

# Parks and Urban Design Plan

## Urban Design Guidelines

The Upper River portion of the Mississippi in Minneapolis is a unique place, with a unique water amenity. In order to guide development as conceived in the Land Use Plan, a careful investigation and analysis of the topography of the area and its location within the city led to the establishment of a set of six urban design guidelines. Following their creation, the guidelines were applied to the Preferred Plan Alternative to refine it as the final Land Use Plan. Perspective sketches portray how development might occur. The guidelines should be applied at the system scale, but are most relevant to new development on the west bank.

### River Views

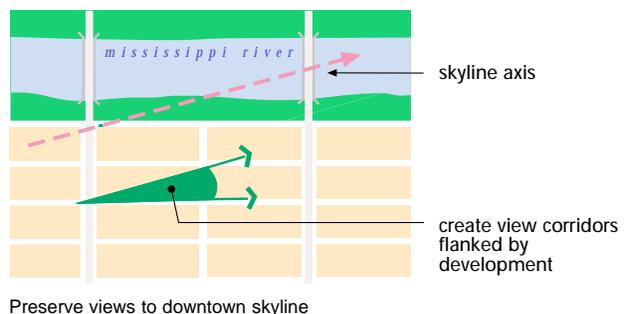
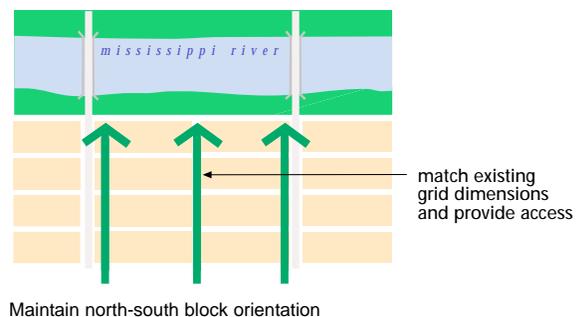
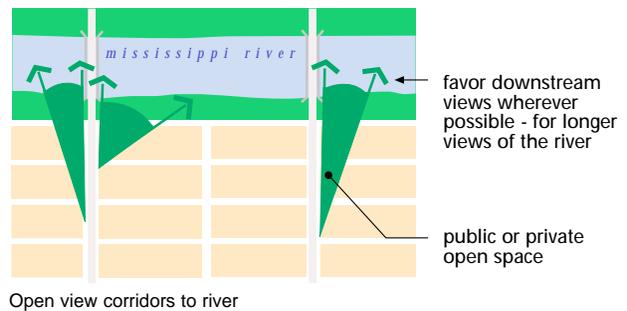
To make the most of the river as a public amenity, and as a location to entice adjacent development, view corridors should be maintained. Bridge areas are especially important to maintain as no-build zones, so that wide views are opened where the largest number of people approach the river. In addition to views of the water, the river also opens views of the sky. Looking downstream, southern exposure provides more light allowing longer views, so view corridors, expressed in the plan as “wedges” favor downstream views.

### Block Orientation

Minneapolis is, in general, a city laid out on a north-south grid, with structures fronting on blocks so that facades receive either morning sun from the east or afternoon sun from the west. This north-south block orientation should be maintained, specifically on the west bank where redevelopment will include construction of new blocks, and in some new street alignments. The new street grid should in most cases follow existing block dimensions, to match street alignments across the interstate in north Minneapolis. Maintaining this orientation will insure sunlight during some part of the day for structures and units.

### Views to Downtown

The west bank of the Upper River has a unique position north of the downtown that allows for views of the skyline. These views should be maintained and enhanced by the establishment of a number of view corridor wedges. The Plan sets these wedges in strategic locations where the best views of the downtown are available, with new development flanking these wedges in relation to the skyline axis.



### Stormwater Retention and Filtration

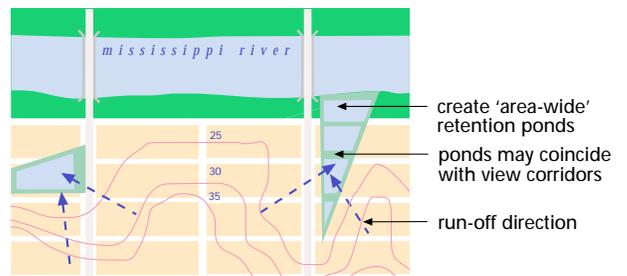
In order to meet current standards for reducing surface run-off during storm events, a series of retention ponds should be created in redevelopment areas. The provision of ponding areas within the overall plan allows for an area-wide system related to new development, rather than smaller individual ponds for each new construction. This approach will create more satisfactory results for water quality improvement and urban design. The Plan places water filtration areas within the view corridor wedges as the most efficient use of land.

### Public-Private Interface

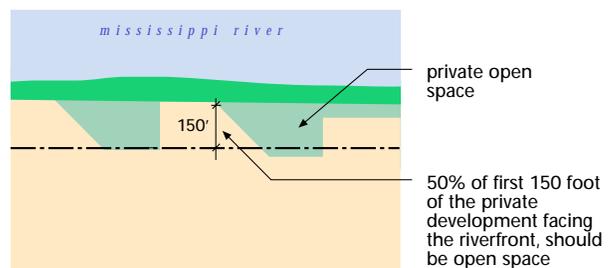
Along many areas of the riverfront, a better interface between public and private space can be achieved by including private open space around which structures are arranged. This crenellated, or notched, pattern will preclude the construction of uninterrupted facades along the riverfront. Application may vary in relation to other urban design goals, specifically at the higher density, riverfront entertainment node along the southern portion of the promenade, where development should create a strong urban edge.

### Sunlight

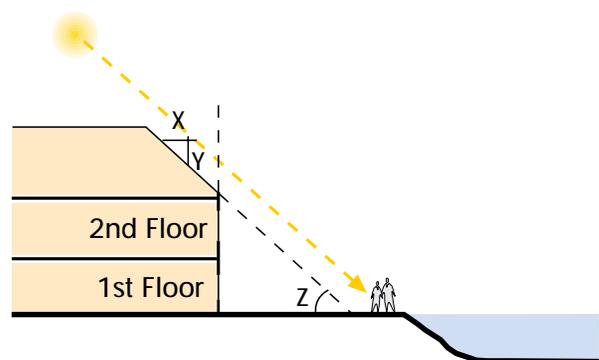
Where development is to occur on the west bank in close proximity to the riverfront, calculations should be made to step back structures so that sunlight penetrates to the public areas. Morning sunlight is always assured by the north-south block orientation, but structures should also allow some afternoon sun if possible. Provision of private open space, as outlined above will also allow areas with increased afternoon sunlight.



Retain and filter stormwater run-off



Create private open space and varied facades



Allow for sunlight at river edge

## Parks and Open Space System

### Riverfront Parks

The Upper River Parks Plan proposes the addition and programming of over **90 acres of new parkland** beside the Mississippi River in north and northeast Minneapolis. North Mississippi Regional Park and Boom Island Park represent recent park development at the north and south ends of the Upper River. Yet along the 2.75 mile stretch in between, only 11 acres of parks exist at Marshall Terrace and Gluek, with the undeveloped Edgewater an additional 3.5 acres. The Upper River Master Plan proposes a six-fold increase in parklands that will create a new waterfront park destination for residents of local neighborhoods and the region on the banks of one of the great rivers of the world.

### Open Space Amenities

Integrated into the overall Parks Plan are other amenities creating additional open space, including a half-mile-long, 7-acre urban Riverfront Promenade and over 16 acres of Water Filtration Parks.

### Parkways and Trails

The Plan extends West River Parkway 2.75 miles and redesigns Marshall St. as a landscaped boulevard for a total of 5.25 miles of new enhanced roadway parallel to the river. Continuous parks along both banks are accessed by over 15 miles of new bike lanes and recreational trails.

West River Parkway will connect to Webber Parkway on the west bank and the entrance to North Mississippi Regional Park. On the east bank, the new Marshall Boulevard will connect Boom Island and the central riverfront to St. Anthony Parkway and riverfront parks in Anoka County.

The trail system follows the riverbank, the majority passing through lands acquired for parks. However, an easement is desired along the river at Scherer Bros. Lumber and Graco between 8th Ave. N.E. and Broadway, as well as through the NSP Riverside plant between Marshall Terrace Park and St. Anthony Parkway. Two railroad bridges are also utilized to carry trails across the river, on a converted BN Bridge and a deck attached to the Soo Line Bridge.

### Riverbank and Landscape Restoration

A key objective of the Parks Plan is to stabilize and vegetate banks to reduce soil erosion and increase connectivity of habitat corridors. The Plan calls for over four miles of riverbank restoration, with a majority of the new parks and open space devoted to naturalized areas, including prairie plantings and constructed wetlands, providing new habitat for wildlife.

### River Recreation

Every aspect of the Upper River Master Plan is designed to increase the recreational use of the Mississippi. Included in the Parks Plan are boat tie-ups, fishing piers, and boat launches. A boat dock and boat rental concession is proposed behind the Grain Belt complex. The Plan retains current riverfront hospitality venues accessible by boat and proposes new waterfront features and uses which

will increase the use of the Upper River by recreational boaters. Bringing new residential units to the river will also add to the number of people canoeing its waters, walking on trails, and fishing the banks.

### Variety and Interest

In conjunction with ecological restoration objectives, the Parks Plan was created to provide a myriad of experiences encouraging visitors to return again and again. Restored landscapes will offer a wide variety of flora and fauna, the scene constantly changing with the seasons. Intermingled with the wild, urban riverfront destinations offer places for gathering, dining, shopping, and entertainment. Park programming will spark continued interest along trails by the inclusion of a feature—be it a butterfly garden, overlook, piece of art, or landmark tree—that rewards users for continuing on down the trail.

