Above the Falls
Regional Park Master Plan survey response
during the 45-day public comment period
March 14 – April 1
Q1 What area of the regional park interests you most, and does the draft master plan meet your expectations for this area? How would you change the plan to meet your expectations?

I'm particularly interested in restoring river access in North Minneapolis. This community has been separated from our natural resources for generations, and finally has a huge opportunity in the Upper Harbor Terminal development to transform this community for the generations to come.

Nonetheless, the plan reduces public parkland from 28 acres proposed by the park board in 2013 to 19.5 acres, which is a 30% reduction in riverfront park for private development and is unacceptable for a progressive city that values natural resources and public access to green spaces. Increased green space will help build resiliency to a changing climate instead of more development that will leave this area and its water access vulnerable to extreme weather.

Also, the landscape plan for the UHT site locates the parkway behind the concert venue and hotel, placing private uses between the river and parkway users. Most everywhere else in the Minneapolis park system, the parkway runs along the river, ensuring access for everyone.

Q2 Please tell us any other comments or suggestions you have regarding the draft master plan.  

Respondent skipped this question

Page 2: We would like to know more about you!

Q3 What is the zip code of your primary residence?

55407

Q4 What is your race/ethnicity?

white

Q5 How do you self identify?

Female

Q6 What is your age?

30-39
Q7 Is English your first language? If not, what is your first language? Respondent skipped this question

Q8 What is your name? This information helps us keep track of everyone's comments. You may use just a first name or some other name. You may still do the survey multiple times with the same name.
Q1 What area of the regional park interests you most, and does the draft master plan meet your expectations for this area? How would you change the plan to meet your expectations?

Traffic at Dowling & 94 exit and entrance ramp and additional affordable housing which the Northside is already saturated with.

Q2 Please tell us any other comments or suggestions you have regarding the draft master plan.

Study/ fix traffic flow at Dowling & 94 entrance/ exit ramp and mitigate. The plan should not consider affordable housing. Greater Minneapolis should be held more accountable with respect to affordable housing within city limits.

Page 2: We would like to know more about you!

Q3 What is the zip code of your primary residence?

55412

Q4 What is your race/ethnicity?  
Respondent skipped this question

Q5 How do you self identify?  
Respondent skipped this question

Q6 What is your age?  
Respondent skipped this question

Q7 Is English your first language? If not, what is your first language?  
Respondent skipped this question

Q8 What is your name? This information helps us keep track of everyone's comments. You may use just a first name or some other name. You may still do the survey multiple times with the same name.  
Respondent skipped this question
Q1 What area of the regional park interests you most, and does the draft master plan meet your expectations for this area? How would you change the plan to meet your expectations?

The park needs to be near the river. Do not reduce the acreage of the park.

Q2 Please tell us any other comments or suggestions you have regarding the draft master plan.

Respondent skipped this question

Q3 What is the zip code of your primary residence?

55413

Q4 What is your race/ethnicity?

white

Q5 How do you self identify?

Female

Q6 What is your age?

50-59

Q7 Is English your first language? If not, what is your first language?

yes

Q8 What is your name? This information helps us keep track of everyone’s comments. You may use just a first name or some other name. You may still do the survey multiple times with the same name.
Q1 What area of the regional park interests you most, and does the draft master plan meet your expectations for this area? How would you change the plan to meet your expectations?

Graco Area - would love to see an off leash dog park incorporated into the area - even if it is small. I firmly believe that dog parks are not for dogs, they are for people. Groups of people with similar interests gather at dog parks. They provide a place to meet and congregate with your neighbors, but dog parks are often overlooked as the great community building locations they are. In addition, you will find dog parks, unlike standard parks, are often in use all year round - even in the winter dog parks usually have regular visitors. Another thing to consider is the area near Graco is continually growing. More and more apartment buildings are going up - and they don't have yards, so there is an increased need for a dog park in the immediate area.

Q2 Please tell us any other comments or suggestions you have regarding the draft master plan.

I attending a planning meeting once about the plans over here - about two years ago. When the topic of a dog park was brought up at the meeting, the elected official in attendance quickly dismissed the idea, saying something to the effect of..."oh everyone wants dog parks." I left thinking, if so many people want them, why aren't we doing them? Why should the idea be so quickly dismissed?

Q3 What is the zip code of your primary residence?

55413

Q4 What is your race/ethnicity?

NA

Q5 How do you self identify?

Female

Q6 What is your age?

40-49

Q7 Is English your first language? If not, what is your first language?

Yes
Q8 What is your name? This information helps us keep track of everyone's comments. You may use just a first name or some other name. You may still do the survey multiple times with the same name.

Respondent skipped this question
Q1 What area of the regional park interests you most, and does the draft master plan meet your expectations for this area? How would you change the plan to meet your expectations?

It looks good but I see no planning to continue the West River Road and East River Roads north. In particular I think there is a missed opportunity to connect the Grand Rounds / Victory Memorial Drive / Webber Parkway to the park on the other side of the I-94. The intersection of the Parkway and Lyndale Avenue north is really an uncelebrated and neglected point in the continuity of the park system.

Q2 Please tell us any other comments or suggestions you have regarding the draft master plan.

See item 1.

Page 2: We would like to know more about you!

Q3 What is the zip code of your primary residence?

55412

Q4 What is your race/ethnicity?

W

Q5 How do you self identify?

Male

Q6 What is your age?

50-59

Q7 Is English your first language? If not, what is your first language?

Y

Q8 What is your name? This information helps us keep track of everyone's comments. You may use just a first name or some other name. You may still do the survey multiple times with the same name.
Q1 What area of the regional park interests you most, and does the draft master plan meet your expectations for this area? How would you change the plan to meet your expectations?

I would like to see more about trail/parkway development and how it can keep a consistent trail that is coordinated with west river parkway.

Q2 Please tell us any other comments or suggestions you have regarding the draft master plan.  

Respondent skipped this question

Page 2: We would like to know more about you!

Q3 What is the zip code of your primary residence?  

Respondent skipped this question

Q4 What is your race/ethnicity?  

Respondent skipped this question

Q5 How do you self identify?  

Respondent skipped this question

Q6 What is your age?  

Respondent skipped this question

Q7 Is English your first language? If not, what is your first language?  

Respondent skipped this question

Q8 What is your name? This information helps us keep track of everyone’s comments. You may use just a first name or some other name. You may still do the survey multiple times with the same name.  

Respondent skipped this question
Above the Falls Regional Park Master Plan: Public Comment on Draft Plan

Q1 What area of the regional park interests you most, and does the draft master plan meet your expectations for this area? How would you change the plan to meet your expectations?

All plans sound okay, but are not urgent and far too expensive for our current fiscal challenges.

Q2 Please tell us any other comments or suggestions you have regarding the draft master plan.

The projects should be slowed and the budget reduced. There is no urgency. Taxpayers cannot afford all this and all the other projects the Cities, County, State and Feds are planning and have already committed us to. In light of rising fees and property taxes to fund the frivolous spending, this entire project can be delayed indefinitely.

It angers me that the authors credited a list of agencies as the source of funds. This is an error. Each of these agencies are funded by taxpayers. I INSIST THAT TAXPAYERS BE LISTED AS THE SOURCE OF ALL THE FUNDS. I also suggest that mention be made that each of the agencies boldly chose to contribute our taxes in a manner that involved an extra amount of taxation to obtain funds for salaries and benefits for their own personnel whom we did not elect. They do not represent us in any way nor do we know them, yet we're forced to pay for them and their non-essential projects.

Please correct the error.

Page 2: We would like to know more about you!

Q3 What is the zip code of your primary residence?

55414

Q4 What is your race/ethnicity? Respondent skipped this question

Q5 How do you self identify? Female

Q6 What is your age? 50-59
Q7 Is English your first language? If not, what is your first language?
Yes

Q8 What is your name? This information helps us keep track of everyone's comments. You may use just a first name or some other name. You may still do the survey multiple times with the same name.
#8

**Q1** What area of the regional park interests you most, and does the draft master plan meet your expectations for this area? How would you change the plan to meet your expectations?

