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\$100,000 matching grant from the Edward R. Bazinet Charitable Foundation positions RiverFirst Campaign to for its final stretch

Only \$600,000 left to reach the \$18.1 million goal for Water Works and Great Northern Greenway River Link riverfront parks

Minneapolis, Minn. – The [Minneapolis Parks Foundation](#) today announced that it received a \$100,000 matching grant from the Edward R. Bazinet Charitable Foundation. The grant is for the [RiverFirst Capital Campaign](#), the largest fundraising campaign for Minneapolis Parks in its history, which will bring \$18.1 million in philanthropic support for two new riverfront parks – Water Works and the Great Northern Greenway River Link/26th Ave N Overlook. Gifts made to the RiverFirst Campaign beginning on January 1, 2020, are being matched through November 30, 2020, or until the campaign goal is reached.

[Water Works](#), located near the Stone Arch Bridge on the Central Riverfront, is now under construction with an anticipated grand opening of the park in fall 2020, followed by the grand opening of [The Sioux Chef's](#) restaurant in spring 2021. Upriver in North Minneapolis, the first phase of the [Great Northern Greenway River Link](#), called the Overlook, will begin construction this spring and is anticipated to open in the fall.

Both projects are part of the [RiverFirst Initiative](#), a [Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board](#)-led vision for 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. Additional RiverFirst projects include the riverfront park at Upper Harbor Terminal, Hall's Island restoration, and Graco Park.

The Bazinet Foundation match comes at a pivotal time for the RiverFirst Campaign – with only \$600,000 to go before reaching the \$18.1 million goal. “We’re grateful for the Bazinet Foundation’s vision for the Minneapolis riverfront and inspired by their generous match to help us reach our goal,” says Tom Evers, Executive Director of the Minneapolis Parks Foundation. “They’re joining more than 100 forward-thinking individuals, families, foundations, and corporations in leaving a legacy of connection to the Mississippi River for generations to come.”

“Our family has an affinity for the unique and vibrant culture in Minneapolis. The parks are a huge part of our city and we were excited by the Parks Foundation’s desire to expand on those critical resources in a very thoughtful way. We look forward to supporting their work and encourage others to do the same,” says Maureen Bazinet Beck.

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Contributors to the RiverFirst Campaign who make gifts of \$10,000 or more will be recognized on a donor wall inside the pavilion; all donors who make gifts of \$1,000 or more will receive an invitation to the donor celebration in spring 2021. Campaign gifts can be made by visiting MplsParksFoundation.org/SupportRiverFirst or contacting Parks Foundation Chief Development Officer Jennifer Downham at JDownham@MplsParksFoundation.org.

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 150th 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.

Water Works and the Great Northern Greenway River Link

Water Works 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 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.

The **Great Northern Greenway Overlook** – which is the first project in a larger multiphase **Great Northern Greenway River Link** plan – is located at the east end of 26th Ave N where the City of Minneapolis recently completed an off-street bike and pedestrian trail that connects the Grand Rounds at Theodore Wirth Regional Park with the Mississippi River through the heart of North Minneapolis.

The Overlook project scope includes shoreline enhancements and a river overlook with inventive approaches to lighting, furniture, and art. Features will include an oval loop trail that will perch like a nest above the riverbank and space for “pop up” interactive experiences. Elements of the Overlook concept are informed by engagement and design ideas developed by Environmental Design Studio apprentices at [Juxtaposition Arts](https://JuxtapositionArts.com), a four-year partnership brought to the project by the Parks Foundation.

The broader vision for the River Link project includes connections to downtown Minneapolis and West River Road trails, together with new parks stretching north and south from the Overlook along the riverfront. Once complete, the full River Link will unite North Minneapolis to downtown along the river, open up a new 40-mile trail loop in Minneapolis, and eventually reach to Northeast across the Mississippi.

About the Minneapolis Parks Foundation

The Minneapolis Parks Foundation transforms human lives through parks and public spaces by aligning philanthropic investment and community vision. Since 2003, the Parks Foundation has raised more than \$20 million for transformative parks projects in Minneapolis. Currently, 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.

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