegetation, clean energy, and energy efficiency				
Improve air and environmental quality in business and transport				
Increase 'green' jobs and career opportunities				
Increase the availability of affordable housing and environmentally high quality housing				
Increase access to healthy, affordable food by support local systems of growing, production, and distribution				
Advance environmental awareness and education in community and schools				
Foster community healing from historical trauma and root shock, using community-based approaches to healing and health				
Stop the patterns of community violence and the cradle to prison pipeline with which it is associated				
Develop an Environmental Justice Scorecard that assesses how well the businesses and branches of government do in practicing responsible and responsive environmental stewardship and partnership around environmental justice. Use the scorecard as a tool to drive policy change toward greater environmental justice.				
Organize the community to develop ecological consciousness and foster a healthy future that takes care of the earth, takes care of the people, and takes care of the future we choose to create together.				
Work with the stakeholders and Native Nations statewide to create an environmental justice partnership that fosters a common platform among environmental justice communities, using a Minnesota Environmental Screen to provide a common basis of measurement and protocols for action.				

Table 3.1 Park Development and Green Zone Goals

ALIGNMENT WITH THE NORTHSIDE PROMISE ZONE

Promise Zones are designated by the federal government and in 2015/2016 the City received a 10 year designation for a large area in North Minneapolis. Promise Zones are an economic development strategy intended to support low income communities throughout the country. The North Minneapolis Promise Zone (NMPZ) is comprised of 80 percent people of color and its residents face rates of poverty, crime, housing instability, and unemployment that far exceed those in the rest of Minneapolis. Because of these disparities, Minneapolis leads the county in racial inequities. North Minneapolis' Promise Zone (NMPZ) has decided to focus on three objectives to improve the conditions of NMPZ residents. Each of these objectives will be approached through a racial equity lens.

1. Build a more Inclusive Economy that supports the NMPZ as a destination for business growth. The City aims to accomplish this by: ensuring dollars are reinvested in the community, increasing capital investment on the Northside that creates jobs for NMPZ residents.
2. Improve Health & Safety of NMPZ residents. The City aims to accomplish this by: strengthening community-law enforcement relationships by investing in community-oriented policing; increasing access to affordable healthy food.
3. Promote stable housing for all NMPZ residents. The City aims to accomplish this by: coordinating and publicizing support services related to housing; facilitating partnerships between housing stakeholders working in the NMPZ.

Five key Promise Zone goals are further articulated below:

- Goal 1: Reduce racial inequities in public services and institutions that contribute to the ongoing economic exclusion of the Minneapolis Promise Zone and meaningfully engage residents in the decisions affecting their community.
- Goal 2: Reduce serious and violent crime by curtailing gun violence, strengthening community law-enforcement relationships, and addressing youth violence and domestic violence.
- Goal 3: Improve cradle-to-career outcomes for Minneapolis Promise Zone students, thereby reducing the racial achievement gap.
- Goal 4: Build a more inclusive economy in the Minneapolis Promise Zone, ensuring dollars are reinvested in the community and that goods, arts, and services are available to Minneapolis Promise Zone residents and visitors. Support the Minneapolis Promise Zone as a destination for business growth.
- Goal 5: Create jobs through the promotion of transit oriented development opportunities; incentivizing growth among businesses in proximity to the Minneapolis Promise Zone; and, creating youth employment opportunities that can meaningfully contribute to household income.

-
- Goal 6: Promote stable housing for all residents in the Minneapolis Promise Zone by increasing availability, affordability, and quality of housing stock while coordinating support services.

Objective #2 and Goals 1, 3, and 4 area are areas where the Promise Zone goals have the most overlap with the ATF Plan. Like the Green Zone goals, staff should examine how all stages of park development and management can intersect with the Promise Zone goals and support positive change on surrounding lands as well. The Northside Promise Zone has a working group of community members and agency staff that MPRB can invite into park planning processes. In addition, the projects with strong community support within the Promise Zone may be competitive for grants and other funding.

PARKS AND GENTRIFICATION

Historically, low-income and minority populations tend to have worse access to city parks than city residents as a whole. The reasons for such unfair land development are multifaceted and complex. Causes include red-lining and other tools that have limited communities of color from living near parks, to rising cost of living through market forces, and patterns of investment and neglect by government agencies including MPRB. The ATF efforts have tremendous potential to change this narrative and create amenities that are close, desirable, and accessible to marginalized communities. However, if providing the green space leads to displacement through higher property values and rising housing costs, park developments may worsen disparities, rather than address them. This topic will be further explored by MPRB during the upcoming 2020 Comprehensive Planning process, but two critical tools that planners can immediately employ are:

- Robust community engagement and a collaborative planning process so that park improvements serve the needs of existing residents first
- Collaboration between park professionals and other government agencies to be aware of the effects projects can have on surrounding neighborhoods. MPRB can work with the City and other stakeholders for a wider look at the intersection of parks, housing, economic development, and cumulative impacts to the community members.

This page left blank intentionally.