I understand that part of the concept is to keep the fertilizer domes. However, are these built with hazardous materials and still have chemical residue? I would prefer that these were completely removed and something built that would resemble them and be functional within the park format. Such as using them as concessions with a museum element to show how they worked. Right now they are an eyesore.

I like seeing more green space near Dowling Ave. I believe that makes the park more interesting and accessible to the community.

Also I think that it would be best to keep all vehicle traffic on 2nd Ave and not create a parkway through the park area. All venue access should be from 2nd Ave and any parking should also be accessed from 2nd Ave.

**Q2** Please tell us any other comments or suggestions you have regarding the draft master plan.

I don't want to see anymore buildings of any size right on the river front. The minimum building set back should be at least 300 feet. The taller the building the further from the river it should be. If the park is for the community then they shouldn't feel like they are trespassing on the buildings grounds. I hate seeing all these high rises on the river front, I feel it detracts from the river being a public amenity.

**Q3** What is the zip code of your primary residence?

55418

**Q4** What is your race/ethnicity? Respondent skipped this question

**Q5** How do you self identify? Female

**Q6** What is your age? 50-59
Q7 Is English your first language? If not, what is your first language?

yes

Q8 What is your name? This information helps us keep track of everyone's comments. You may use just a first name or some other name. You may still do the survey multiple times with the same name.
Q1 What area of the regional park interests you most, and does the draft master plan meet your expectations for this area? How would you change the plan to meet your expectations?
The area of the regional park that interest me most is the Upper Harbor Terminal Site (phases 1-3). Currently, the draft master plan does not meet my or my communities expectations for this area and region. I urge you to amend the proposed Above the Falls Master Plan Regional Park boundary which would privatize public parkland and reduce regional parkland boundaries at the Upper Harbor Terminal (UTH) site. The proposed Above the Falls Master Plan regional boundary reduces public parkland from 28 acres proposed by the park board in 2013 to 19.5 acres, which is a 30% reduction in riverfront park for private development and is unacceptable.

Public parkland and regional parkland boundaries must be preserved for the health and benefit of community residents, including North and Northeast residents experiencing economic, health, and environmental disparities. It's important that we ensure that redevelopment will provide equitable benefits to North and Northeast community members rather than allowing private interests to take the lead and reap the majority of the benefits on publicly-owned property. Rather than private development, expand park/public space flanking both sides of Dowling Avenue to more visibly connect North Minneapolis to the river. The redevelopment of this city-owned site can better connect residents with river and be a model of community investment and wealth building.

Throughout the planning process, the development team has failed to respect the presence of the Mississippi River and the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area. As evidenced in the designs and presentations, focus is on the performing arts center as the singular driver and primary resource to leverage surrounding development. Because of this, we see rendered buildings that loom over the river and are inconsistent with the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA) rules.

North of Dowling Avenue is the most narrow portion of the site, yet it is slated for tall private development. We recommend locating private and taller buildings on the southern portion of the site away from the river where they can be more effectively tiered and screened. The further setback and tiered the visible development is, the less impact and dominance it has on the river and shoreline appearance. It's imperative that all development at this site, adhere to the MRCCA CA-UM building height limit of 65’ on the northern portion of the site.

Moreover, the landscape plan for the UHT site currently locates the parkway to the west of, or behind, the concert venue and hotel, placing private uses between the river and parkway users. We urge that you remove language that prescribes the specific location of buildings until CPEC is able to provide input. Everywhere else in the Minneapolis park system, the parkway runs along the river, lakes, and waterways ensuring access for everyone. As a result, the concept plan does not prioritize equity, greater public access, and sustainability as called for in the bold vision of the award-winning master plan for the area.

In summary, I request that the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board of Commissioners to revise the Above the Falls Regional Park Master Plan to maintain 28 acres of public parkland, locate the parkway to the east of the proposed private land-uses, relocate taller buildings to southern portion of site, away from the river, follow MRCCA height regulations, adopt a more inclusive co-creative planning process, and ensure that redevelopment will provide equitable benefits to North and Northeast. The community deserves an opportunity to explore alternatives that could better serve residents and enhance the river.
Q2 Please tell us any other comments or suggestions you have regarding the draft master plan.

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Q3 What is the zip code of your primary residence?
55411

Q4 What is your race/ethnicity?
Black

Q5 How do you self identify?
Male

Q6 What is your age?
30-39

Q7 Is English your first language? If not, what is your first language?
yes

Q8 What is your name? This information helps us keep track of everyone's comments. You may use just a first name or some other name. You may still do the survey multiple times with the same name.
Q1 What area of the regional park interests you most, and does the draft master plan meet your expectations for this area? How would you change the plan to meet your expectations?

I like how you are proposing Expanded bike trails on the river to connect up to Saint Anthony parkway. That is my commute now and it is not safe biking on the streets with cars due to the increased accidents from distracted drivers, especially texting. The more we can connect north and northeast with river trails like they have in south Minneapolis and downtown, the healthier our communities will be. Also, to encourage livable walkable communities, the more retail we can have on the river such as restaurants like on Saint Anthony main and psycho suzi's, the better. They are always packed there which demonstrates demand is greater than supply.

Q2 Please tell us any other comments or suggestions you have regarding the draft master plan.

Thanks for doing this and seeking comments!

Page 2: We would like to know more about you!

Q3 What is the zip code of your primary residence?

55418

Q4 What is your race/ethnicity?

White

Q5 How do you self identify?

Female

Q6 What is your age?

40-49

Q7 Is English your first language? If not, what is your first language?

Yes
**Q8 What is your name?** This information helps us keep track of everyone's comments. You may use just a first name or some other name. You may still do the survey multiple times with the same name.
Above the Falls Regional Park Master Plan: Public Comment on Draft Plan

#11

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Saturday, March 30, 2019 9:03:13 PM
Last Modified: Saturday, March 30, 2019 9:15:52 PM
Time Spent: 00:12:38
IP Address: 

Page 1

Q1 What area of the regional park interests you most, and does the draft master plan meet your expectations for this area? How would you change the plan to meet your expectations?

The plan does not meet my expectations for this regional park. I am very disappointed that the trails and parkway have not been given the prominence at the river's edge that they deserve. The other giant disappointment is the two large plots of land excluded from the regional park. It is one thing to know that there are plots that are currently not park or city property that will need to be acquired in the future for the park, but to remove land from the park boundary is a horrible precedence to set.

Q2 Please tell us any other comments or suggestions you have regarding the draft master plan.

The park board should not under any circumstances be responsible for any industrial relics that will not be demolished as part of this plan. If the city feels these are historic and should be kept, they can shoulder the burden of restoration and maintenance.

Page 2: We would like to know more about you!

Q3 What is the zip code of your primary residence? Respondent skipped this question

Q4 What is your race/ethnicity? Respondent skipped this question

Q5 How do you self identify? Respondent skipped this question

Q6 What is your age? Respondent skipped this question

Q7 Is English your first language? If not, what is your first language? Respondent skipped this question

Q8 What is your name? This information helps us keep track of everyone's comments. You may use just a first name or some other name. You may still do the survey multiple times with the same name. Respondent skipped this question
What area of the regional park interests you most, and does the draft master plan meet your expectations for this area? How would you change the plan to meet your expectations?

The area of the park in which my family and I are most interested is the proposed park land along the east side of the river in NE. I am a homeowner in NE Minneapolis, and am very excited about the prospect of a transformative park project. My expectation for this project is that it adds richness and vibrancy to the community while preserving the river’s history and culture of the river community. Currently the plan does not completely meet my expectations because I believe it does not reach its full potential to benefit the city and community.

I would change the plan in the following ways:

- Allow for, and encourage, new restaurants along the river to have patio seating and kayak/boat access to the restaurant from the river as well as access from the continuous river trail. I envision a block of restaurants in the area between Lowry and Broadway (possibly area 18 or 16 on the ATF regional park development concept). A similar concept is the San Antonio, TX Riverwalk which is tremendously popular. I believe restaurants and parks together along the Mississippi would become a truly special destination boosting jobs and local economy while drawing residents to the ATF park system from around the city and beyond.

- Route the park trail around the properties of Siwek Lumber and Marshall Concrete companies (allowing these companies to keep their current property and stay in business). I believe these companies represent the important history of how industries in NE have used and benefited from the river (even though they currently don’t use it for transportation). It would be a loss for the community’s heritage to lose these representatives of river industry. Losing these companies would also hurt the local economy by removing jobs and access to building materials that they provide.