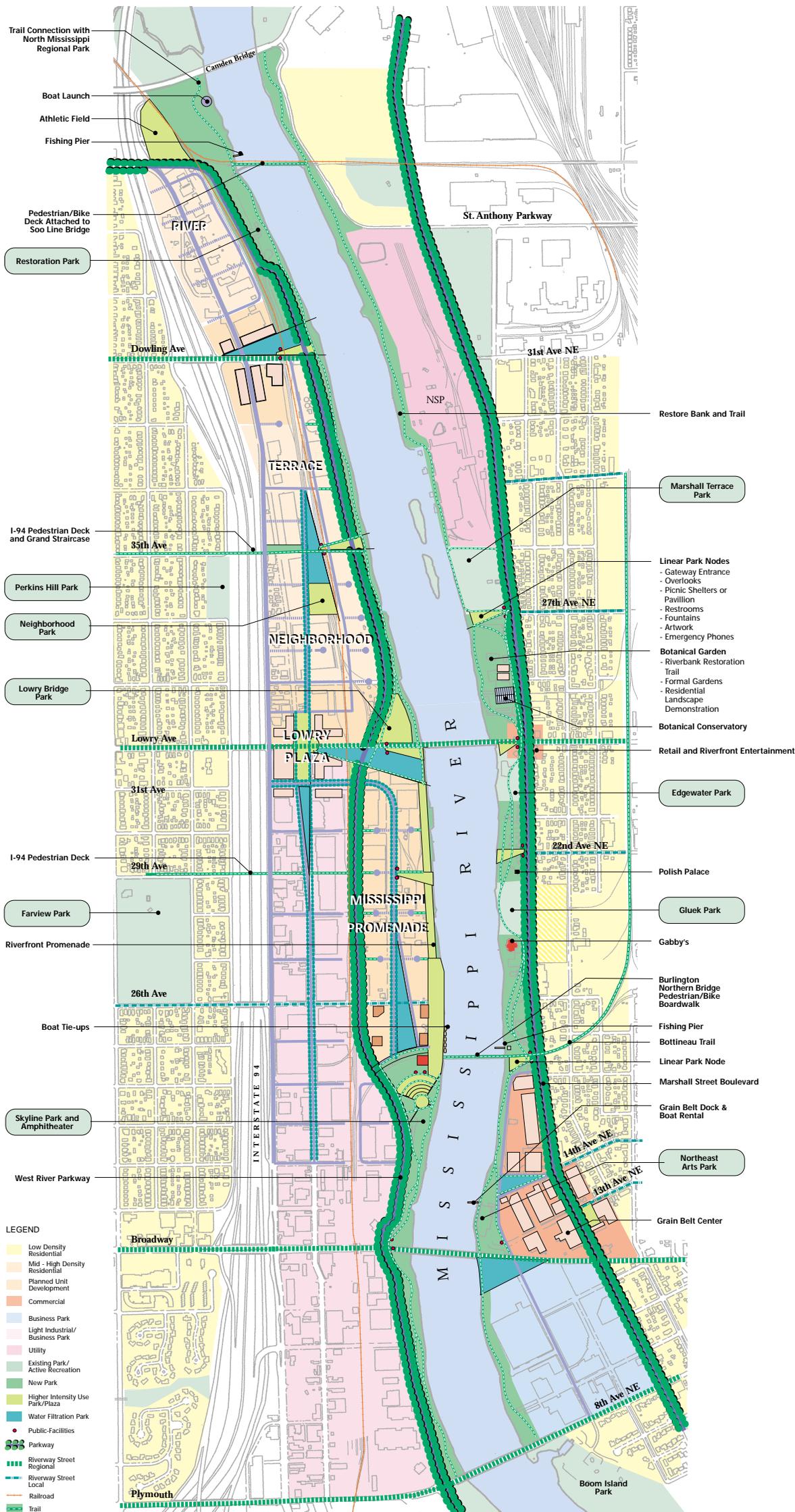
### Using the Upper River parks as a system

All of the parks and open space elements contained in the Upper River Master Plan are connected to the overall system. Trails intersect with four vehicular and two railroad bridges. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities are proposed to be added to the two railroad bridges, with improvements to vehicular bridges as well. These river crossings allow trail and park users to experience the system in a series of loops up one bank and down the other, either small loops around two adjacent bridges or even the largest loop from Plymouth to the Camden Bridge. The different topography and programming on each bank creates exciting opportunities for a day along the Upper River.

### System-Scale Features

- ◆ Skyline Park and Amphitheater
- ◆ Mississippi Promenade
- ◆ Restoration Park
- ◆ Marshall Terrace Botanical Garden and Conservatory
- ◆ “Gemuetlichkeit” Park
- ◆ Northeast Arts Park
- ◆ Grain Belt Boat Concession

# Upper River Parks and Urban Design Plan



## Urban Design System

Urban design components included as part of the Upper River Master Plan, add richness and suggest how reconfigured land uses can be enhanced through place-making infrastructure and nomenclature, since frequently it is the neighborhood park, unique topography, main street, or landmark that distinguishes a place and gives it a recognizable name. Application of the project planning principles and urban design guidelines resulted in a system of features, including designated view corridors, water retention and filtration areas, Riverway Streets, and new internal circulation patterns, which occur throughout the plan.

### View Corridors and Water Filtration Parks

Combining the necessary water retention and filtration infrastructure with recommended no-build view corridors produces a pattern of “wedges” in the plan. These wedges meet both ecological and aesthetic objectives, to improve the river’s water quality and preserve views of the river and downtown skyline, which add value to surrounding land.

### Riverway Street System

The plan envisions a system of “Riverway Streets,” with enhanced streetscapes and signage that will lead residents and visitors to riverfront parks. This system includes major thoroughfares with river crossing bridges, as well as local streets that provide the most direct routes across north and northeast Minneapolis. Regional routes on high traffic thoroughfares should have enhancements that are oriented to vehicular way-finding, while local routes should have improved facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists. Employing a common palette of streetscape elements will identify the streets leading to and parallel with the river as a unified system; especially important is the installation of signage specifically designed to direct people to Upper River parks.

### Riverway Street Elements

- Directional signs to Upper River parks.
- Decorative pedestrian-level lighting.
- Bicycle lanes and designated routes.
- Enhanced boulevard plantings.
- Additional street tree plantings.

### Internal Circulation and Truck Routes

A layout is included in the Plan suggesting street alignments in redevelopment areas. These streets, shown as deep blue lines, set a block pattern for future development, with the existing grid extended into areas where segments are currently missing in the industrial areas on the west bank.

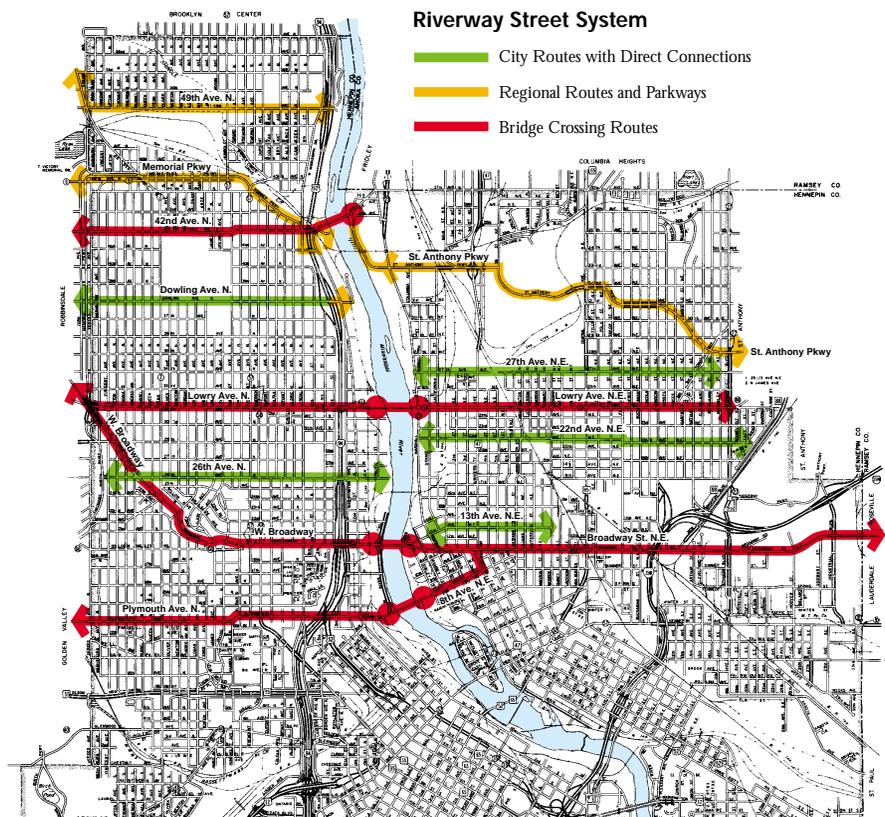
Truck routes remain on Washington Ave. and 2nd St. N. south of Lowry, but are excluded to the east of the new parkway. Railroad crossings are limited. One block south of Lowry, traffic is diverted to the west and onto Washington in order to eliminate the truck route on 2nd St. through the new residential zone to the north. The street pattern in the residential area north of Dowling shifts to parallel the river.

