



**Minneapolis Parks Foundation and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Commemorate Groundbreaking at Water Works**  
*Grand opening of the expansion of Mill Ruins Park and Water Works Park Pavilion anticipated in fall 2020, with restaurant run by The Sioux Chef to follow in spring 2021*

Minneapolis, Minn. - The Minneapolis Parks Foundation and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board celebrated a milestone today when they commemorated groundbreaking on the expansion of Mill Ruins Park known widely by its project name, Water Works. The occasion was marked by a “golden shovel” ceremony featuring Minneapolis Park Board Superintendent Al Bangoura and Commissioner Jono Cowgill; the Parks Foundation’s Tom Evers, Executive Director, and Tom Paul, Board Chair; General Mills Foundation Executive Director Nicola Dixon; Bank of America Minneapolis Market President Katie Simpson; Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey; and Sean Sherman and Dana Thompson, co-owners of The Sioux Chef. Construction on the highly anticipated park project began in late July and will continue through winter, with grand opening of the 2.8-acre park space and mill-embedded pavilion expected in fall 2020. The Sioux Chef’s restaurant, tentatively called *Owamni: An Indigenous Kitchen*, is expected to open in spring 2021.

Water Works/Mill Ruins Park expansion overlooks St. Anthony Falls and the Stone Arch Bridge; it’s located on Dakota homeland and has been sacred to both the Dakota and Anishinaabe people for millennia. It is a RiverFirst signature project that will bring visitor services and recreational and cultural amenities to one of Minnesota’s most highly visited destinations - the Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park, which attracts more than 3 million visits annually, a number that is expected to nearly double in the next decade. The park and pavilion are designed to reveal layers of untold stories, in acknowledgement of the location as both the birthplace of the city’s milling history and a spiritual place that has shaped cultural and economic connections for Indigenous people and immigrants. The project will be completed in two phases, beginning with the Mezzanine phase, now under way.

“Water Works is a huge opportunity to create a space that opens up more access to the riverfront, educates people on its rich, complex history, and provides respectful space for all communities with a connection to the riverfront to tell their stories,” says Al Bangoura, Superintendent for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. “I’m incredibly grateful for the generous partners and donors who support RiverFirst and make it possible to continue to build on Minneapolis’s riverfront revitalization.”

“The Minneapolis Parks Foundation is thrilled to mark this momentous milestone with the Minneapolis Park Board, our community collaborators, and RiverFirst Campaign donors,” says Tom Evers, Parks Foundation Executive Director. “After years of thoughtful engagement and design development, this transformative project promises to be a place for people and peoples to share stories, be heard, and create new connections with each other and with the

most powerful point on the Mississippi River. We sincerely thank the Park Board for their leadership and hard work, as well as our donors for believing in this tremendous vision.”

RiverFirst is a Park Board-led vision for regional riverfront parks and trails that will transform the Minneapolis Upper Riverfront into a world-class cultural and recreational destination for residents and visitors, as well as an economic engine for the Twin Cities region. Other RiverFirst projects include the Great Northern Greenway River Link, the riverfront park at Upper Harbor Terminal, Hall’s Island restoration, and Graco Park.

### **RiverFirst Capital Campaign and Naming Recognition**

The philanthropic community is largely funding the Water Works Mezzanine Phase with contributions to the RiverFirst Capital Campaign. To date, the Parks Foundation has raised \$16.9 million towards the total \$17.9 million goal, which also includes funding for the initial Overlook phase of the Great Northern Greenway River Link.

Contributors to the RiverFirst Campaign who made gifts of \$10,000 or more will be recognized on a donor wall inside the pavilion. In addition, several leadership donors to the campaign selected recognition opportunities with naming rights, which the Park Board of Commissioners approved in July 2019. They include: General Mills Plaza, Bank of America City Steps, Lenzmeier Family Foundation Classroom, Nature Play Lab by Caroline Amplatz, and the Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation Atrium. At the time the Park Board approved park naming rights, it also approved formally calling the park building the Water Works Park Pavilion.

More than a hundred visionary individuals and institutions have supported the historic RiverFirst Campaign to date. In 2016, the General Mills Foundation made the lead corporate contribution to the RiverFirst Campaign. Its “birthday gift” of \$3 million was made to commemorate the Minneapolis-based company’s 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, recognizing its origins on St. Anthony Falls. In 2019, Bank of America made a catalytic Anchor Grant of \$1 million, which positioned the campaign for its public phase launch in 2020. The City of Minneapolis supported the project with a \$400,000 grant for public art, and the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization will contribute up to \$900,000 towards an innovative rainwater reuse system that will repurpose rainwater from adjacent buildings for flushing toilets and irrigation.