Q2 Please tell us any other comments or suggestions you have regarding the draft master plan.

The ATF park system can reach its full potential by, not only allowing residents to experience the river banks, but also the body of the river itself. Kayaking and canoeing (even sailing) up and down the river through the parks could be one of the aspects that draws people to the park. The current kayak rental is very popular (and fun), and I believe it should be expanded upon by adding more restaurants and places of interest to stop and visit along the river. Organizations similar to Minneapolis Sailing Center with boat rentals (or membership) would allow for residents to easily and effectively have access to recreation on the river.

Q3 What is the zip code of your primary residence?

55418
Q4 What is your race/ethnicity?
white

Q5 How do you self identify? Male

Q6 What is your age? 21-29

Q7 Is English your first language? If not, what is your first language?
Yes

Q8 What is your name? This information helps us keep track of everyone's comments. You may use just a first name or some other name. You may still do the survey multiple times with the same name.
Q1 What area of the regional park interests you most, and does the draft master plan meet your expectations for this area? How would you change the plan to meet your expectations?

Need to connect the paths. Must be continuous along the river.

Very disappointed in the Graco property being sold. They had previously agreed to trail open in exchange for allowing the city street to be abandoned 9th and 10th ave. to Graco. Need to adhere to concerns that there should be positive activity that draws people to these sites -

Upper Harbor plan could be a boondoggle - costly and not engaged enough with the residents. Potentially gentrifying a whole community. This is history repeating itself - similar to the huppalla around St Anthony Main that was commercial festival place making that failed in a matter of years and now is sad with four bars, one movie theater and mostly businesses.

Q2 Please tell us any other comments or suggestions you have regarding the draft master plan.

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Very disappointed in the Graco property being sold. They had previously agreed to trail open in exchange for allowing the city street to be abandoned 9th and 10th ave. to Graco. Need to adhere to concerns that there should be positive activity that draws people to these sites -

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Page 2: We would like to know more about you!

Q3 What is the zip code of your primary residence?

55413

Q4 What is your race/ethnicity?

NA
Q5 How do you self identify?  
I prefer not to specify my gender

Q6 What is your age?  
50-59

Q7 Is English your first language? If not, what is your first language?  
yes

Q8 What is your name? This information helps us keep track of everyone's comments. You may use just a first name or some other name. You may still do the survey multiple times with the same name.
The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board posted a draft Master Plan for the Above the Falls Regional Park (ATF) in 2013. An updated draft is now available for a new public comment period in 2019, along with a brief memo describing the updates. This 45 day public comment period will end on April 1, 2019. Once comments are compiled and the final plan is complete, staff will advertise a public hearing where community members can speak directly to the elected Board before they consider any actions around the plan.

The ATF Regional Park includes both sides of the Mississippi riverfront in Minneapolis between the Camden Bridge to the Plymouth Bridge. Eventually ATF Regional Park will connect North Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park and the Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park, creating a continuous regional park system along the upper Mississippi River. The draft plan has been created with the guidance of a Community Advisory Committee and other stakeholders and puts forth a set of recommendations for park improvements for the next 20 years.

You can view a hard copy of the draft plan at the Mary Merrill Headquarters Building and the Bottineau, Marshall Terrace, Logan, Webber, Folwell, Farview, North Commons, and Bethune Recreation Centers, and the Carl Kroenig Interpretation Center. You can also view the draft plan online: [https://www.minneapolisparks.org/above-the-falls-regional-park-master-plan-update](https://www.minneapolisparks.org/above-the-falls-regional-park-master-plan-update)

If you are viewing this survey as a paper copy and would like to complete the survey online, please visit: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/draftATF](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/draftATF)

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us! Please contact Kate Lamers, klamers@minneapolisparks.org, 612-230-6486 with questions or concerns.

1. What area of the regional park interests you most, and does the draft master plan meet your expectations for this area? How would you change the plan to meet your expectations?

   Accessible parks and natural spaces.

   Yes, I think with intentional construction, particularly along the river, this is a great idea.
We would like to know more about you!

The following information is optional.

3. What is the zip code of your primary residence? 
   55407

4. What is your race/ethnicity? 
   [White]

5. How do you self identify? 
   - Male
   - Female
   - Transgender
   - I prefer not to specify my gender
   - Other (please specify)

6. What is your age? 
   - 17 or younger
   - 18-20
   - 21-29
   - 30-39
   - 40-49
   - 50-59
   - 60 or older

7. Is English your first language? If not, what is your first language? 
   [English]
April 1, 2019

Ms. Kate Lanners
Project Manager
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
2117 West River Road
Minneapolis, MN 55411

Subject: ShamPlan, a.k.a. Above the Falls Master Plan Modification (ATF)

Dear Ms. Lanners,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the ATF ShamPlan.

It’s ironic that comments on this absurd plan are due on April Fools Day.

The Earth Protector® group, and myself, are well-known environmental, political, and community activists for the past 36-years, and based in the Minneapolis McKinley neighborhood for the past 20-years. I can testify with absolute certainty that no one ever contacted us in any way, or knocked on our doors, regarding the Upper Harbor Terminal or the Above the Falls Master Plan, or its modification.

At the ATF Public Hearing being proposed I will provide specifics on Earth Protector® work in the City of Minneapolis. But for right now, I will simply mention the names of a few projects and a snapshot of our involvement:

**Earth Protector® City of Minneapolis activities:**
NO Fluoride – Campaign to stop fluoridating public water (current).
35W Bridge – False Claims Act lawsuit to prove cause and fault (current).
Garbage Burner (HERC) – Protested, litigated, provided alternatives.
Target Field – Lawsuit over HERC emissions affecting patrons.
Riverside Power Plant – Lawsuit over toxic air emissions.
Northern Metals – Letters to lawyer Rockenstein suggesting a move.
Light Rail Transit – Lawsuit over impacts, need, alignment, and alternatives.
Sears Building – Organized the coalition that prevented demolition.
Target Stores – Stopped their scaffolding erection in Washburn Fair Oaks Park.
Lowry Avenue Bridge – Litigated to protect the bridge from demolition.
Federal Reserve – Berman Buckskin – Litigated for environmental review.
Lead Poisoning – Founding member of the Lead Coalition to protect kids.
Highway 55 – Participant in fight to prevent demolishing houses for a road.

COMMENTS:
We are aware of claims that community engagement occurred, and ideas were solicited for the Upper Harbor Terminal, but we believe this was all manipulated and managed to result in the present outcome.

A group of wealthy, influential, and political people are attempting to perpetrate fraud upon the People of Minneapolis, through cronyism and conspiracy, by stealing the 48 acre Upper Harbor Terminal (UHT) property, to give to their friends, associates, and supporters for their personal financial benefit. The (UHT) is owned by the people of Minneapolis and managed for them by the City.

The people expect the City to obtain the highest and best use possible for the UHT. But the City is not doing so and instead they are using minority community engagement and inclusion as the smokescreen for the theft. The thieves are using black Council members Cunningham and Ellison to do their bidding to silence the black people of North Minneapolis with promises of theater tickets, places along the river to go fishing, and other trite and relatively meaningless payoffs.

These clever conspirators include, Dayna Frank of First Avenue Productions and Parks Foundation Board Member (the Parks Foundation is a private corporate partner and financier of the Park Board), the Pohlad Family acting as United Properties, Thor Development Corporation, Stuart Ackerberg, Chief Executive Officer of the Ackerberg Group and a Parks Foundation Board Member, Jacob Frey, Mayor of Minneapolis, and a multitude of co-conspirators that include Park Board Members and staffs, and Minneapolis City Council Members and staffs.

What’s wrong with this Upper Harbor Terminal plan? Everything.

Giving away 19 acres of productive land to the Park Board to spend a fortune to maintain a park just 1.8 miles from the 62.5 acre North Mississippi Regional Park is stupid. Building
houses next to where GAF emits unhealthy toxic air pollution is stupid. An outdoor music venue at the Upper Harbor Terminal is stupid.