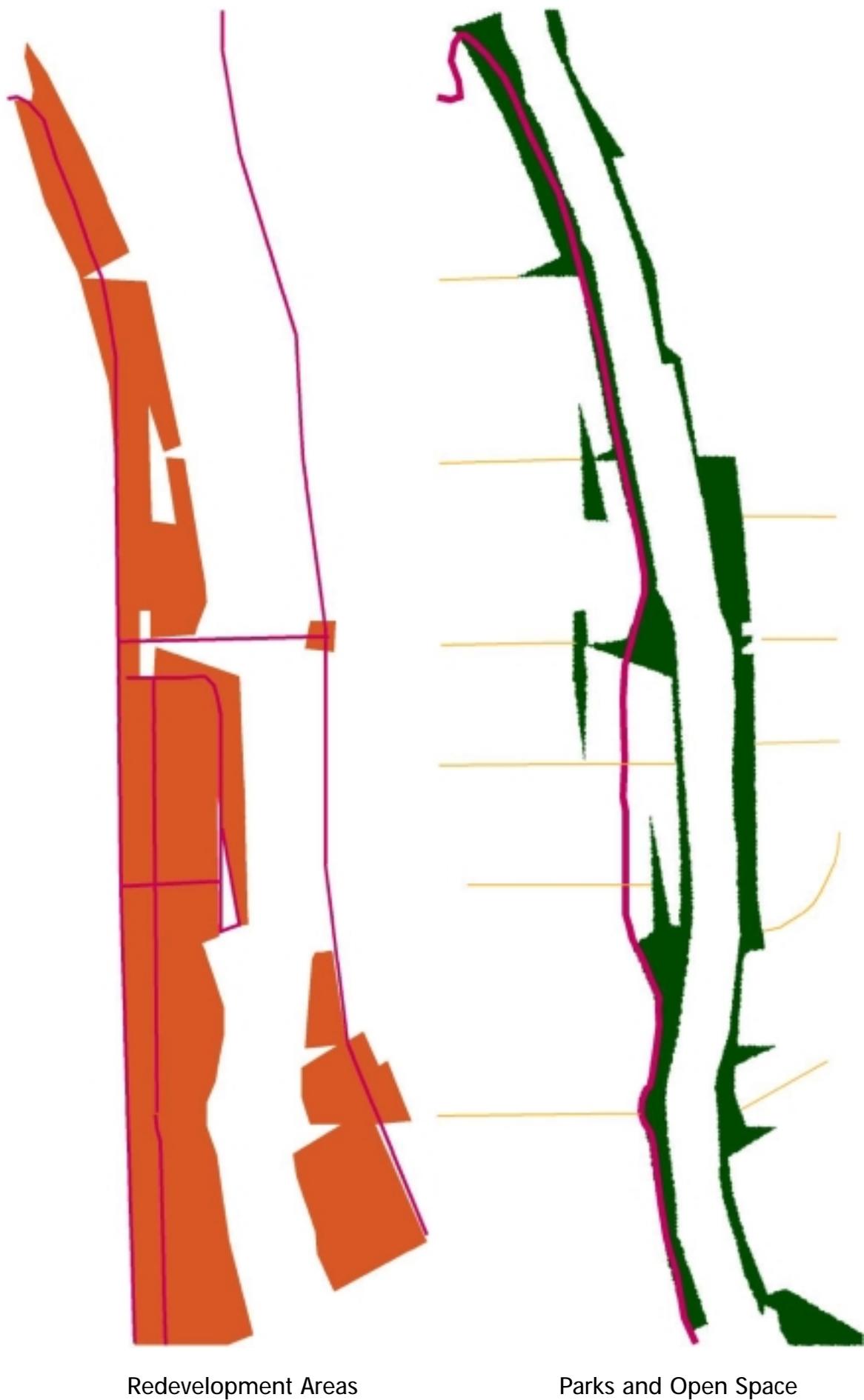
### Riverfront Destinations

The Plan encourages trips to the riverfront not only by the creation of new parkland, but also by conserving existing hospitality venues and proposing new areas with urban riverfront destinations. Special park programming and commercial destinations within the overall waterfront open space system will increase the number of users, providing increased safety in parks, and a variety of choices of things to do on the Upper River.

### System-Scale Features

- ◆ Riverway Street System
- ◆ Mississippi Promenade
- ◆ River City
- ◆ Lowry Plaza
- ◆ River Terrace Neighborhood
- ◆ Pedestrian Deck and Grand Stair
- ◆ Dowling Place
- ◆ Marshall Boulevard
- ◆ Grain Belt Center





Redevelopment Areas

Parks and Open Space

*Figure shows the Upper River Master Plan as cut-out parks and redevelopment areas. This view reveals the relative size and interrelated structure of the recommended urban design. All of the parks and open space elements are connected as part of an integrated system.*

### Skyline Park and Amphitheater

Just below the BN Bridge, where the Mississippi meanders to the west before flowing under Broadway, a unique confluence of land and water brings crowds to the riverbank. Looking to downtown, a fabulous vista unfolds with the blue-green Mississippi creating a watery foreground for the Minneapolis skyline. At the site where the river begins its bend, a long view down river is aligned precisely with the position of the downtown business district and its office towers on the horizon. The full width of the river is captured in this view, with the skyline seemingly resting on the Broadway Bridge.



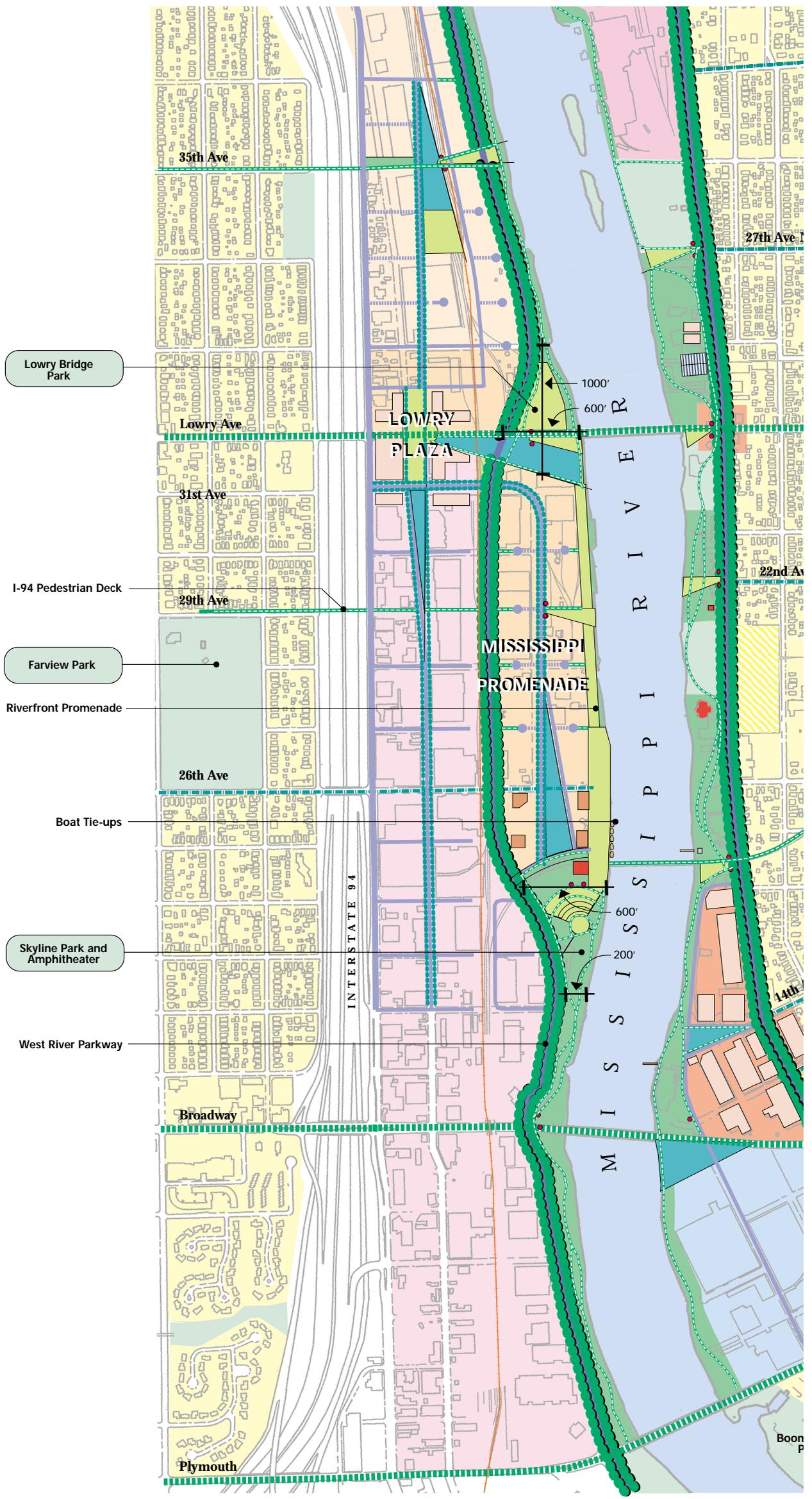
On this site, Skyline Park and Amphitheater celebrate the river and its city. The Amphitheater has 1,000 seats all directed to the magnificent view and a small stage near water level. The seating is cut into a rise of land, with a patio, concessions, and public facilities at the top level. The Amphitheater is a public venue for performances on stage and on the river. Musical acts are sponsored by the Upper River hospitality business association. Festivals also utilize the stage and the rest of Skyline Park between the BN and Broadway bridges. Big crowds consistently turn out for water ski shows and fireworks launched just downstream at Boom Island. Boaters too are drawn to the area during performances and events.



Above Skyline Amphitheater (see page 75), a pool and fountain play with water soon to join the river, adjacent to a major hospitality venue near the west end of the BN Bridge. This structure contains a full supper club, dance floors, and indoor stage. Near the Broadway Bridge fishing areas and a small sunning beach bring people to the river's edge.

The synergy between the east and west banks is stirred by a dressed up Broadway Bridge and the conversion of the former BN railroad bridge into a boardwalk for pedestrians and bicyclists. The Broadway Bridge is fitted with decorative lighting along sidewalks above, as well as lamps below lighting the underside of the bridge and reflecting in the water. The two bridges form a loop for strolls around the river from Skyline Park to the Grain Belt Center.





**West River Parkway**

Extending north from Skyline Park, West River Parkway envelops the Mississippi Promenade development, containing the vibrant mixed-use residential, office, entertainment district to the east and sheltering the new settlement from the light-industrial park to the west. Recognizing the need for a green buffer between the different land-use zones, the parkway includes generous landscaping on both sides of the railroad corridor. With traffic counts growing on all Minneapolis parkways, and a connected West River Parkway carrying some commuter traffic, the alignment located away from the waterfront allows a separation of vehicular traffic from those on foot desiring closer contact with the river. High-speed bicyclists and rollerbladers are directed to follow the parkway, with on-street lanes provided.

**26th Avenue connection**

North of Skyline Park the parkway intersects with 26th Ave. N., a local Riverway Street offering the only bridge over the interstate between Lowry and Broadway. With access to the river provided to the heart of north Minneapolis, the linking of West River Parkway to 26th Ave. N. connects a whole community to the Mississippi River. A view to the water, which begins on the incline at Farview Park and carries through the new development, is ensured by a wide landscaped right of way that leads to the water's edge. When turning south onto the parkway at 26th, a vista of the downtown skyline is revealed as the road curves back to the river.



