

MEDIA CONTACT [Janette Aldrich Law](mailto:Janette.Aldrich@mplsparks.org) 612-306-4430

NEWS RELEASE | September 24, 2015

Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board Adopts Water Works Concept Design

When completed, the expansion of Mill Ruins Park will become an iconic riverfront destination for residents and visitors to Minneapolis.

Minneapolis, Minn. – On Wednesday, September 23, the **Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board (MPRB)** approved the concept design for Water Works as part of the Central Riverfront Regional Park. The Minneapolis Parks Foundation (Parks Foundation) funded the Water Works concept design phase in 2013-2014, which ran concurrent with the Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park Master Plan process adopted by MPRB in April 2015.

The Water Works concept builds on the vision for Mill Ruins Park that MPRB began more than 25 years ago. The four-acre site encompasses Minneapolis Park Board-owned land between Portland Avenue South and the Third Avenue Bridge, and between First Street and the Mississippi River. Today, there are nearly 2.5 million visits to the area annually, making the Central Riverfront Regional Park the fourth most visited park in the Twin Cities. Water Works also meets the principles of the RiverFirst Initiative, which includes projects such as Scherer Site/Hall's Island, East Bank/Upper Riverfront trail loops, and the 26th Ave N Greenway + Overlook. More information about RiverFirst can be found at MinneapolisParks.org/RiverFirst and MplsParksFoundation.org/RiverFirst.

“When completed, the Water Works site will become one of the most visited locations in Minneapolis and will meet the needs of residents and visitors as they come to see the historic St. Anthony Falls and the birthplace of Minneapolis,” says Tom Evers, Executive Director of the Minneapolis Parks Foundation. “Throughout the Water Works design process the Parks Foundation collaborated closely with MPRB Planning Staff and community members, especially the Central Riverfront Regional Park Community Advisory Committee, whose input was invaluable. As a result, we believe the Water Works design reflects the community’s interests and addresses the underlying complexities of this much-loved and iconic destination and we are committed to bringing the additional resources required to realize the full potential of this vision.”

On July 1, 2015, MPRB approved a five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Parks Foundation for partnership activities related to the RiverFirst Initiative. Via the RiverFirst MOU, the Parks Foundation and MPRB have agreed to raise funds for the RiverFirst Initiative and related projects including Water Works.

“Water Works will be an exciting, iconic destination that builds on the Central Riverfront’s rebirth as a place where a full range of Minneapolis’ diverse communities can engage with the river,” said MPRB President Liz Wielinski. “We’re fortunate to have partners like the Parks Foundation to help make these grand plans a reality.”

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Additional community input to be addressed in the schematic design:

Most of the remaining concerns raised during the public comment period will be answered as part of the next phase of the design process. The next iteration of the site plan will address the community desire to maintain or increase a diverse and healthy tree canopy over time; with the addition of a “woonerf” (a shared pedestrian and automobile path) connecting the Water Works site to 2nd Street, there will be additional public parking and a pedestrian connection from downtown to the river; and ensuring that the site includes adequate space and programming to meet the increasing demand while remaining respectful to the residents who live nearby. The plan will also take into consideration the future development of the lock and dam as it is transitioned from a working facility into a cultural and historic point of interest.

Water Works Concept

The Water Works concept provides a unique visitor experience, highlights the site’s historic features and proximity to St. Anthony Falls, suggests a park pavilion with amenities, addresses navigation problems for pedestrians and bikers coming off the Stone Arch Bridge, and creates direct access to the river for paddlers.

Water Works is the site of the city’s original water supply and fire-fighting pumping stations were located on the site in the 19th century. The site is an important convergence of multiple riverfront destinations and physical features in addition to St. Anthony Falls, including the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, the Stone Arch Bridge, lock and dam, listed and eligible industrial ruins, the Mill City Museum and Guthrie Theater, as well as parkway, trails, and Mill Ruins and Gold Medal parks. Like the city itself, this site has grown to meet the changing needs of the people living in it from navigation, to industrial, to recreational and residential. When completed, the site will become an iconic destination for residents and visitors to Minneapolis.

About the Minneapolis Parks Foundation

The Minneapolis Parks Foundation, which partners with the [Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board](#), is an independent 501c3 dedicated to community investment in the nation’s top park system. The Parks Foundation is working to ensure that the [RiverFirst](#) Initiative – a partnership with MPRB and others to reimagine the Mississippi River north of St. Anthony Falls is implemented, is leading the design and preliminary steps for the [Water Works](#) site, and hosts the Next Generation of Parks Lecture Series. The Parks Foundation seeks to provide visionary and philanthropic support for the whole Minneapolis parks system with a special attention to innovation and equity. For more information or to support our work, please visit [MplsParksFoundation.org](#).

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Major Funding for MPF is Provided By:

The McKnight Foundation | The Minneapolis Foundation | General Mills
George Family Foundation | Curtis L. Carlson Foundation