We asked the Minneapolis City Council to reject the Concept Plan but our request was rejected. However, we enclosed the February 28, 2019 letter we delivered to all the City Council Members, and would like it made part of these comments and part of the record.

Finally, we reject, as you should also, this entire Sham Plan. It denigrates the work of the hard-working honest people who work for the City and Park Department and it continues to victimize the wonderful people of North Minneapolis.

Sincerely,

/s/ Leslie Davis

Leslie Davis

P.S. We want jobs at the UHT that can create generational wealth. We know that some menial and part-time jobs will be needed for any project but they should pay enough to have a reasonable standard of living platform from which to launch upward. Also, we are proposing and lobbying for a plan that will begin to stop the inflation that is making it very difficult or impossible for many people to keep up. We are having our taxes go up and our cost of living go up with no end in sight.

Enclosed: Letter to all City Council Members dated February 28, 2019.

LD/ck

cc: Ms. Erica H MacDonald, United States Attorney
Mr. Mike Freeman, Hennepin County Attorney
Senator Champion
Senator Dziedzic
February 28, 2019

Dear Minneapolis City Council Member:

The Minneapolis Parks Foundation (Foundation) is a private corporation that is the primary financial partner to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (Board).

The Pohlad Family and their Minnesota Twins baseball team provide more than a million dollars to the Foundation annually. The Frank Family, owners of the First Avenue companies, provide thousands of dollars to the Foundation. And they each have Foundation Directors representing them who help advise and influence the Foundation and the Park Board, as well as have advance knowledge of Park Board planning and other inside activities.

The Upper Harbor Terminal (UHT) 48 acres is proposed to be divided up between the Pohlad Family, Frank Family, and the Park Board Cronyism epitomized.

I, Leslie Davis, Earth Protector® Companies President, have met with, and/or spoken with, dozens of people throughout the state and the country who want to do business with us and the people of Minneapolis, at the UHT location, once it is clear to do so. Some build greenhouses, some provide growing materials and expertise, some grow hemp, some grow vast amounts of food indoor, and some manufacture or assemble various items. They are all great Americans and great business people who want to help us thrive and pay taxes. Not beg for charity.

The Upper Harbor Terminal (UHT) should be put to its highest and best use. What is proposed in the Concept Plan is its lowest and worst use.

Improper uses for the UHT:
1. 19 acre park 1.8 miles from the 62.5 acre N. Mississippi Regional Park
2. Nightclub – 4 to 17 miles from its population zone
3. Housing – too close for children to toxic air emissions from GAF
4. School – we already have many schools short of funds

**Location benefits of the UHT:**
1. Interstate Highway on/off ramp
2. Railroad line
3. Limitless water resources
4. Direct river access
5. Vast labor pool nearby
6. Zoned industrial

**Proper use for the UHT property:**
1. Growing Indoor Organic Food
2. Processing and manufacturing non-psychoactive hemp feedstock:
   a. construction materials
   b. fabrics (clothing, carpeting)
   c. human food and pet food
   d. body oils, lotions, hair care
   e. plastic and paper
   f. bio-fuels
   g. hundreds of other products
3. Manufacturing and assembling electric devices

The Earth Protector® Companies and our vast array of community and business partners want to work with you on the Upper Harbor Terminal project to make certain the potential of the site is maximized, great jobs and training programs are developed, the environment is enhanced, and taxes are paid on the entire site. Except of course for a small portion needed to connect the Grand Rounds.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/ Leslie Davis
Leslie Davis, President

LD/ck                               Recycled paper
March 30, 2019

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
2117 West River RD
Minneapolis, MN 55411

City of Minneapolis CPED
Crown Roller Mill
105 Fifth Avenue South #200
Minneapolis, MN 55401

To Whom it may concern,

Having reviewed the draft update of the Above the Falls Master Plan I am very disappointed in the results. In a climate at both the city and the park board where equity and sustainability are the concerns of today’s Minnesotans this plan gives neither equity or parity for the Northside community surrounding this area nor the sustainability that should be a major portion of any planning effort in the 21st century.

Having served on both AFCAC and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board I have watched the park borders shrink and now see that the trails and parkway that should follow the river’s edge, with any development behind, have been altered. While I am sympathetic to the City of Minneapolis wishing to provide space for development on the site, the entire plan should have been based on the premise that continuous, contiguous trails and a parkway would be at the river’s edge.

The most disturbing part of the plan are the two parcels along the river’s edge that are designated as “excluded from the park boundary”. To say that the city will “explore options for the land to be held in public trust” is not enough. This land is currently public and should remain so. Once out of public hands it is likely to eventually fall into the hands of those NOT concerned with the public’s access to the riverfront but to their financial gain.

These two properties designated for an outdoor music performance venue just south of Dowling Ave along the river and a hospitality mixed-use building just north of Dowling Ave along the river, while nice goals, are fraught with issues. Is the outdoor performance space to be owned by the city and operated by a preferred contractor? If so, was the land excluded from the park because with The Commons it was concluded that the City of Minneapolis is not legally able to operate a park and does not feel that the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board could work with the contractor? Should the city be depriving its citizens of park land because they think they will be able to “make money” at the site? What type of agreement does the city have in place that would show projections concurring with this conclusion? What agreement does the city have in place for the development of the amphitheater that has brought the building of the site to the Legislature for funding? What written and signed
contract does the city have in hand that shows the public benefits that Minneapolitans will receive from not including this land in the regional park? What obligations does the city have for the duration of a contract? If the city chooses to switch operators how will they do so?

The other portion, the hospitality mixed-use building, also has the scent of being a money-making proposition for the city. I will let you in on a not so big secret if anyone had bothered to read and follow the contracts the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) has with its concession operators. These venues may make money, but it does not offset costs in other areas. The funds the MPRB has earned at their concessions are just enough to continue to maintain the facilities where they exist. The Minnehaha Park Refectory for example needed a new roof and restroom facilities. The MPRB has funded these repairs based on future earnings at Sea Salt. Should the city find an operator for this facility they would again either need to go to the Legislature to build the project or use TIF funds which use future increase tax payments from ALL jurisdictions including the county, school board and other taxing authorities to pay for this. Can the county and school board opt out to fund their own priorities? Does the city in effect becomes a commercial landlord. The even bigger not secret is that these establishments make their money not on the food they sell, but the liquor. It is one thing for the MPRB to have vendors selling liquor to make their necessary bottom line, but another for the City of Minneapolis. I imagine it would be a huge conflict of interest for the City to enforce the liquor laws on a property they receive a financial benefit from owning.

I feel that the City has assumed that these projects will be self-sustaining but there is no proof of that being offered as part of this plan. The city or park board will also have to assume responsibility for maintaining and/or demolishing the proposed historic elements of the area. The site having been mostly off limits will now have more of the public accessing the area and what could be left to fall apart in the past will now need rehabilitation so as not to become a public nuisance. I am sure PPL could tell you what their expenses for the Bunge Elevator site in the SE Como neighborhood were during the years prior to its reuse. How does that fit into the sustainability plan?

The original Above the Falls plan was a well thought out document that understood the land along the river’s edge was to be held by the public for the public good. This plan gives no assurances that it will or that they will meet any of the goals for equity and sustainability that both the MPRB and the City currently claim that they support.

Sincerely,

Liz Wielinski

3519 2nd ST NE

Minneapolis, MN 55418
AFCAC
Above the Falls Community Advisory Committee

Date: March 29, 2019

To: Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board of Commissioners, Mayor Jacob Frey, and the Minneapolis City Council

From: Alexis Pennie, Co-Chair, on behalf of the Above the Falls Community Advisory Committee (AFCAC)

Re: Update to the Draft Above the Falls Regional Park Master Plan

The Above the Falls Community Advisory Committee (AFCAC) is an organization made up of representatives from neighborhoods, businesses and environmental organizations. In 2000, the Above the Falls: A Master Plan for the Upper River in Minneapolis was adopted by the City of Minneapolis, the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board (MPRB) and Hennepin County; this Plan was enhanced by RiverFirst in 2012 - a 20-year vision for Mississippi riverfront parks that builds on our community's rich river heritage and passion for parks, nature and wildlife, and updated in 2013. Since 2000, AFCAC's mission has been to provide an inclusive, public process that will guide and pro-actively support the implementation of these plans.