26th Ave. at Farview Park

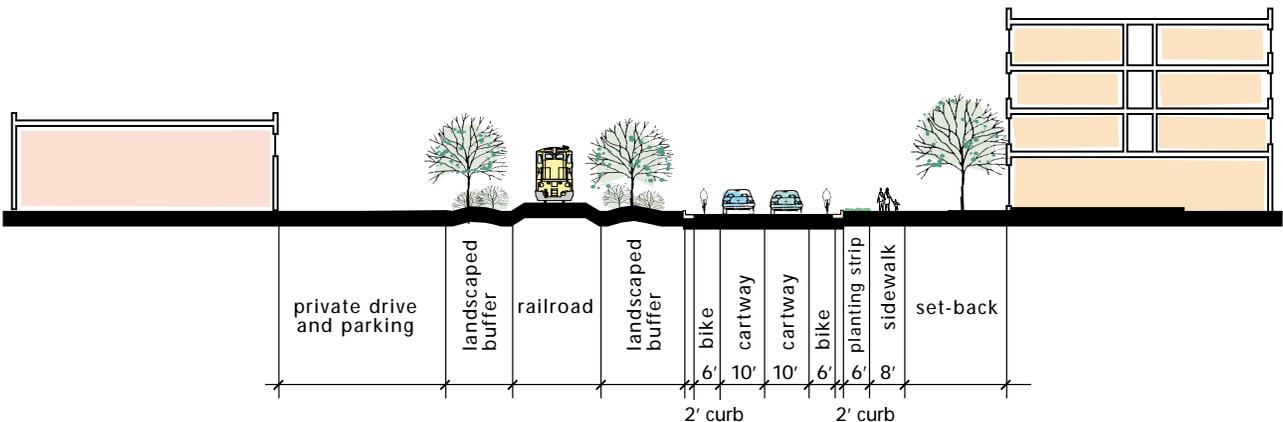
**Pedestrian access**

Traveling north along the parkway, views to the river are caught between buildings set on the normal street grid (330-by-330-foot blocks in this section). Pedestrian access to the river or parkway is provided throughout the development via a system of sidewalks connecting to short internal drives, which stem from a new Pacific St. This pedestrian system is augmented by a pedestrian deck over the interstate at 29th Ave. N., providing a greenway experience from the north side of Farview Park to the river.



**Parkway intersections**

Vehicles entering the Mississippi Promenade are restricted to intersections with the parkway at 24th, 26th, and 31st avenues. A route to Lowry Ave. is provided from the parkway, west on 31st to Washington Ave. This configuration excludes a direct interface between the high-traffic Lowry and the parkway, yet provides a reasonable route for residents and visitors to the area.



### The Promenade—An Urban Riverfront for Minneapolis

The Mississippi Promenade is a new type of waterfront for Minneapolis. It is located at the river edge, on a low bank between the BN Bridge and Lowry Avenue. While the Lower Gorge is usually seen from above and the Falls of St. Anthony at a distance, the river along the Promenade entices contact. Standing on the Promenade, the Mississippi is a few feet below yet fills the view to eye level—*the river is right there!* The Promenade is a unique feature that offers not just a river view, but a real urban riverfront.



Promenade View at 27th Ave. N.

The public right of way is a decorative plaza filled with activity. The plaza varies in width, but is a minimum of 50 feet, creating a large space in which those passing through and those lingering can safely mix. Hundreds of trees in planting strips green the plaza, with ornamentals adding flowers and scent, while broad-limbed trees provide pools of shade. Lamps, benches, drinking fountains, and flower planters dot the plaza. District property owners pay for daily maintenance, including cleaning and plowing, by the Promenade’s dedicated service crew.



Fronting on the Promenade, cafes, shops, and music clubs create a major riverfront destination unlike any other place in the city or region. Residents of the district’s apartments and condominiums fill the Promenade day and night, while visitors make a day of it strolling along the Mississippi, window shopping, relaxing just feet from the river at an outdoor café, or dining at a waterfront restaurant.

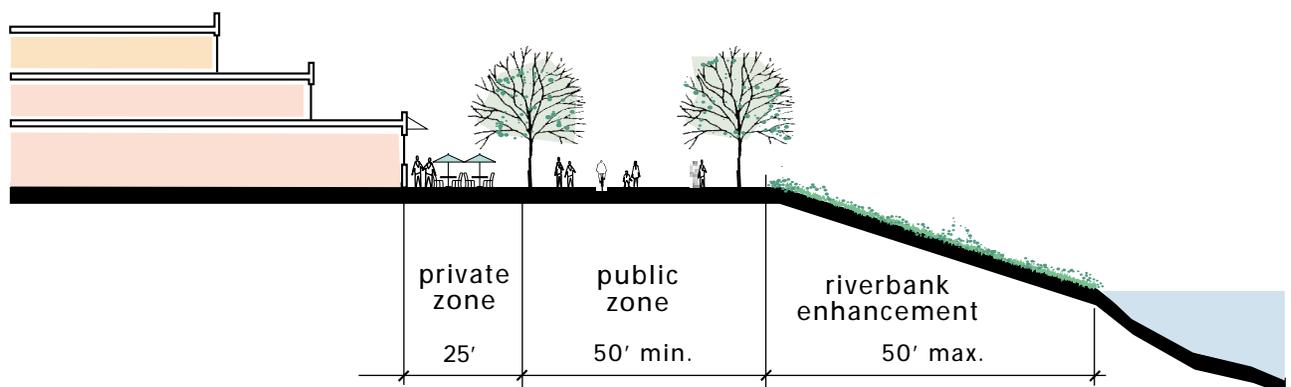


The Promenade is built in two distinct sections. The southern section (see pages 74 and 75) has two levels, in the style of quays along the Seine, with the upper level beginning at the back row of the Skyline Amphitheater, and the lower level skirting past a retaining wall and under the BN Bridge. On the upper level, outdoor seating is provided adjacent to the wall separating the two levels. The setting is one of the most romantic in the city, especially at night, with the river slipping by and office lights in downtown towers creating a pastiche along the downstream horizon. Because of the activity, including local residents, area employees, and visitors, the Promenade is the safest waterfront in the city after nightfall.



Ramps at each end, and terraced steps, link the upper and lower levels. The lower quay is a special place where the city meets the river. Pedestrians and slow-speed bicyclists share the space. Boaters tie up along the bulkhead and ascend to dine or attend events at the Amphitheater.

Where 26th Ave. meets the river an overlook feature celebrates the special node; at 27th the ramp from the lower quay brings the Promenade to a single level from this point north to Lowry. The northern section of the Promenade has a vegetated bank, with low growing shrubs, small trees, and emergent wetland plants. At 29th Ave., steps descend to the water from a parkland wedge extending public space back to Pacific St. The northern end of the Promenade takes on a quieter residential aspect, with the plaza terminating at a landmark piece of outdoor sculpture where the space opens into Lowry Bridge Park.



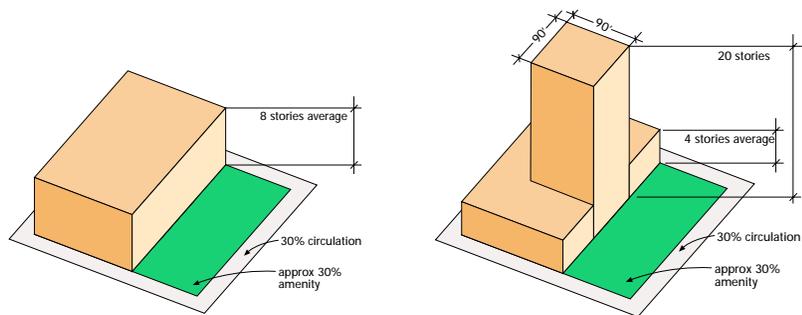
## Mississippi Promenade District

The District is defined by the Mississippi Promenade along the river and West River Parkway, from the BN Bridge to Lowry. The density of residential development approaches 50 dwelling units per acre, with the tax base generated paying for a portion of public costs incurred during development. The land use is a complex mix of open space, residential, office, retail, and hospitality.

Housing dominates the planned unit development. The population includes young professionals, employees of nearby industries and downtown offices, empty-nesters, and seniors. The environment is decidedly urban.

### North of 26th Avenue

Mid-rise apartment buildings and stacked townhouses create the core of the district north of 26th. Studios and live-work lofts serve the twenty-first-century housing market, with the lines between workplace and home blurred. Taller buildings near the parkway provide views of the river over mid-rises along the Promenade.



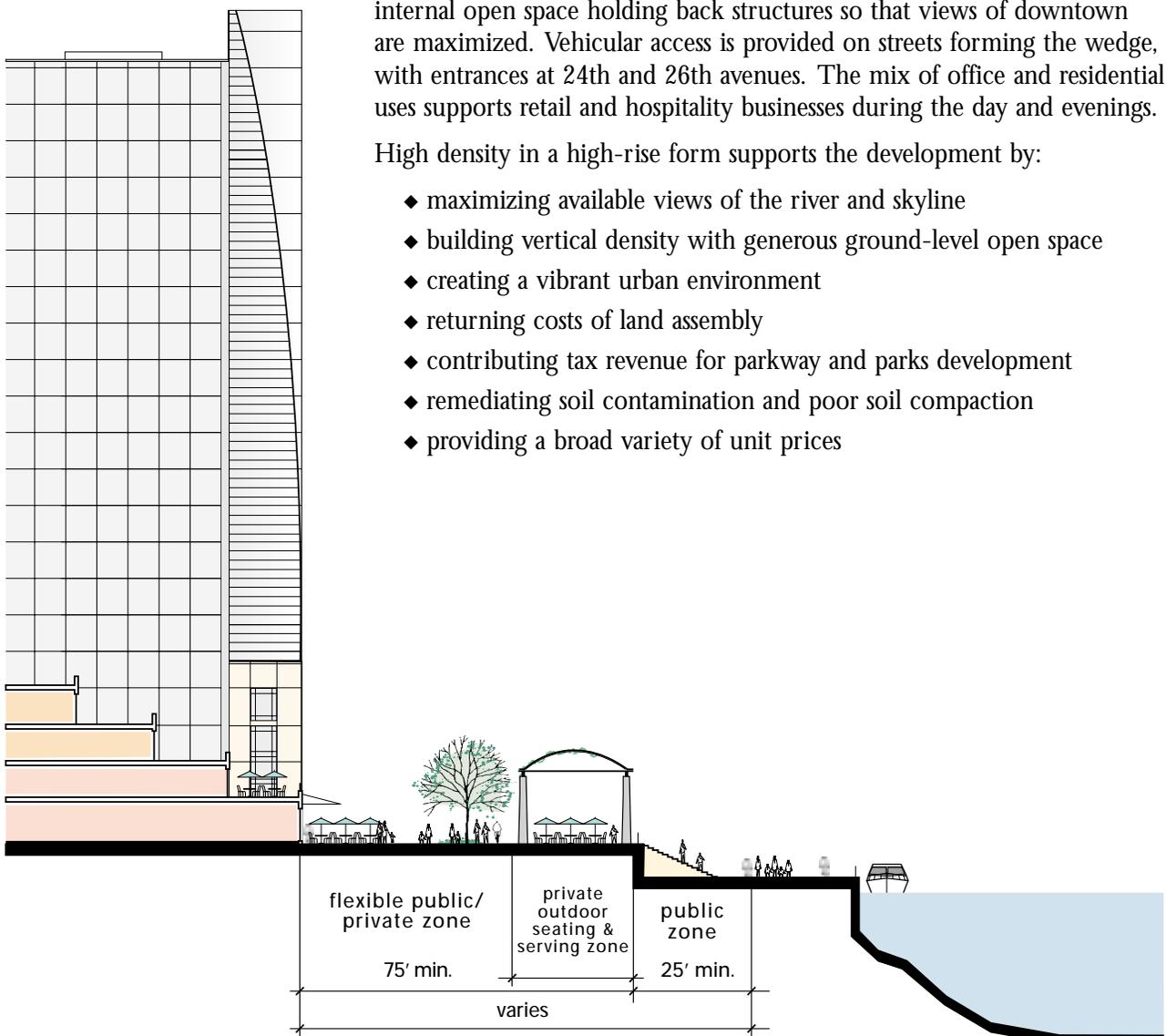
*Towers allow a varied building mass at 50 du/a.*

