



**Minneapolis Parks Foundation Accepts \$3 Million Gift from General Mills Foundation
to Commemorate the Food Company's 150th Birthday**
*Lead gift made to the RiverFirst Campaign at the site of General Mills'
early beginnings as a company*

Minneapolis, Minn. (January 27, 2016) – The Minneapolis Parks Foundation today accepted a \$3 million “birthday gift to Minneapolis” from the General Mills Foundation in the form of a three-year lead corporate contribution to the RiverFirst Campaign. Ken Powell, Chairman of the Board and CEO of General Mills, presented the gift at an event in the Mill District on the Minneapolis Central Riverfront, the birthplace of General Mills 150 years ago.

RiverFirst is a Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board-led vision for regional riverfront parks and trails that will transform the Upper Mississippi into a world-class cultural and recreational destination for residents and visitors, as well as a regional economic engine for the 21st century. The Minneapolis Parks Foundation is the Park Board's primary philanthropic partner in the public-private RiverFirst Initiative.

“We are truly honored to be playing a key role in an initiative that is so intertwined with General Mills past, present and future,” said Kim Nelson, Senior Vice President of External Relations and President of the General Mills Foundation. “Our investment, along with other funding from the private and public sectors, will enable RiverFirst projects to transform disjointed and formerly industrial stretches of the Minneapolis riverfront into a vibrant destination and community asset that can be enjoyed for the next 150 years.”

General Mills Foundation is making the RiverFirst grant in honor of the company's 150th birthday and to commemorate the company's community roots.

“150 years is cause for celebration and what better way to celebrate this milestone than to give a birthday gift to the very birth place of our company,” Powell said in his remarks at the event. “All that General Mills is today ties back to this very place [the river front] and is intrinsically woven into the foundation of this city. Our history is the city's history.”

The multi-year grant will go toward three RiverFirst signature projects on both sides of the Minneapolis Central and Upper Riverfronts, including a critical trail link and pier at 26th Ave N, a future riverfront park and beach at Hall's Island (Scherer site), and Water works, an iconic destination on the Central Riverfront.

The Water Works project is on the Central Riverfront, where General Mills was born. The area is already home to popular landmarks such as the Stone Arch Bridge, St. Anthony Falls, the Pillsbury “A” Mill and original Washburn Mill. An expansion of Mill Ruins Park, the Water Works project will result in an iconic destination for residents and visitors – including a park pavilion, historic ruins, a natural classroom and play and picnic spaces.

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General Mills' \$3 million commitment to RiverFirst brings fundraising to \$9 million in the first six months of the Minneapolis Park Foundation's \$15 million philanthropic fundraising campaign, with other funding coming from private individual donors. The Minneapolis Park Board is providing public sector support to RiverFirst primarily through grants from local, state and Federal sources.

RiverFirst: Unlocking the Potential of the Upper Riverfront

When the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board was founded in 1883, community leaders envisioned protecting the city's lakes and riverfront for the public good. Already developed and heavily industrial, the 5.5 miles Upper Riverfront was the only stretch of the Mississippi River unavailable to early parks leaders, leaving North and Northeast Minneapolis scarce access to regional natural resources.

"Now we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to complete our legacy and connect North and Northeast Minneapolis with the larger Grand Rounds and all that this chain of excellence has to offer," said Liz Wielinski, President of the Minneapolis Park Board of Commissioners. "Visionary philanthropic investment from General Mills echoes the dedication of early leaders and carries forward a tradition of true public-private partnership."

"Through RiverFirst, the city will provide access for under-served neighborhoods, support ecological systems, and establish new parks and trails in iconic locations, including where General Mills, and Minneapolis, were born," said Tom Evers, Executive Director of the Minneapolis Parks Foundation. "We are grateful that a legacy company like General Mills is reaffirming its commitment to our community by investing in our parks for this generation and generations to follow."

The Minneapolis Park Board, with philanthropic support from the Minneapolis Parks Foundation, will break ground on Water Works and Hall's Island in late 2016.

To learn more about RiverFirst, visit www.mplsparcsfoundation.org/riverfirst. For more information on General Mills' 150-year history, visit www.generalmills.com.

About the General Mills Foundation

General Mills and its Foundation contributed more than \$150 million to charitable causes in fiscal year 2015. The General Mills Foundation partners with remarkable nonprofits across the globe to strengthen communities and nourish lives through grantmaking and employee volunteerism focused on our hometown communities. To learn more about our philanthropy and community engagement, join us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/GeneralMillsGives](https://www.facebook.com/GeneralMillsGives) or visit us at <http://www.generalmills.com/en/Responsibility/general-mills-foundation>.

About the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is an independent, semi-autonomous body responsible for the Minneapolis park system. With 179 park properties totaling 6,801 acres of land and water, the Park Board provides places and recreation opportunities for all people to gather and engage in activities that promote health, wellbeing, community and the environment. More than 21 million annual visits are made to the nationally acclaimed park system. Its Grand Rounds Scenic Byway, neighborhood parks, recreation centers and diversified programming have made the park system an important component of what makes Minneapolis a great place to live, play and work. Visit www.minneapolisparcs.org for details.

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About the Minneapolis Parks Foundation

The Minneapolis Parks Foundation is an independent, donor-supported nonprofit that brings visionary leadership, philanthropic investment and private sector expertise to support innovation and equity throughout the Minneapolis park system. It co-leads the RiverFirst Initiative with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and is responsible for private fundraising and implementation of the Water Works and 26th Ave N to Ole Olson projects. It also supports innovative projects for Minneapolis parks through equity funding and champions world-class design through its Next Generation of Parks™ Lecture Series. Get involved at MplsParksFoundation.org.

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Editor's Note:

Please email Janette@MplsParksFoundation.org for links to project videos and downloadable images.

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