AFCAC appreciates the opportunity to comment and address recent, proposed updates to the Above the Falls Regional Park Master Plan. As a result, we urge you to amend the proposed Above the Falls Master Plan Regional Park boundary which would privatize public parkland and reduce regional parkland boundaries at the Upper Harbor Terminal (UTH) site. The proposed Above the Falls Master Plan regional boundary reduces public parkland from 28 acres proposed by the Park Board in 2013 to 19.5 acres, which is a 30% reduction in riverfront park for private development and is unacceptable.

Public parkland and regional parkland boundaries must be preserved for the health and benefit of community residents, including North and Northeast residents experiencing economic, health, and environmental disparities. It's important that we ensure that redevelopment will provide equitable benefits to North and Northeast community members rather than allowing private interests to take the lead and reap the majority of the benefits on publicly-owned property. Rather than private development, expand park/public space flanking both sides of Dowling Avenue to more visibly connect North Minneapolis to the river. The redevelopment of this city-owned site can better connect residents with the Mississippi River and be a model of community investment and wealth building.

Throughout the planning process, the development team has failed to respect the presence of the Mississippi River and the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area
(MRCCA). As evidenced in the designs and presentations, focus is on the performing arts center as the singular driver and primary resource to leverage surrounding development. Because of this, we see rendered buildings that loom over the river and are inconsistent with the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area rules.

North of Dowling Avenue is the most narrow portion of the site, yet it is slated for tall, private development. We recommend locating private and taller buildings on the southern portion of the site and away from the river where they can be more effectively tiered and screened. The further set back and tiered the visible development is, the less impact and dominance it has on the river and shoreline appearance. It's imperative that all development at this site, adhere to the MRCCA CA-UM building height limit of 65’ on the northern portion of the site.

Moreover, the landscape plan for the UHT site currently locates the parkway to the west of, or behind, the concert venue and hotel, placing private uses between the river and parkway users. We urge that you remove language that prescribes the specific location of buildings until CPEC is able to provide input. Everywhere else in the Minneapolis park system, the parkway runs along the river, lakes, and waterways ensuring access for everyone. As a result, the concept plan does not prioritize equity, greater public access, and sustainability as called for in the bold vision of the award-winning master plan for the area.

In summary, we request that the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board of Commissioners to revise the Above the Falls Regional Park Master Plan to maintain 28 acres of public parkland, locate the parkway to the east of the proposed private land-uses, relocate taller buildings to southern portion of site and away from the river, follow MRCCA height regulations, adopt a more inclusive co-creative planning process, and ensure that redevelopment will provide equitable benefits to North and Northeast. The community deserves an opportunity to explore alternatives that could better serve residents and enhance the Mississippi River.

We urge the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board of Commissioners to revise the Above the Falls Regional Park Master Plan, as discussed above, as we come to an end to the 45-day public comment period ending Sunday, April 1, 2019.

Thank you for your efforts and consideration.

Respectfully,

The Above the Falls Community Advisory Committee (AFCAC)
April 1, 2019

Kate Lamers
Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board
2117 West River Road N
Minneapolis, MN 55411

Re: Comments on the Above the Falls Regional Park Master Plan

Dear Ms. Lamers,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Above the Falls Regional Park Regional Park Master Plan.

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) is a local non-profit organization that works to protect, restore and enhance the Mississippi River and its watershed in the Twin Cities metropolitan region. We have more than 2,700 active members, 3,500 volunteers and 2,000 advocates who care deeply about the river’s unique resources.

FMR takes an active interest in working with municipalities, counties, state government, and other stakeholders to help shape and influence decisions that impact the health of the river. FMR was founded and continues to play a leadership role in ensuring that the public resources of our National Park—the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA), are preserved for current and future generations to benefit from.

FMR is also an active and ongoing partner with MPRB in planning and advocating for the Above the Falls, where we have played a leadership role with the Above the Falls Community Advisory Committee for the past two decades. We greatly value the constructive relationship we have with MPRB staff and we are committed to assisting with plan implementation.

In general, with the exception of the Upper Harbor Terminal site, we support the draft plan, and we appreciate the work that has gone into it. We are pleased that the RiverFirst plan adopted in 2012 is characterized as a visionary call to action instead of a prescriptive planning document.
As you know FMR has opposed the City of Minneapolis’ concept plan for the UHT, in part because of the size and configuration of parkland in the plan. We recognize that MPRB may not have control of these issues, but we are disappointed the parkland acreage is not greater and that private development is planned between the parkway and the river.

Our specific comments, detailed below, provide a summary of the concerns, recommendations and suggested changes that we’d like to see addressed in the plan, as well as some of the plan elements we consider to be positive.

**Executive Summary**

**ATF Plan Principles, p E-3**
The fourth bullet in this section could be strengthened: “Integrate stewardship of natural and cultural resources with the design, management and programming of new and existing parks and trails”

**Near Term Priorities, p E-3**
We suggest adding a near-term priority about continuing to pursue land acquisitions and easements and develop a continuous trail system.

**Ch 1 Previous Planning**

**Park Boundary Evolution, p.1-5 to 1-7**
According to Figures 1.3 and 1.4, the parkland along St. Anthony Parkway will be removed from the ATF park boundary. Will this area still be eligible for regional park funding? If so, it would be helpful to explain that in this section.

**ATF Master Plan 2000, p 1-5**
We appreciate the inclusion of these objectives and we suggest reiterating that they still apply.

**Implementation, p 1-8**
The list of accomplishments doesn’t sync with Figure 1.5 on p 1-9. Perhaps this section should reference that it is a partial list of the projects included in Figure 1.5

**Riverfirst, p 1-10**
This section does an excellent job of clarifying how Riverfirst fits in to the Above the Falls Plan. Riverfirst is a very visionary plan, but many of the specific concepts are not realistic or feasible. We strongly support the approach you articulated in this section. Figures 1.6 and 1.7 are helpful, but somewhere they should indicate that only the ATF portion is included in the maps. Otherwise it gives the false impression that Riverfirst has focused on ATF exclusively and not the Central Riverfront.

**Ch 2 Park Background**

**Existing Parks – West Bank, p 2-6**
Ole Olson Park history has no mention of the supper club that existed there. I know there is some community angst about events that took place there, but it seems odd to just erase it from the history.

Fig. 2.3 Land Use, p 2-8
This map is from 2010. Is there a more recent version of existing land use in the recently adopted Mpls 2040 Plan that could be used instead?

Fig. 2.4 Public Land Ownership, p 2-10
Has this map been updated since 2012? There are some properties that are not identified as publicly owned, such as the Ramsey Excavating site at 41st Av N and the Gedney Pickle Factory site at 31st Av N.

Fig. 2.5 Existing & Planned Bikeways, p 2-11
This map should include a date

Ch 3 Community Engagement

Equity Analysis, Green Zones, Promise Zones, etc. p 3-5 to 3-11
We appreciate the addition of this section. It’s well done and very thorough. MPRB will need to work closely with the City and other partners to develop and implement additional strategies to ensure park development does not lead to gentrification/displacement.

Ch 4 Visitor Demand

No comments

Ch 5 Natural Resources and Management

We have more recent (and more pretty) photos of the restored prairie at Ole Olson Park that would spruce up this section.

Historic Resource Inventory, p 5-11
This section should add mention of studies done by the City to determine historic designation potential for the UHT relics.

Soil Contamination, Figures 5.5 and 5.6
PCA maps on pp 5-12 & 5-13 should include dates

Ch 6 Park Development Concept

Basis in 2000 ATF Master Plan, p 6-2
The table showing major changes from 2000 to 2019 is very helpful. In general some of the grander ideas from the 2000 plan have been replaced with more natural features such as
restored riverbank, trails and overlooks. Riverfirst brought in new destination concepts, but some of them are unrealistic and won’t happen either.

We have generally been supportive of these changes, but it does raise an interesting conundrum: Is Above the Falls becoming too much of a passive park? Future plans for the Graco Park, 26th Ave N and the UHT promise to create destination parks, if they are implemented successfully. We are hopeful that these projects can move forward, as they will ensure that the park can serve both the local and regional community.