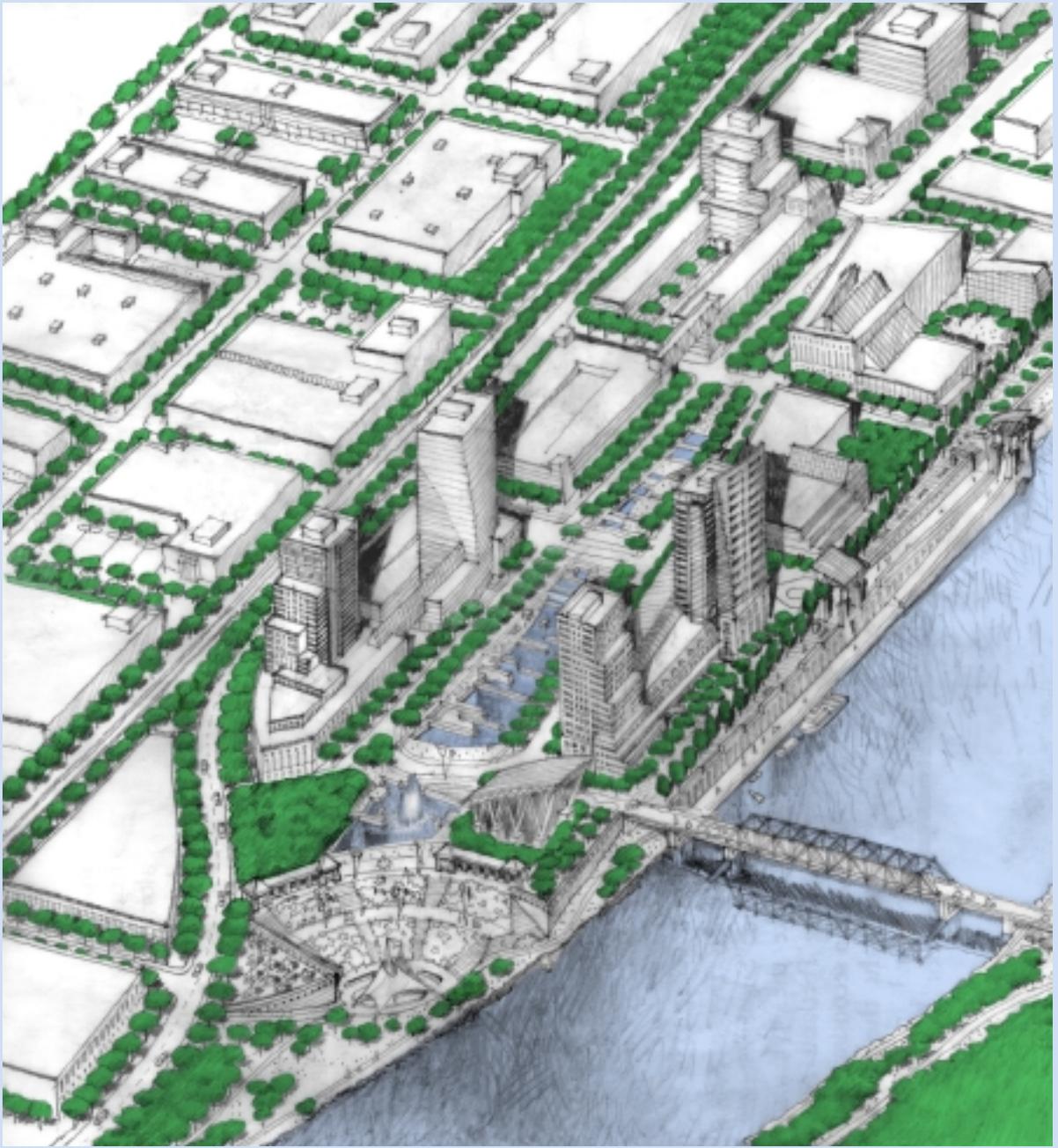
### River City

Taking advantage of the magnificent views of the river and downtown, the River City development south of 26th Ave. incorporates residential high-rises, as well as a landmark hotel, and single-tenant office tower. The River City site offers a triple-loaded amenity package including: a parkway, water filtration park, and riverfront promenade. Parking is available in ramps and under structures. The development shows a full realization of the district urban design guidelines, with the wedge of internal open space holding back structures so that views of downtown are maximized. Vehicular access is provided on streets forming the wedge, with entrances at 24th and 26th avenues. The mix of office and residential uses supports retail and hospitality businesses during the day and evenings.

High density in a high-rise form supports the development by:

- ◆ maximizing available views of the river and skyline
- ◆ building vertical density with generous ground-level open space
- ◆ creating a vibrant urban environment
- ◆ returning costs of land assembly
- ◆ contributing tax revenue for parkway and parks development
- ◆ remediating soil contamination and poor soil compaction
- ◆ providing a broad variety of unit prices

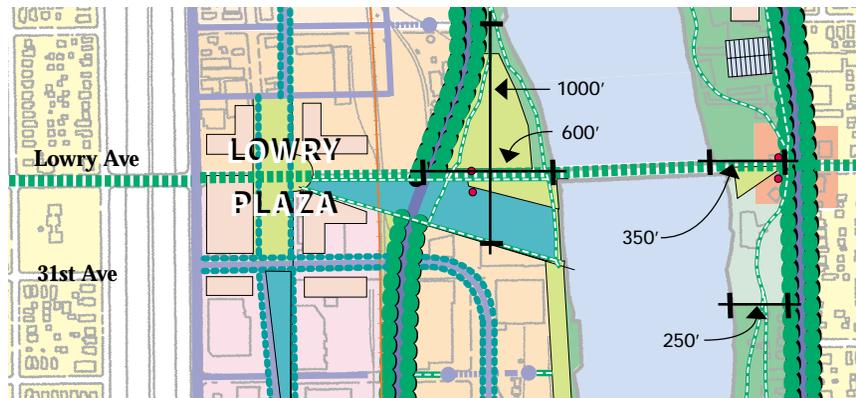




*River City*

### Lowry Plaza

Situated as a main thoroughfare across north and northeast Minneapolis, Lowry Ave. has always played an important role in the life of the community. Traffic converges on Lowry because it has a river crossing, making the western approach to the Lowry Bridge a premier address for professional and technical offices, and neighborhood retail businesses. The Lowry Plaza development realizes this inherent potential, with the combined bridge construction and area redevelopment project acting as a catalyst to private investment.



### New Lowry Avenue Bridge

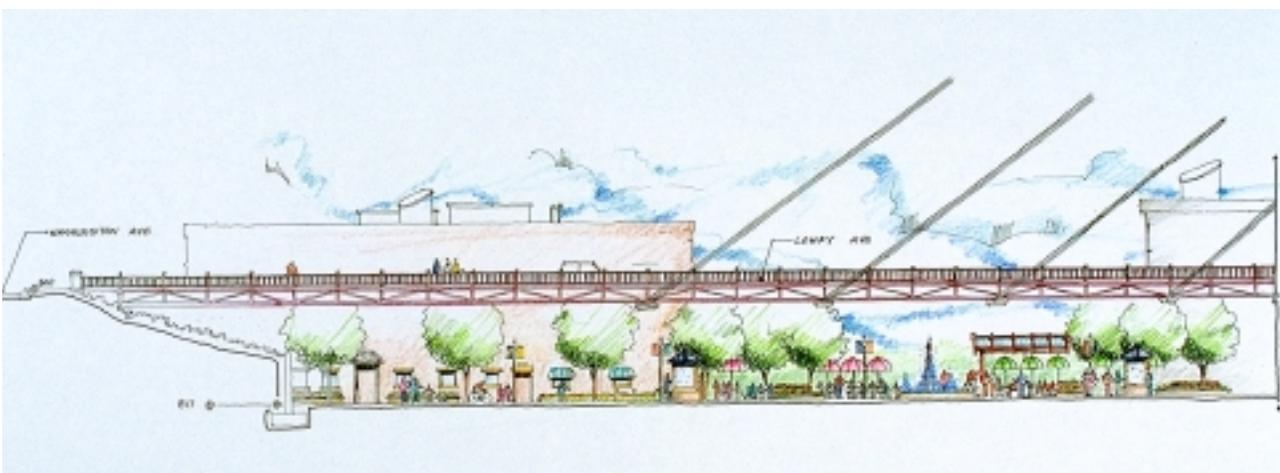
More than a plain, utilitarian river crossing, the new Lowry Bridge is both an example of twenty-first-century structural engineering and a work of sculpture at landscape scale. The cable-stayed design has an elegance and lightness unlike any other bridge in the city. The twin piers rise high above the river, supporting shining strings of cable reaching down to lift the roadway deck. The whole western approach is redesigned as part of the bridge project. The long, concrete cribwall that had raised the old approach over the railroad corridor is removed—the new bridge is suspended over the tracks, as well as West River Parkway, with the riverfront park corridor flowing unimpeded beneath the deck. Along the bridge deck, wide bicycle and pedestrian facilities include river observation areas, with a stairway and ramp down to plaza level on the west bank.

