

MEDIA CONTACTS [Janette Aldrich Law](#) 612-822-3407

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Minneapolis Parks Foundation Names New Executive Director and Director of Individual Giving

Incoming Executive Director Tom Evers brings 20 years of experience guiding philanthropy for parks and youth programs

Minneapolis, Minn. –The Board of Directors of the [Minneapolis Park Foundation](#) has selected Tom Evers from Playworks Minnesota and formerly of The Trust for Public Land to lead the organization as its new Executive Director. The Minneapolis Parks Foundation (MPF) is an independent non-profit that seeks to enhance the community’s economic, environmental, civic and cultural health by helping to create the Next Generation of Parks™, including [RiverFirst](#) and [Water Works](#). Evers will take the helm October 1, from Peg Birk, who has served as Interim Executive Director since March 2014.

“We were incredibly pleased with the caliber of candidates who put forward their names for consideration,” says Daniel Avchen, MPF Board Chair. “Tom easily rose to the top of the list because of his deep commitment to urban parks and community development, extensive track record in successful fundraising, and demonstrated organizational and personal leadership.” Evers was selected from a national candidate pool through a six-month process conducted by DHR International.

Evers has focused his career on strategically guiding organizations dedicated to parks, land conservation, and youth development. Evers has most recently served as the founding Executive Director of Playworks Minnesota, part of a national non-profit dedicated to improving the health and well-being of children by creating opportunities for physical activity and safe, meaningful play. During his tenure with Playworks, Evers developed partnerships with Minneapolis and St. Paul public schools, led a program team of 20 staff and AmeriCorps members and guided all philanthropic and programmatic operations for Playworks in Minnesota, including generating \$1 million in philanthropic support through foundations, individual donors and corporate sponsorships.

Evers’ professional background includes more than a decade with The Trust for Public Land (TPL), where he was involved in strategic conversations about urban parks across the country, including Minneapolis, and supported efforts to create new parks and natural areas throughout Minnesota and the Northwoods. Prior to his time with TPL, Evers spent four years working in Vermont as a Park Ranger with the State of Vermont and the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps. He has a Master of Public Affairs from the University of Minnesota’s Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs and is a graduate of St. John’s University.

“The parks, trails, lakes, and Mississippi riverfront of Minneapolis are essential to the Twin Cities’ regional health and our state’s economic vibrancy,” says Evers, who is a resident of Minneapolis and an avid user of the parks. “Parks bring a community together through play, creativity and conversation. Every person living in and around Minneapolis has a personal

connection to these parks and we owe it to the next generation to ensure our existing parks continue to include creative programming and engaging design and that we generate new parks to serve the next century of Minneapolitans. The opportunity to guide the Minneapolis Parks Foundation and bring people and resources together around a grand vision for our parks and the Minneapolis Park System is a challenge I embrace with enthusiasm.”

Joining Evers in forging a broader vision for MPF will be Jennifer Downham. As the Director of Individual Giving, Downham will oversee the Minneapolis Parks Foundation’s Major Gifts and annual giving program, as well as plan and execute new opportunities for donors to support Minneapolis parks through philanthropy. Downham is an experienced fundraiser who was most recently the Director of Individual Giving for Como Friends, where she increased individual giving by 46% from 2010 to 2013. She has also worked in fundraising for Concordia University, Minnesota International Center, and KFAI, Fresh Air Radio.

About the Minneapolis Parks Foundation

The Minneapolis Parks Foundation (MPF) is an independent non-profit serving Minneapolis by securing knowledge, talent and funds to improve and sustain the city’s legacy of world-class parks. Through the generosity of donors and grantmakers, MPF provides private-sector leadership and funding for RiverFirst and Water Works, adaptive reuse urban design projects that build on our community’s 100-year legacy of visionary parks. Since 2011, MPF has worked collaboratively with multiple government and non-profit partners on these parks projects, as well as our signature Next Generation of Parks™ Lecture Series. The Minneapolis park system enhances the quality of life of the city and contributes to social and economic environments that strengthen communities throughout the region. For more information or to support our work, please visit MplsParksFoundation.org.

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