The map/table in this section should also include changes to the UHT site (no more Grand Staircase) and St. Anthony Parkway

Park Development Concept, 6-4 to 6-5
We are supportive of the park development concept, but we have a few suggested changes.

This summary needs to be updated a bit. It refers to the veteran’s memorial at Sheridan in the future tense and describes the “Scherer site” as if nothing has been completed yet (island, trails, funding).

The Northside Wetlands Park is mentioned in this section, but is that really the plan for the southern portion of the UHT? This is a bit confusing and conflicts with the UHT planning information in the appendices.

We are very pleased to see the “Promenade” replaced with restored riverbank and the 26th Av N overlook.

Park Projects

Graco Park, p 6-6
The description could provide more information or indicate that the site plan shown in Figure 6.4 is likely to change to reflect Graco’s presence on site.

The last sentence in this section is a little confusing. We suggest the following rewrite: “In 2019, the MPRB made an agreement with Graco to exchange development rights on the non-regional park portion of the Scherer property for a riverfront trail easement on their property, park naming rights and a substantial donation toward park development.

Sheridan Memorial Park, p 6-7
Please add the rain garden to the list of amenities at the end of the first paragraph.

The park development concept graphic is tiny and provides very little detail. Also it is referred to as figure 6.7 in the text – it should be 6.5

East Bank Trail, p 6-8
The 2000 plan was more definitive about providing separate trails for bikes and pedestrians. As it is MPRB policy to have separated trails, there should be a stated goal about this in the document.

**Upper Harbor Terminal Redevelopment, p 6-8**

This section is very short, and it seems like a little more info within the body of the plan would be helpful. Also, it’s odd that there is a graphic of the wetlands complex, but no mention of it in the narrative. (Also see our comments on Appendix A)

**Trails and River Crossings, p 6-10**

First paragraph describing existing trails does not include east bank trail from Plymouth to BN Bridge.

There’s also a typo – “St.” is missing from St. Anthony Parkway regional trail.

Change Scherer Bros site to Graco Park

**National Water Trail, p 6-11**

The last paragraph is out of date. It references things that will be done before the lock is closed.

**Public Water Access Points, p 6-13**

Change Scherer Bros site to Graco Park

**Parkway Development & Phasing Strategy, p 6-13**

We strongly support this language from the draft plan:

"Unlike the 2000 ATF Plan, this plan locates the proposed West River Parkway directly adjacent to proposed riverbank parkland, separating the riverbank from future private development."

However, Figure 6.1 on the next page provides an example at the UHT, where planned structures are surrounded by parkland and the parkway is separated from the river by private development. This is exactly what you are trying to avoid.

The city should support the MPRB policy of using the parkways to delineate the public domain from private development – it’s a hallmark of our award-winning park system and what sets Minneapolis apart from other cities.

**Ch 7 Land Acquisition, Easements, and Conflicts**

**Boundaries and Acquisition Costs, p 7-2**

“Recent successes...” in the fifth paragraph should be updated to include recent acquisitions on west side of the river, such as the Ramsey Excavating site at 41st Av N and the Gedney Pickle Factory site at 31st Av N
Figure 7.1 This map should also be updated to include properties that are not identified as MPRB-owned, such as the Ramsey Excavating and the Pickle Factory sites.

**Easements, p 7-4**
This section needs several updates.

- It describes seeking future easements and trail development on Xcel property, which has been removed from the ATF regional park boundary in this plan.
- It states that the Xcel-owned transmission pylons do not conflict with park development and use, yet the UHT concept plan in the appendices includes moving these structures back to the railroad tracks.
- Discussions with Graco regarding a potential trail easement are described as ongoing, but in Chapter 6 they are described as completed.
- The East Bank Trail is described as proposed, but it has already been constructed.

**Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11**
No comments

**Ch 12 Implementation, Costs and Funding**

**Near Term Priorities, p 12-2**
The 26th Av N Overlook should be added to this list.

**Hall’s Island, p 12-2**
This section should say something about future improvements, such as bridges and a trail.

**Appendix A Upper Harbor Terminal**

This section does an excellent job of summarizing the four-year process undertaken by MPRB and the City to plan for future use of the UHT site. A lot of really good work has gone into this planning effort, and while we appreciate the work of all the parties involved, we are disappointed with many components of the concept plan approved earlier this year by the City of Minneapolis.

With respect to how the UHT concept plan described here affects the ATF Regional Park Plan, our concerns are as follows.

**Park Boundary, p A-5**
We would like to see more of the UHT site be used as parkland. The 2013 draft plan included a much bigger park of approximately 28 acres and that has been reduced to less than 20 acres. We believe this is short-sighted and would prefer to see a larger park that can leverage more private development outside of the city-owned land. We have repeatedly asked the City to study a larger area of land that includes all the parcels between I-94 and the UHT/river. These landowners outside of the UHT stand to gain considerable property value once the park is added, and it would be to their benefit to participate in a process that encompasses the whole area.
Park Concept Plan, p A-7
We are very concerned that the concept plan includes private development between the river and the parkway. The summary on page A-5 describes a process in which there were mixed views about whether or not this would privatize the riverfront. While we understand that there are diverse opinions about this, we don’t understand why the City and MPRB would consider it when it so blatantly defies a precedent that makes the Minneapolis Park System stand out from other cities. We would like to see both MPRB and the City adopt policies to ensure that land between the river and the river parkway be publicly owned and utilized.

We would also prefer a performing arts center that is publicly owned and provides greater benefits to the community. One way to accomplish this would be to have a music venue that is smaller than what has been proposed and is part of the park system. A smaller venue would be much more compatible with the planned affordable housing on the site, as well.

Thank you again for the opportunity to weigh in on this important planning process. We commend you for your effort and we look forward to continuing our partnership to plan and implement continuous parks and trails along the river north of downtown.

If you have additional questions or wish to discuss the content of this letter, please don’t hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Irene Jones
Senior Policy Advocate
River Corridor Program
March 28th, 2019

Katherine Lamers
Project Manager
2117 Wests River Road,
Minneapolis, MN 55411
klamers@minneapolisparks.org

RE: 2019 Above the Falls Regional Park Master Plan Update

Dear Ms. Katherine Lamers,

The Above the Falls (ATF) Regional Park lies mostly within the boundary of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (NRRA), a unit of the National Park system, and shares the central resource being the Mississippi River. Congress established the Mississippi NRRA in 1988 to preserve, protect, and enhance the significant values of the Mississippi River Corridor in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

In the coming years, the ATF stretch of the Mississippi River is ripe with opportunity for ecological restoration, enhanced recreation and reconnecting the north and northeast neighborhoods to the Mississippi River. We look forward to seeing the 2019 ATF Plan Update (Plan) carry forward the vision for a robust parks and trails system lining the Mississippi River similar to that set forth by Horace Cleveland.

“In considering the question of the selection of suitable lands for parks and connecting lines of parkways or boulevards, let me ask you to bear in mind the fact that the Mississippi river is not only the grand natural feature which gives character to your city and constitutes the main spring of its prosperity, but it is the object of vital interest and the center of attraction to intelligent visitors from every quarter of the globe, who associate such ideas of grandeur with its name as no human creation can excite.”
- H.W.S. Cleveland

The NPS previously provided substantive comments regarding the Upper Harbor Terminal (UHT) redevelopment to both the City of Minneapolis (City) and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB). Those comments are attached and are relevant to portions of this Plan. Our comments layout the grand opportunity and challenges that are before us in the redevelopment of the UHT. We would more broadly apply those same principles to the entire ATF area and challenge the MPRB to embrace and champion them along with the responsibilities they come with.

In our UHT comments we highlight the economic and cultural opportunities having a national park designation can bring to an area. The MPRB recently released a draft master plan for the
Mississippi Gorge Regional Park (MGRP), and it included examples of embracing and using the national park identity as branding. We suggest including such examples and goals in this Plan as well. Below are comments we provided on the MGRP Master Plan to this regard.

NPS Comments on Mississippi Gorge Regional Park Master Plan

Pg. 2-38 and 6-65
- We are pleased to see the embrace and use of the national park identity and branding throughout the plan. We fully support this and would suggest using images of existing NPS signage within the corridor with the goal of future design consistency.
  - Examples are found near the bridge crossing in Hastings, MN and at Coldwater Spring (directly south of Minnehaha Falls).