### 2nd Street North

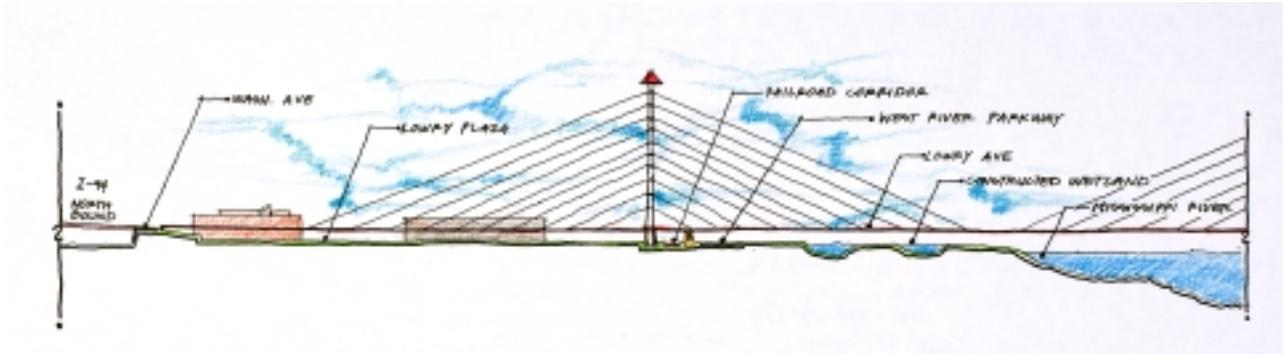
In a special piece of urban design, the new Lowry Bridge deck is suspended over 2nd St. N., finally touching down at Washington Ave. This extension of the bridge deck recognizes that 2nd St. lies a bit lower than the elevation at Washington, and that starting the bridge at Washington allows a more level approach to the crossing. Under the bridge deck 2nd is closed to vehicular traffic creating Lowry Plaza. Truck traffic is diverted off of 2nd onto Washington, one block south of Lowry at 31st Ave. This diversion limits the impact of traffic on the residential neighborhood north of Lowry, by removing the redundant truck route.

### Lowry Plaza

Closing 2nd St. to vehicular traffic under the new Lowry Bridge opens a 700-by-175-foot space, from 31st to a new local access street north of Lowry. This space forms Lowry Plaza, a wide pedestrian mall that is the front door address for small office and retail buildings. The plaza is especially popular during lunch time, with carry-out restaurants and street vendors serving many of the employees in the nearby light-industrial and business park. Plaza businesses also cater to daily needs of the residents of River Terrace and Mississippi Promenade neighborhoods, and add to shopping choices of communities on both sides of the river. Parking is provided behind structures fronting the plaza.



Lowry Plaza

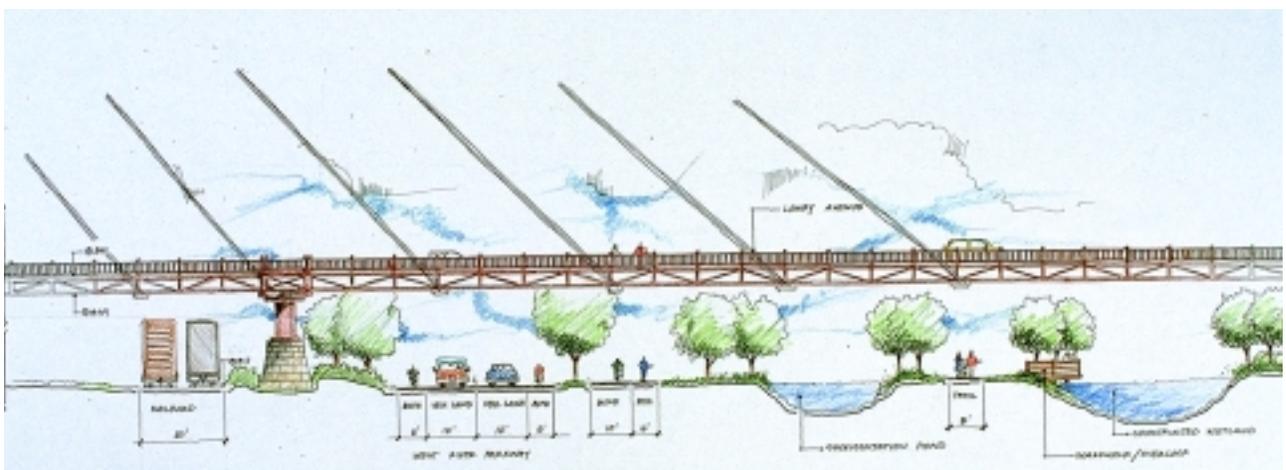


**Lowry Bridge**



**Lowry Bridge Park**

Flowing uninterrupted under the new Lowry Bridge, the two sections of Bridge Park, at 14 acres, form one of the larger parks on the Upper River. The southern section contains a two-cell stormwater pond system, the first cell being a retention and settling pond slowly draining into the secondary constructed wetland. North of the bridge, a destination park serves the needs of local and regional residents, with lawn areas for informal ball play, games, and Frisbee, as well as simple open space for picnics or sunning along the river. Trails connecting to the Promenade follow the restored and stabilized bank.



**West River Parkway at Lowry**

### Neighborhood Park

West of the railroad corridor, and just north of 34th Ave. N., a local park serves the residents of River Terrace Neighborhood. At the southern end of a water filtration park, this active two-acre park includes a tot lot and play field. Internally located and focused on meeting neighborhood resident needs, the park is frequented by youth living in the surrounding housing. Interpretive displays around the constructed wetlands of the adjacent water filtration park and the challenge of climbing the Grand Stairs provide plenty of additional daily interest.



### Restoration Park

Copses of burr and white oaks huddle among prairie grasses and flowers along the 1.5 miles of riverfront that is Restoration Park. Stretching north from Lowry Bridge Park, Restoration Park recreates the oak savanna landscape that the sandy soils of the Upper River support. North of Dowling, the parkway corridor widens from 300 to 600 feet, with the largest section joining North Mississippi Regional Park at the Soo Line Bridge.

A blaze of color throughout the summer, the savanna buzzes with insect and bird life feasting on the available nectar. Owls are frequently heard from perches in the oaks; a chorus of cicadas fill the day and crickets the night. Under winter snows, matted grasses form secret networks, where mice, rabbits, and muskrats nest. Human visitors slow down to the natural pulse, finding favorite places among the trees and prairie to watch the river pass.



### West River Parkway

Leaving the Promenade district, the parkway slips under the new Lowry Bridge and back toward the river. Curbside landscaping is thick with savanna species, blending the roadway with Restoration Park. Views of the river, wildlife, and wildflowers are presented along the drive. A new entrance welcomes visitors to North Mississippi Regional Park where the parkway intersects with Washington Ave. at 41st Ave. N. A popular athletic field, with running track and a surrounding fence, is located between the CP Rail mainline and the parkway.

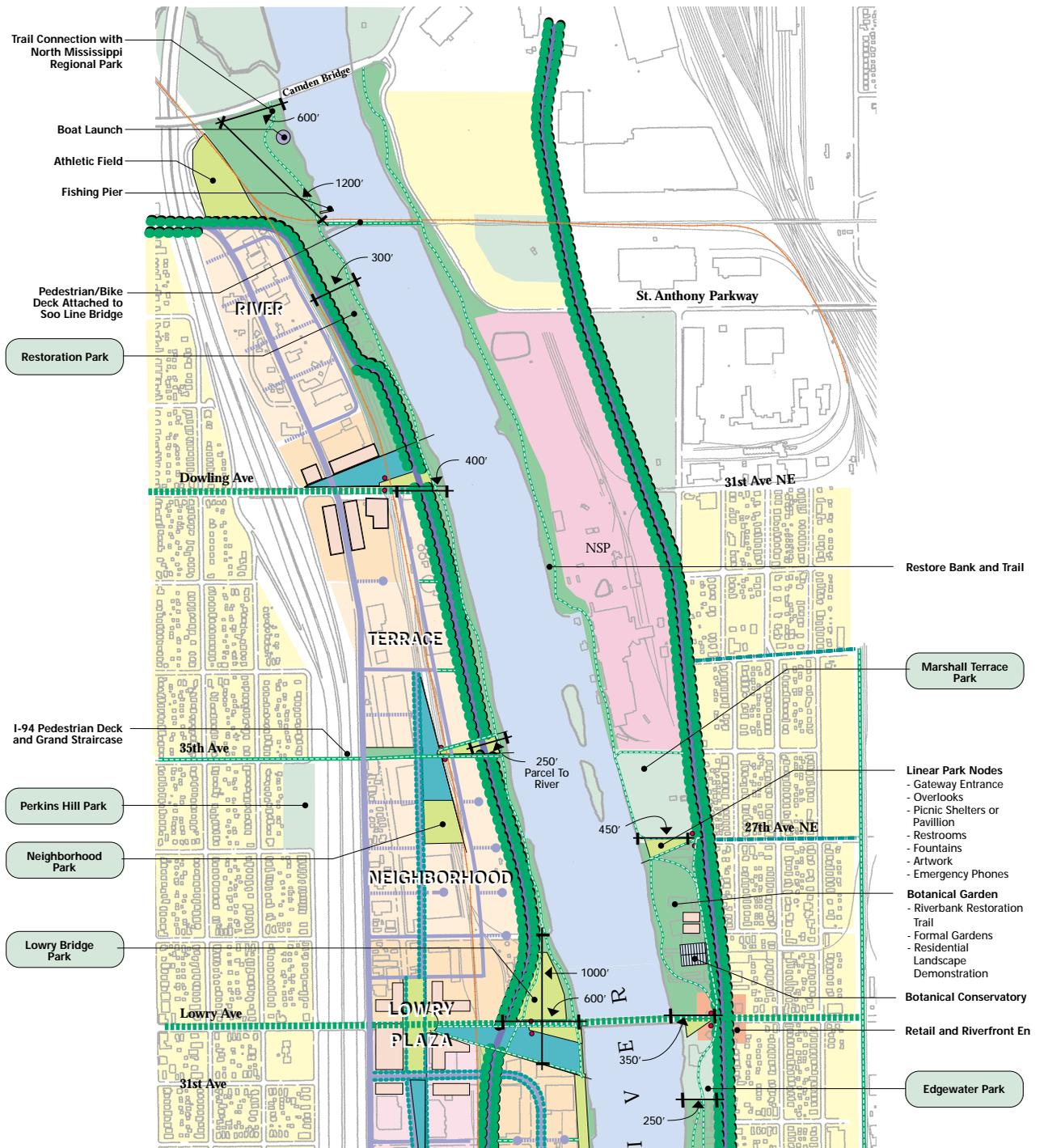


### Trails

Recreational and walking trails are the main park facilities in Restoration Park, connecting to similar trails in North Mississippi Regional Park and beyond. High-speed bicyclists and rollerbladers are accommodated on parkway lanes, with a recreation trail in the park varying its distance near to the road. Along the restored riverbank, walking trails weave through the prairie plantings, to oak openings, and river observation points on softer, porous surfaces. Careful attention to sight lines and placement of emergency phones and lighting allow strollers added security along paths.

