



DRAFT based on public comment: July 2019

For more information about the Above the Falls Regional Park Master Plan and the planning process, please visit:

https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/park_care_improvements/park_projects/current_projects/above-the-falls-regional-park-master-plan-update/



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



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



Wilderness Inquiry

Parks programming and access to the river are enhanced through collaboration with the National Park Service, Wilderness Inquiry and other organizations.

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

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

NEED FOR PLAN UPDATE

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

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

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

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

economic development to evolve independent of yet strengthened by the amenities that such parks create. Implementation of the 2019 ATF Park Plan will be a long-term, incremental prospect requiring patience and consistent policy-making. Property and easement acquisition for parks and trails will require the on-going cooperative efforts of the MPRB, the City, private land owners, non-profit partners and especially the Metropolitan Council.

ATF PARK PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Remain Committed and Be Patient.

Achievement of the land assembly, park development, and park programming initiatives outlined in the ATF Master Plan will require years of continuous commitment.

Build Strong Relationships.

The initiatives of the master plan will be best achieved in the context of strong community, landowner, business, and partner relationships.

Meaningfully Engage.

The ATF master plan is a bold framework for landscape transformation. Implementing the master plan will demand many individual park development projects around which the community must be meaningfully engaged.

Seize Opportunities.

Land assembly, funding, and partnership opportunities may present themselves when least expected; be ready.

Expect the Unexpected.

Creating parks on previously developed land surrounded by public infrastructure and in a context of unpredictable politics, funding, and climate will demand strategic agility.

Design for Stacked Benefits.

The realization of the many potential community, environmental, and ecological benefits in parks demands creative design approaches beyond the norm.

Design Welcoming Spaces and Programs.

Translating the desire for welcoming public spaces into the creation of welcoming public spaces demands continuous learning, experimenting, and falling short but always conscious effort.

Understand the Impacts.

Parks have impacts that are some combination of positive and negative. We need to understand the full breadth of impacts as best we can, amplify the positive, and mitigate the negative.



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

IMPLEMENTATION PRINCIPLES

Engage Actively and Continuously in Land Assembly.

The ATF Master Plan will only be achieved if riverfront parkland is methodically placed in public trust through a combination of acquisition, easements, or forms of partnership over a period of years – this is job #1 of ATF Master Plan implementation.

Develop Linear Recreation.

Continue to implement the parkway and trail system, including key river crossings (especially the BNSF rail bridge). Linear recreation will be instrumental in fulfilling the vision and establishing an activated constituency for ATF Regional Park.

Complete the Design Vision for Park Spaces Currently Under Development.

Graco Park/Hall's Island, Sheridan Memorial Park, 26th Avenue North Overlook, and Upper Harbor Terminal are active projects at time this master plan is being authored and they warrant fulfillment.

Develop New Park Spaces and Facilities.

As land is protected and as resources allow, construct parks using a few key strategies as guideposts.

Smart Park Development is a Staged Activity.

Stage one in establishing activated and beloved public spaces is creating ways for people to access them, spend time in them, and weave them into the stories of their lives. Accomplishing this task should always be top-of-mind in park investment decisions. Too much development before a constituency exists results in squandered resources. Too little results in low visitation and a constituency not being created.

Program Parks Appropriately.

Integral to the act of designing a park is creating its program model; one that strikes the appropriate balance between organized programming and non-programming of spaces and times.

Get People on the River.

Nearly two-thirds of the ATF Regional Park is Mississippi River. There is tremendous capacity for expansion of recreational water access and activities.

Care for Park Assets.

Land and park facilities demand financial and staffing resources at robust levels necessary to accomplish continuous care.

Pursue Connected Actions Outside Park Boundary.

Ideas about the I-94 lid, Marshall Street improvements, and a link to the Camden commercial district fall outside the purview of this master plan, will be instrumental to the park's future success and should continue to receive attention and resources.

NEAR-TERM REGIONAL PARK PRIORITIES

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

- Continued MPRB assembly of parkland within the regional park boundary.
- Implementation of interim parkland management strategies.
- Implementation of the 26th Avenue North overlook.
- Continued programming and stewardship of existing park land
- Continued development of Graco Park on the Scherer Bros. site and establishment of habitat on the new Hall's Island
- Partnership with the City of Minneapolis to transition the 48-acre Upper Harbor Terminal from industrial uses to new parks and other uses, including phased development of West River Parkway
- Continued improvements to Sheridan Memorial Park
- Continued development of ADA-compliant Public Water Access points