If you any questions regarding these comments, please contact my staff, Rory Stierler at rory_stierler@nps.gov or by calling 651-293-8440.
Sincerely,

John O. Anfinson
Superintendent

Attachments:
190226_UHT_MISS_CityCouncil.pdf
February 26, 2019

Minneapolis City Council
City Hall, Room 307
350 South Fifth Street
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Dear Members of the Minneapolis City Council,

We are at a unique moment in time. The City of Minneapolis (City) has the opportunity to continue creating a new narrative for the land above St. Anthony Falls. The first American explorer to reach the falls saw it as the boundary between known and unknown worlds. The early artists, writers and tourists who followed Zebulon Pike stopped to marvel at the cataract but saw little value in continuing upstream. As Minneapolis grew and matured, the St. Anthony Falls remained a defining boundary.

Thanks to Horace Cleveland’s vision, tree-lined parkways bordered the Gorge below the falls, while industry populated the lands above, fueling the city’s growth. Lumber companies laced the river with booms and lumber yards crowded its banks. After the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock opened in 1963, commercial towboats served the aggregate yards, cement operations, and scrap metal processing plants that replaced older industries. Rail lines had already cut neighborhoods off from the Mississippi River, as would the freeway. Some industries polluted the land, air and water. Now, Minneapolis can make the Upper Harbor Terminal site a place locals and visitors are compelled to explore, visit and write about.

The opportunity to reuse a one-mile long, publicly owned, 48-acre site on the Mississippi River is rare for any city on the Great River. What Minneapolis decides will define the Upper Harbor Terminal for generations and be a strong statement to other cities and towns looking to build along the river. Given how rare this opportunity is, the potential to help north Minneapolis, and the chance to make a 21st Century statement about great riverside development requires more thought and thoughtfulness than other projects.

The Mississippi is not just another street, boulevard or freeway to develop along, as people treated it in the 19th and early 20th centuries. There are plenty of those; there is only one Mississippi River. Riverfront development in the 21st century should reflect what society has learned about equity, environmental justice and how we treat the
environment. Plans for the Upper Harbor Terminal cannot simply check off the “respect for the river box” with a strip of parkland running along the river. That respect has to flow back into the whole property.

The Mississippi is the site’s greatest asset and true catalyst, and we were pleased to see Mayor Jacob Frey and Council Member Phillipe Cunningham highlight the river’s importance to Minneapolis in their StarTribune op-ed of February 18. They stressed the need to reconnect north Minneapolis to the river, saying “Every resident should have a chance to share in the benefits of one our greatest natural resources.” The City must ensure that those benefits are not lost.

Not only is the Upper Harbor Terminal on America’s greatest river, it lies within the boundaries of one of America’s 418 National Park units. Communities around the country are clamoring to have their special places added to the National Park Service (NPS). They recognize the economic and cultural value this designation brings. Minneapolis already has what so many cities envy. Granted, NPS status comes with responsibilities to protect, preserve and enhance these nationally important places and resources, but living up to those responsibilities creates world-class places, places that are economic engines for neighboring communities.

Elements of the Concept Plan are not inherently a problem. A performing arts venue could draw thousands of visitors. A community innovation hub could be a catalyst for positive cultural and economic connections to adjoining neighborhoods. A hospitality center, when and if needed, could be an economic boon to the area. Affordable housing and business offices located on the site’s west side reduces impacts to the areas nearest the river and are critical to the north side’s economic and social well-being. The parkland running along the Mississippi and woven into the site will connect people to the river.

We do have some concerns. By locking in the building locations, the Concept Plan precludes creative alternatives that could make the overall site plan better. There is a troubling lack of detail on many elements, for example: the undefined purposes and uses of the hub and hospitality center and the lack of examining and/or communicating the economic viability of businesses located at the site. We understand that the Coordinated Plan will address many details, but with so many critical aspects still undefined, the City is putting tremendous weight on that plan, especially with the current timeline, to make the overall site successful.

Throughout the planning process, the development team has failed to respect the presence of the Mississippi River and the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. As evidenced in the designs and presentations, focus is on the performing arts center as the singular driver and primary resource to leverage surrounding development. Because of this, we see rendered buildings that loom over the river and are inconsistent with the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area rules. If the Upper Harbor Terminal is to be a model of 21st Century respect for the Mississippi River and the environment, we must not disregard the environmental protections people have fought long and hard for.
Other than the parkland and shoreline areas, the current designs and presentations have shown no intentional inspiration or interest related to the Mississippi River. None of the programming has recognized the river’s presence. There is opportunity for the performing arts center, hub and hospitality center to, in their design and intention, draw inspiration from the river and related history such as lumber milling and barging. Instead it seems they could be located on any street in any city or suburb. Someone who did not already know the Upper Harbor Terminal was on the Mississippi, would never otherwise know; nor would they know it was within the boundaries of the National Park Service unit. We have further detailed our concerns in the attached files.

For the reasons above, we had hoped the City would pause before voting on the Concept Plan as proposed. If that is not possible, we ask that you carefully consider our comments and address them in the Coordinated Plan process. We commend the City for establishing a Community Planning and Engagement Committee and considering how to bring in others to help shape the Upper Harbor Terminal site’s future. We trust this will be an open and meaningful opportunity, even if constrained by the Concept Plan. We look forward to the opportunity to help guide the Coordinated Plan and help produce an outcome that truly benefits the north side, city, region and the Mississippi River.

If you have any questions, please contact me at john_anfinson@nps.gov or 651-293-8432.

Sincerely,

John O. Anfinson
Superintendent

Attachments:
190301_UHT_NPS_MPLS_CityCouncil_GraphicsPolicy.pdf

CC:
Ann Calvert, City of Minneapolis
Kate Lamers, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
ISSUE #1 - North of Dowling

North of Dowling Avenue is the most narrow portion of the site, yet it is slated for tall private development. We fear this could result in many design constraints and conflicts between the proposed private development, parkway, recreational amenities, and river.

- The narrow site makes it difficult to step back or tier taller buildings from the river.
- The narrow site makes it difficult to screen development as viewed from the river.
- Taller buildings close to the river create a "looming effect" that impairs the river's character.
- The scale of the proposed private development could impose itself on the public space and river creating an unwelcoming/private feeling for members of the public.
- The constrained space will result in restrictions and concessions for the private development.
- The constrained space and development will limit and/or impact the river, parkway, and recreational amenities.

SOLUTIONS

- Locate private and taller buildings on the southern portion of the site away from the river where they can be more effectively tiered and screened.
  - Some areas south of Dowling are 200’ (70%) wider than north of Dowling. The additional space provides more flexibility for private development that is taller and more dense while not imposing itself on the river and public spaces.
- Adhere to the MRCCA CA-UM building height limit of 65’ on the northern portion of the site.
- Rather than private development, expand park/public space flanking both sides of Dowling Avenue to more visibly connect North Minneapolis to the river.
- Relocate the mixed-use Community Innovation Hub north of Dowling provided the building scale is appropriate.
- There is no expectation that structures will not be visible from the river, but the further setback and tiered the visible development is, the less impact and dominace it has on the river and shoreline appearance.

**See attached GUIDING POLICY document for supporting rationale**

ISSUE #2 - Prescribing Building Locations

The draft Concept Plan is largely visionary and aspirational, but when it comes to building placement it becomes specific and prescriptive. This prescriptive language preempts the Community Planning and Engagement Committee (CPEC) and creates a conflict between the passage of the draft Concept Plan and the goals for the CPEC.

SOLUTION

Remove the language that prescribes the specific location of buildings until CPEC is able to provide input.

UHT CONCEPT PLAN

Below for reference are relevant statements from the Concept Plan that specify building locations.