A pedestrian and bicycle deck attached to the Soo Line Bridge makes for an exciting river crossing to the east bank and St. Anthony Parkway. An easement at the river's edge provides passage through the NSP Riverside plant, with high berms forming a green slope topped by the black of coal piles behind. Interpretive signage explains the process for generating electricity in front of the plant, before the trail climbs up to observation platforms at Marshall Terrace Park.





## River Terrace Pedestrian Deck and Grand Stair

The pedestrian deck from Perkins Hill Park to the riverfront is located in the middle of a three-quarter-mile, or six-block, gap between Lowry and Dowling avenues where no bridges span the interstate. Although primarily designed to provide access from north Minneapolis to riverfront parks, the pedestrian deck is much more than a simple catwalk over the expressway—it is a unique addition to the civic infrastructure of the area, and an original solution to a number of vexing constraints.

### Making the connection

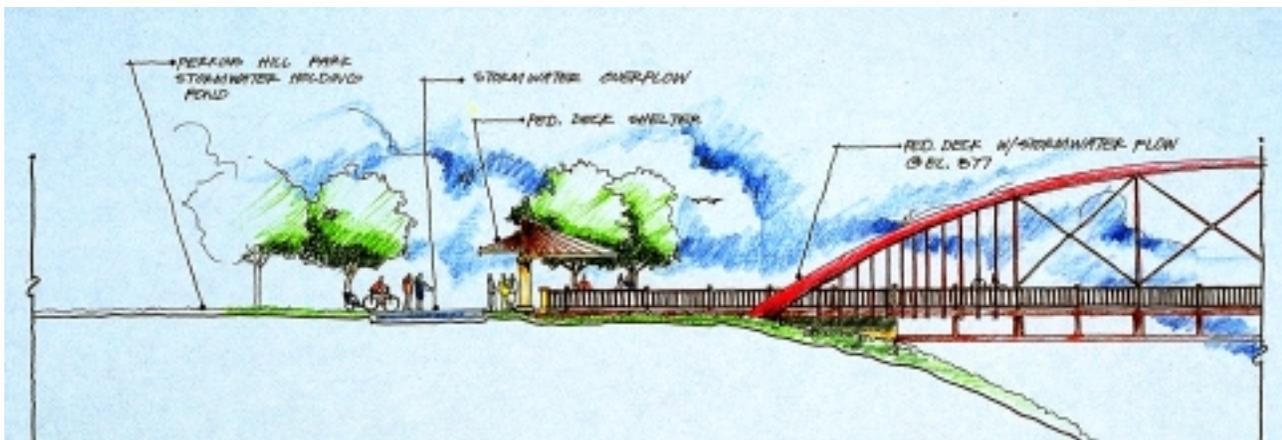
In addition to the multiple lanes of the interstate, the truck route on Washington Ave. and the railroad corridor also separate north Minneapolis from the riverfront. The pedestrian deck is constructed to carry pedestrians completely over all of these barriers, a feat aided by the underlying slope that descends in three terraces from Washington to 2nd St. and finally to the level of the railroad and river. The deck and associated stairways also connect the three levels of the River Terrace Neighborhood, allowing passage up and down the slope without having to walk to through streets at 33rd or 36th.

### Grand Stair

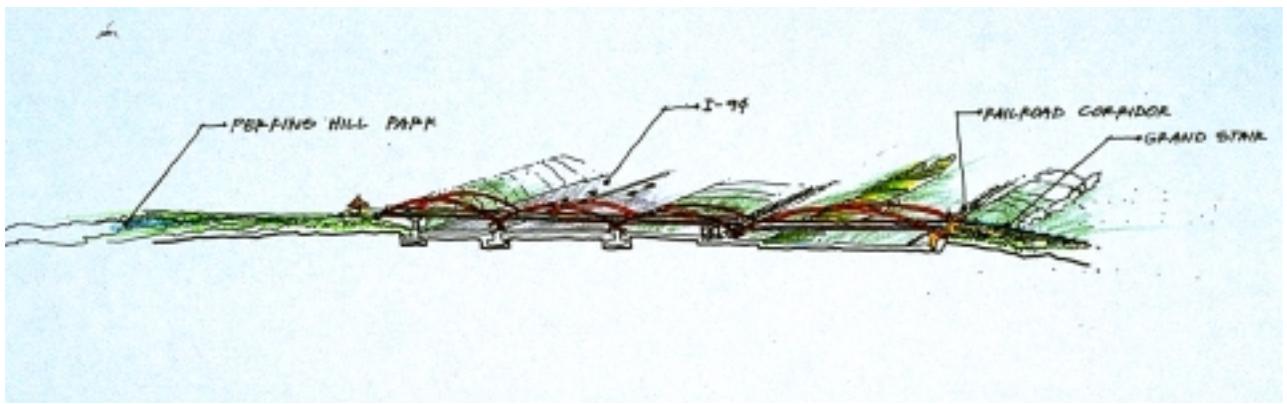
The culmination of the four-span deck is a Grand Stair at the end of the final span over the railroad corridor. This stair case, with adjoining ramps, accentuates the terraced descent to the river. An overlook at the top of the Grand Stair provides an excellent vantage point from which to view the river, with the stairs themselves a favored place to sit.

### Cascade

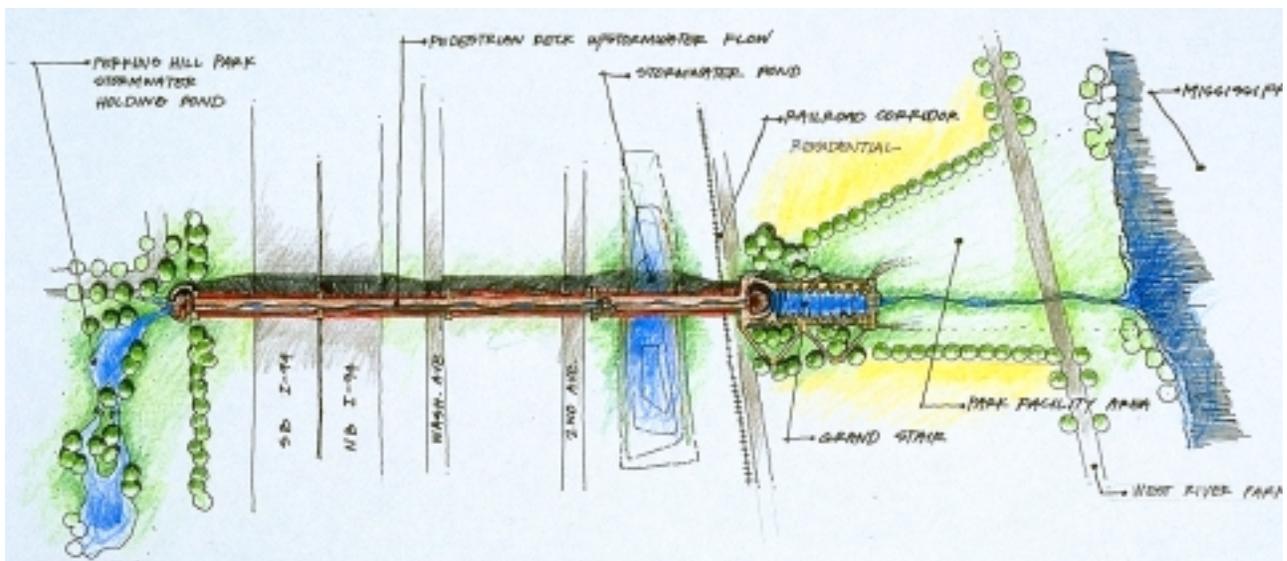
An added touch to the pedestrian deck and Grand Stair is the inclusion of a small channel for stormwater. A holding pond at Perkins Hill Park provides a constant supply of water gathered from local collectors, with gravity causing the flow over the interstate, as the channel descends from an elevation of 877 feet above sea level at Perkins Hill Park, to 869 on the span over 2nd St., and 853 at the top of the Grand Stair. The final cascade down the Grand Stair makes a dramatic statement about River Terrace as a place and the small streams that combine as one great river.



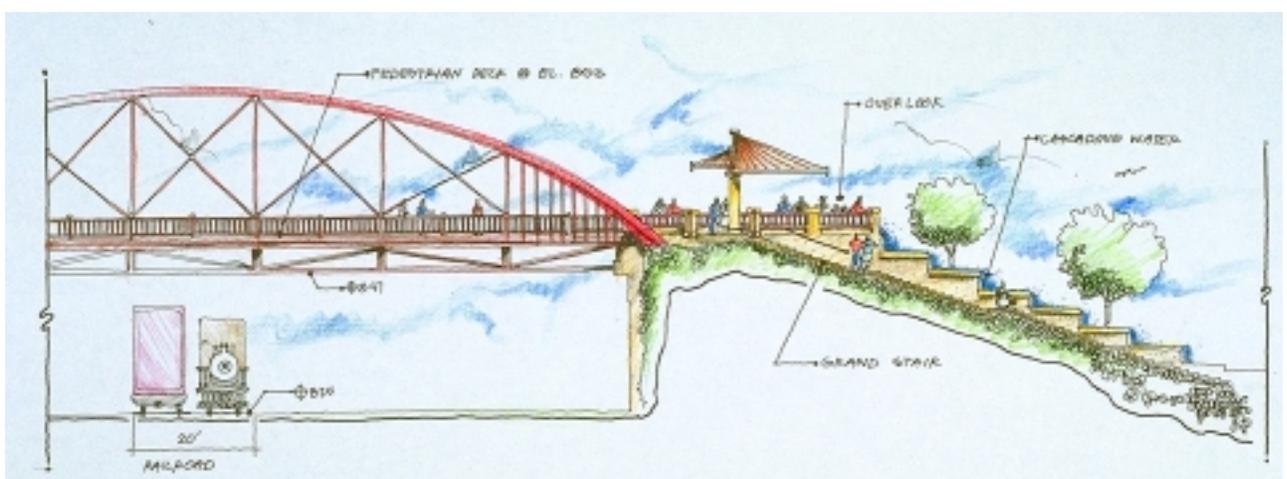
Perkins Hill Park



*Section Perspective*



*Plan*



*Grand Stair and Cascade*

### River Terrace Neighborhood

North of Lowry along the west bank of the Mississippi is River Terrace Neighborhood. Built along slopes formed long ago when the Mississippi filled a wider valley, River Terrace is home for over 2,000 residents, including 400 children. The river is ever present for those who live on these terraces: it's there out the living room or kitchen window, down the street stepping out the front door, from a rooftop garden, or the neighborhood park. Nearly every unit has some view, and many have an added prospect to downtown. Housing developments vary between 15 to 30 units per acre.