LONG-TERM PRIORITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

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

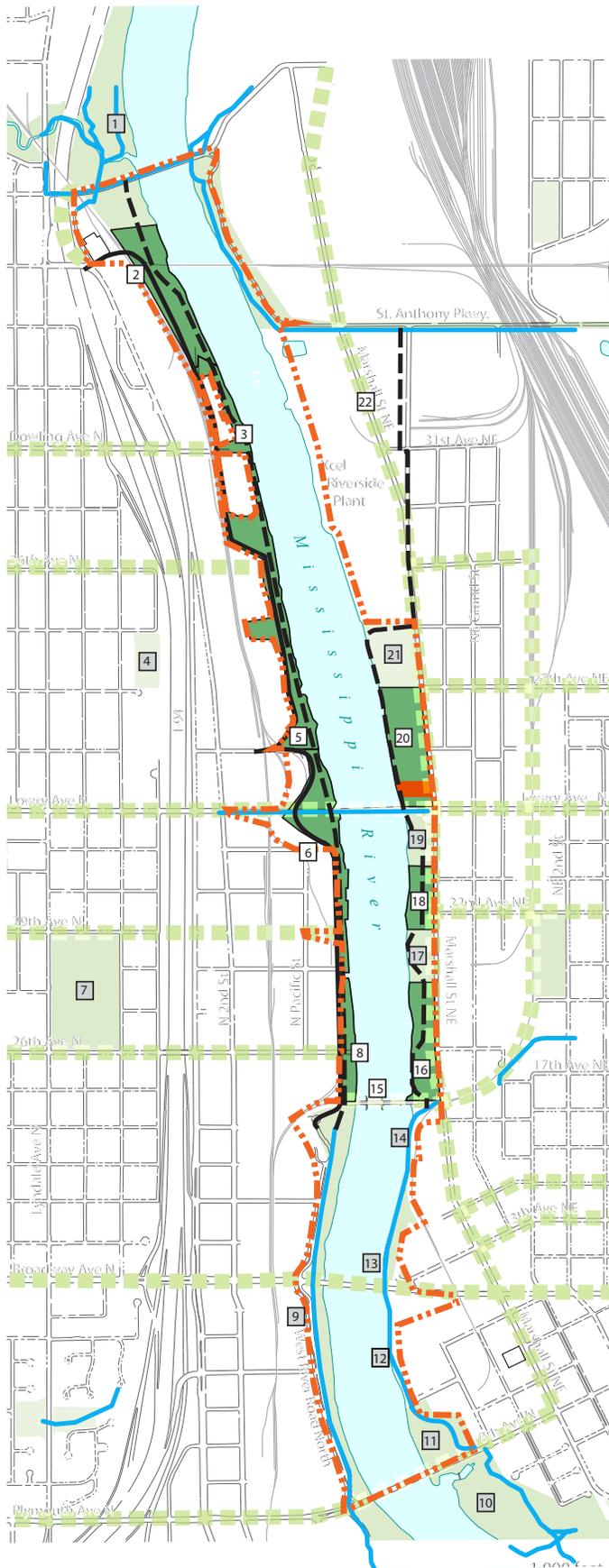
- Extension of West River Parkway between 22nd Ave North and 41st Ave North along the west bank, requiring acquisition of many privately and publicly owned parcels
- Development of Northside riverfront parks with connections to northside neighborhoods
- Continued coordination with the City and County to improve Marshall Street NE as a parkway-like corridor for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Development of Northeast riverfront parks and trails, as land acquisitions and funding allow
- With the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County, pursuit of bike/ped trail development rights on the BNSF rail bridge across the river.
- Continued MPRB assembly of parkland within the regional park boundary.
- Preparation of acquired lands for park development.



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



The long-term vision includes improved river crossings. One example is acquisition and conversion of the BNSF rail bridge, a specific goal shared by the City of Minneapolis.



Legend

- ▬ Regional Park Boundary
- ▬ Riverway Street
- ▬ Existing Trails
- ▬ Proposed Trail Connections
- ▬ Proposed Parkway
- ▬ Proposed Parkland
- ▬ Parkland
- ▬ Mississippi Watershed Management Organization

0.5 Miles

Future parkland and trails shown here are conceptual, and will depend on land acquisitions. For context, connecting elements outside the Regional Park boundary are shown, such as existing trails and neighborhood parks as well as proposed future "Riverway Streets."

- 1 North Mississippi Regional Park (existing)
- 2 West River Parkway Extension
- 3 Park Trails
- 4 Perkins Hill Park (existing)
- 5 Upper Harbor Terminal parkway and riverfront park
- 6 West River Parkway Extension
- 7 Farview Park (existing)
- 8 26th Ave N Overlook
- 9 West River Road North (existing)
- 10 Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park (existing)
- 11 Scherer Brothers Park Site (Graco Park)
- 12 East Bank Trail
- 13 Sheridan Memorial Park (existing)
- 14 East Bank Trail
- 15 BNSF Rail Bridge
- 16 Northeast Riverfront Park
- 17 Gluek Park (existing)
- 18 Northeast Riverfront Park
- 19 Edgewater Park (existing)
- 20 Northeast Riverfront Park
- 21 Marshall Terrace Park (existing)
- 22 East Bank Trail (easement required)

Figure E.1 Above the Falls Regional Park development plan