Pg. 8 - Concept Plan Overview
- An outdoor music performance venue just south of Dowling Avenue along the river
- A hospitality mixed-use building just north of Dowling Avenue along the river
- A residential mixed-use complex on the southeast corner of Dowling Avenue and Washington Avenues...
- An office mixed-use building on the southwest corner of Dowling and Washington Avenues
- An innovative mixed-use building dubbed “The Hub” along the river near 36th Ave N

Pg. 17 - PHASED DEVELOPMENT PLAN
- A hospitality mixed-use building with ground floor active uses and structured parking just north of the outdoor music performance venue at Dowling and the River.
- Additional residential development along the river north of Dowling Ave.
**UPPER HARBOR TERMINAL**

**Building Height and Location**
The location of buildings and their relative distance from the river are strongly correlated to their perceived and real impacts to the character of the Mississippi River. The more setback a building is the taller it can be without creating a looming effect over the natural restored shore and treelines.

![Development Area Diagram](Image)

**Source:** Mississippi National River and Recreation Area - Comprehensive Management Plan

**Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Comprehensive Management Plan**

**Policies UHT Concept Plan could be inconsistent with:**

**PG. 31 General criteria for compatible riverfront uses include:**
- river related (an economic or operational need for a river location or a connection to the river)
- provides high quality building and landscape design
- compatible with the riverfront environment
- maintains views of the river
- contributes to natural, cultural, or economic resource appreciation, protection, and enhancement

**PG. 34 - Site Development Policies**

(2) Coordinate land development policies to protect natural resources using a system of preservation areas.
- allow minimal disturbance (selective grading and tree removal) in an additional 60 foot setback adjacent to the shoreline area for a total shoreline preservation area setback of 100 feet
- reduce visual impacts and protect views of the river and from the river and its shoreline areas by establishing maximum building heights for the bluff line and riverfront preservation areas

(14) Apply setback and height restrictions and encourage careful site design to maintain the ability to view the river from existing open space and developed areas. Avoid significantly obstructing river views with development.

(15) Screen development wherever practical to minimize its visibility from the river or the opposite shoreline.

**PG. 174 ARCHITECTURAL GUIDELINES**

An architectural approach that allows buildings to blend with and complement their surroundings should be used. Development should fit the context, whether natural, historic, or urban. In natural areas buildings should be unobtrusive.
- make new or substantially redesigned developments (outside downtown areas) appear unobtrusive from the river
- locate and design buildings so that they do not loom over the river
- minimize the overall size of the structure and the elevation facing the river, keep development low profile near the river

![Proposed Hospitality Building Diagram](Image)
Preference towards Simple Landform and Elevated Slope conceptual designs.

**OUTDOOR MUSIC PERFORMANCE VENUE**

**GANTRY**

“Wall” effect along river
Design resembles parking ramp
“Looming effect” potential for much longer stretch of river
Structure effectively turns it’s back to the river like industry did in the 19th and 20th century

**GANTRY DESIGN**

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**OUTDOOR MUSIC PERFORMANCE VENUE**

**SIMPLE LANDFORM**

Design blends into landscape
Less building near river’s edge
Structure opens to the river

**SIMPLE LANDFORM**

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**OUTDOOR MUSIC PERFORMANCE VENUE**

**ELEVATED SLOPE**

Design blends into landscape
Less building near river’s edge
Structure opens to the river

**ELEVATED SLOPE**

11
POLICY

- Mississippi National River and Recreation Area - Comprehensive Management Plan
- Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area

Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP)¹

CONSISTENT - The following are relevant policies from the MNRRA CMP that the draft Concept Plan is generally consistent with.

PG. 31 - Riverfront Location Policies - General criteria for compatible riverfront uses include:
- meets or exceeds federal, state, or local environmental standards (potentially)
- cleans up polluted areas
- removes blighting influences
- provides high quality building and landscape design (potentially)
- compatible with surrounding uses (particularly the neighborhoods)
- sustains economic vitality of riverfront improvements
- offers public access to and along the river
- provides visual open space
- retains or restores natural shoreline appearance
- contributes to natural, cultural, or economic resource appreciation, protection, and enhancement (potentially)

PG. 34 - Site Development Policies
(1) Provide uninterrupted vegetated shorelines where practical along the Mississippi and its tributary streams and ravines to preserve a natural look from the river and the opposite shore and to provide connections to adjacent natural areas.

(2) Coordinate land development policies to protect natural resources using a system of preservation areas
   - Preserve a narrow zone along the shoreline (using the state definition for shoreline) with an undisturbed area 40 feet back from the river (ordinary high water mark) or restore natural vegetation where practical along the shoreline. When expanding existing uses located in this area, locate expansions as far back from the shoreline as practical and consistent with existing uses.

(3) Minimize the cumulative impacts on natural, cultural, and economic resources that result from many individual land development projects being implemented over time. (potentially)

(6) Encourage shoreline area preservation and restoration.

(7) Provide pedestrian/bicycle paths to connect the river to the downtowns, neighborhood areas, and parks and open spaces.

(13) Work to increase and restore wildlife habitat and biological diversity in development projects.

(16) Maintain existing public access to the river and increase access in redevelopment and new development projects if practical.

(21) Encourage local governments to adopt sustainable building practices, such as energy efficiency and water conservation practices, in their municipal codes for new construction and renovation work.

**INCONSISTENT** - The following are relevant policies from the MNRRA CMP that the draft Concept Plan is or could be inconsistent with:

**PG. 31 - Riverfront Location Policies**
- General criteria for compatible riverfront uses include:
  - river related (an economic or operational need for a river location or a connection to the river) *(potentially)*
  - provides high quality building and landscape design *(potentially)*
  - compatible with the riverfront environment *(potentially)*
  - maintains views of the river *(potentially)*
  - contributes to natural, cultural, or economic resource appreciation, protection, and enhancement

**PG. 34 - Site Development Policies**
- Coordinate land development policies to protect natural resources using a system of preservation areas
  - Allow minimal disturbance (selective grading and tree removal) in an additional 60 foot setback adjacent to the shoreline area for a total shoreline preservation area setback of 100 feet.
  - Reduce visual impacts and protect views of the river and from the river and its shoreline areas by establishing maximum building heights for the bluff line and riverfront preservation areas.

(14) Apply setback and height restrictions and encourage careful site design to maintain the ability to view the river from existing open space and developed areas. Avoid significantly obstructing river views with development.

(15) Screen development wherever practical to minimize its visibility from the river or the opposite shoreline.

**PG. 174 - ARCHITECTURAL GUIDELINES**
- An architectural approach that allows buildings to blend with and complement their surroundings should be used. Development should fit the context, whether natural, historic, or urban. In natural areas buildings should be unobtrusive.
  - make new or substantially redesigned developments (outside downtown areas) appear unobtrusive from the river *(potentially)*
  - locate and design buildings so that they do not loom over the river
• minimize the overall size of the structure and the elevation facing the river; keep development low profile near the river

Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA)\(^2\)

Subp. 7. Urban mixed district (CA-UM).
A. The urban mixed district (CA-UM) includes large areas of highly urbanized mixed use that are a part of the urban fabric of the river corridor, including institutional, commercial, industrial, and residential areas and parks and open space.
B. The CA-UM district must be managed in a manner that allows for future growth and potential transition of intensely developed areas that does not negatively affect public river corridor views and that protects bluffs and floodplains. Restoring and enhancing bluff and shoreline habitat, minimizing erosion and flow of untreated storm water into the river, and providing public access to and public views of the river are priorities in the district.

6106.0120 Subp. 2 - Structure Height
• CA-UM: 65 feet, provided tiering of structures away from the Mississippi River and from bluffs lines is given priority, with lower structure heights closer to the river and bluffs lines, and that structure design and placement minimize interference with public river corridor views. Taller buildings are allowed by conditional use permit, as provided under item D; and

6106.0120 Subp. 3 - Location of Structures
• CA-UM: 50 feet from the Mississippi River

*More standards from the MRCCA rules will become relevant as the project progresses from the Concept Plan to the Coordinated Plan.*

OTHER APPLICABLE POLICY
• Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan
  ○ Minneapolis 2040
  ○ The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth
• Above the Falls Master Plan
• RiverFirst

\(^2\) Minnesota Administrative Rules, Chapter 6106, Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area, https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/6106/
Structures were built at a time when the upper river was not valued for other than industrial uses.

*Power line appears taller due to being closer to the river.

Source: Structure heights are estimated based on measurements using LIDAR data. Measurements are taken from the approximate highest structure point to the approximate ground elevation and rounded to the nearest 5’. Some structures appear taller than others despite their measured height being shorter due to being closer to the river.