The Parks Foundation continues to gratefully accept gifts to the campaign of any amount, which will be matched by the Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation through December 31, 2019, or until a further \$250,000 is raised from the community. Campaign gifts can be made by visiting [MplsParksFoundation.org/SupportRiverFirst](https://MplsParksFoundation.org/SupportRiverFirst) or contacting Parks Foundation Chief Development Officer Jennifer Downham at [JDownham@MplsParksFoundation.org](mailto:JDownham@MplsParksFoundation.org).

### **Park, Pavilion, and Restaurant Details**

The 7,800 sq. ft. two-story Water Works Park Pavilion will include a public lounge, multi-purpose room, The Sioux Chef’s restaurant, along with restrooms, and stairs and elevator to transition between the site’s two levels on First St. and West River Parkway. On the park grounds, and adjacent to the pavilion, tree-sheltered city steps will provide a place for contemplation and programming, while a south plaza will be a gateway to the Central Riverfront. The wooded hillside on the north end of the site will retain its character and be enhanced with native vegetation, including plants with edible or medicinal value, and a direct trail link into downtown promoting access and circulation.

The Sioux Chef will conceive and manage both the four-season dine-in and take-out restaurant, as well as programming in the Water Works Park Pavilion and on the grounds. The

Sioux Chef plans to create events and educational opportunities to elevate Indigenous voices as part of its larger mission to promote Native American cultures, honor plants and natural resources, and foster a vibrant Indigenous food movement. The restaurant's name is derived from Owamni Yamni, the Dakota name for what is called St. Anthony Falls in English; it means swirling or laughing waters.

"We're excited to bring the Dakota perspective to this experience overlooking the river, beginning with our menu of Indigenous foods," says Sean Sherman, founder of The Sioux Chef and author (with Beth Dooley) of the James Beard Award-winning cookbook of the same name. "Visitors will find a changing menu that is both seasonal and regional, sourced first from Native growers and producers, helping to create a cycle of economic growth for Indigenous communities."

To accommodate the large number of guests expected to the pavilion, The Sioux Chef will link Owamni with its Indigenous Food Lab nearby. "Together, they are a powerful job creation tool, creating opportunities for Indigenous workers to gain valuable experience and develop leadership skills through all aspects of our work," adds Dana Thompson, The Sioux Chef co-founder.

### **Construction Update**

Initial construction activity started in July with excavation around the buried Columbia Mill walls and rehabilitation of historic stonework masonry. Much of the initial work consisted of site excavation, grading, and utilities work. Next steps include an enhanced crossing on West River Parkway in the late fall, ongoing site work and utility installation, selective building demolition, and framing for the new building. Over the winter construction will continue inside the building.

Minneapolis-based [Damon Farber Landscape Architects](#) with [HGA Architects and Engineers](#) and a multidisciplinary team that also includes expertise in cultural resources, programming, and engineering led the design development of the project.

Following completion of this first phase, the project's second phase addressing the area between West River Parkway and the Mississippi River is anticipated to begin in 2021.

### **About the Minneapolis Parks Foundation**

The Minneapolis Parks Foundation transforms human lives through parks and public spaces by aligning philanthropic investment and community vision. The Parks Foundation 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 [Great Northern Greenway River Link](#) projects. The Parks Foundation also supports innovative Minneapolis parks projects, including [Little Free Libraries® at all recreation centers](#), through equity funding, and champions world-class design through its [Next Generation of Parks™ Event Series](#). Learn more at [MplsParksFoundation.org](#).

### **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 180 park properties totaling 6,804 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, well-being, community and the environment. 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. More than 24 million annual visits are made to the nationally acclaimed park system, which was named the number one park system in

the nation in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018 by The Trust for Public Land's ParkScore® Index.

**About The Sioux Chef**

**WE ARE THE SIOUX CHEF.** We exist to educate and make indigenous foods more accessible. We are committed to revitalizing Native American Cuisine and in the process we are re-identifying North American Cuisine and reclaiming an important culinary culture long buried and often inaccessible.

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