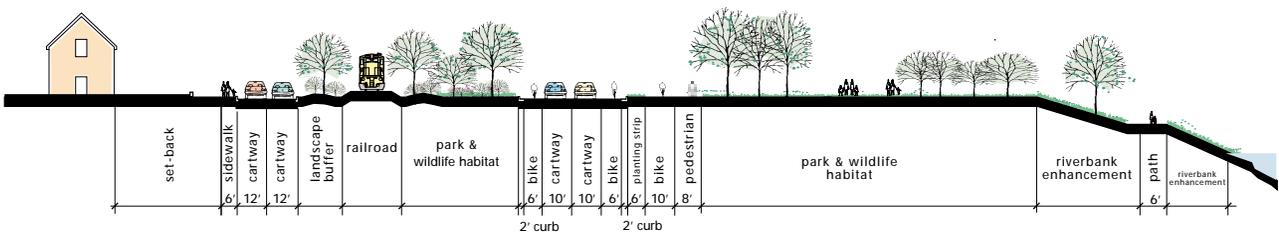
Brick and stucco walk-up apartment buildings line Washington Ave. south of 36th, turning their backs to the interstate and truck route and framing views to the river and downtown from the highest elevation of this three-level terrace on the eastern slopes of Perkins Hill. Below, along a redesigned 2nd St. and West River Parkway, stacked row houses and courtyard apartments line the middle and lower terrace levels. Around the neighborhood park a number of larger single-family houses have attracted families with children.

North of Dowling a more secluded and lower density area of the neighborhood lies between the tracks and Washington Ave. The riverfront park is a giant playground for resident youth, days spent in favorite haunts, fishing under the Soo Line Bridge and counting train cars. Couples enjoy walks along the river and through neighborhood streets.

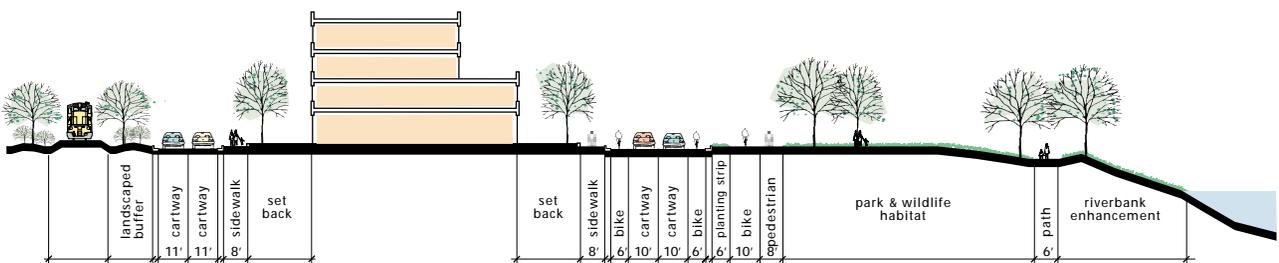
Perhaps the biggest advantage of River Terrace for busy families is the easy access to downtown (5 minutes by car, 10 minutes by transit) or northern suburbs, and neighborhood businesses at Dowling Place and Lowry Plaza. Many residents know north and northeast Minneapolis well, having moved up to River Terrace from starter homes in adjacent neighborhoods. The ability to find new housing next to a unique park amenity sealed the decision to stay put in the community, and forego long commutes on congested highways.

### Dowling Place

Dowling Ave. is the off-ramp exit from the interstate to River Terrace. This ease of access encourages higher intensity uses at the Dowling Place development, including an office complex, medical clinic, technical college, and senior high-rise apartments. Neighborhood residents and office workers provide the market for retail shops on the first floors of the larger buildings. Commuters also appreciate the coffee shop across from the Dowling transit station. A water filtration park retains run-off from the development, while also creating a setting for the office complex. South of Dowling, courtyard apartments present a crenelated façade to West River Parkway, with private open space contributing to the parkway aesthetic and opening a variety of views up and down river. North of Dowling, Restoration Park expands in width to the railroad corridor.



West River Parkway North of Dowling Ave.



West River Parkway South of Dowling Ave.



*River Terrace Neighborhood at Dowling Ave.*

### Linear Park Nodes

Areas of higher intensity park programming are found at strategic locations where the Riverway Street System leads park users to the riverfront. These are areas where the greatest number of visitors enter the riverfront parks, forming a series of linear park nodes containing common park facilities. One example is the node on the south side of Marshall Terrace Park. This location is at the riverfront terminus of 27th Ave. N.E., a local street which provides a direct route to the riverfront, all the way across northeast Minneapolis to the Village of St. Anthony.

Given the more intense use, park nodes have lawn areas maintained as open space for community gatherings. The regular spacing of nodes rewards trail users for continuing by offering a series of experiences, be it a special view of the river, an outdoor sculpture, or a picnic rest area. For those attending gatherings at specific nodes, the trail system offers a chance for short diversions exploring the riverbank.

### Gateway Entrance

A landscaped entrance signals that the riverfront is just ahead to those approaching from Riverway Streets. These entrances vary in design, with paths from sidewalks, low stone walls, landmark trees, park entrance signs, hedges, and tended flower beds as common techniques to mark the area and welcome visitors.

### Overlooks

Placed on high banks with steep slopes to water level, overlook facilities provide interesting and safe vantage points from which to observe the river and its banks. Some overlooks are placed in a direct line with local Riverway Streets and entrances, others can be found along trails, such as the two in Marshall Terrace Park with views of river islands. Facilities also vary from small clearings along the tops of banks to structures supported from below on steep banks.

### Picnic Shelters or Pavilions

A pavilion at the Marshall Terrace node provides shelter during rainfall and hosts many receptions following weddings in the nearby Botanical Gardens. The pavilion can be reserved for special events, while other park nodes contain smaller picnic areas with tables and shelters available on an unreserved basis.

### Restrooms

Public restrooms are available immediately adjacent to picnic areas and trails.

### Fountains

As part of an overall playfulness in regard to water, fountains add to the experience at nodes on the Upper River. Benches attract sitters near the sound and cool of the water.

### Artwork

Outdoor sculptures, earth works, and signature pieces on facilities enliven linear park nodes, adding to and recognizing local culture and the heritage of the Mississippi.

### Emergency Phones

With a direct connection to the 911 Emergency System, these phones provide added security at each node, and are easily accessed from trails.



## Marshall Terrace Botanical Gardens and Conservatory

Built from scratch on a site that had practically no vegetation, the Botanical Gardens on the Upper River bring a year-round stream of visitors to northeast Minneapolis. Local residents know the real pleasure is in repeated visits—the passage of seasons marked by the rush of daffodils, bloom of lilac then rose, late asters, and the deepening yellow and reds of maple and oak.

### The Conservatory

Sunny days in January find crowds of people enjoying the Conservatory at Marshall Terrace Botanical Gardens. Inside the glass enclosure the air is warm and humid; the green growing plants lifting spirits during the long winter, with abundant southern and western exposure maximizing infusion of light. When flowing again in spring, views of the river behind giant palms and vines heighten an illusion of tropic adventure for fanciful youth. Frequent class trips learn about the world's variety of plant life and ecological zones. Special flower shows find favor among senior horticulturalists during the day, while after hours the indoor formal garden is booked solid for sunset wedding events.

### Formal Gardens and Landscape Design Classes

Allowing a space for Park Board garden designers to display their talents, the Botanical Gardens outdoor formal beds are constantly changing. Shows are carefully planned and executed. Next to the formal gardens, a restored Victorian house relocated to the site serves as the master gardener's office, while a second hosts community meetings, gardening classes, and makes dressing rooms available for wedding parties. Recommended landscaping practices and other design ideas for residential lots are demonstrated around the two houses.

### Riverbank Restoration Trail

Leading down to the river, away from the bustle of the Conservatory and formal gardens, the Riverbank Restoration Trail displays and interprets bank restoration techniques applied to the Upper River area. Trees, shrubs, and other plants are labeled for easy identification. Interpretive displays explain how the bank was restored, techniques and plants used, and a timeline showing growth over the years.



### “Gemueticlichkeit” Park

The open space along northeast Minneapolis’s riverfront embraces the local culture with a series of hospitality destinations set in parks along the bank, which welcome residents and visitors alike. Combining Edgewater, Gluek, and Grain Belt in a continuous linear park, the riverfront is known informally as “Gemueticlichkeit” Park, recognizing the sites of the former Gluek and Grain Belt breweries, and recalling the tradition of beer gardens, sociability, and love of goods times that are the hallmarks of the old northeast.

#### Lowry and Marshall Riverfront Node

The River Garden Tavern on the northwest corner of Lowry and Marshall, with its neon sign on early-twentieth-century brick front is a classic neighborhood watering hole. The tavern is the anchor of the small riverfront hospitality node at the intersection. A new gas station, with two-level convenience store and retro-fashion diner is at the northeast corner of Edgewater Park. An outdoor patio seating area is popular with trail riders stopping at the seasonal ice cream shop. Visitors to the nearby Botanical Gardens also frequent the area, strolling through older buildings on Marshall converted to antique shops and art galleries selling local works.



#### Edgewater to Gluek

With the two best Victorian houses formerly on the site moved to the Botanical Gardens, Edgewater and Gluek are linked together as a single long park: *the* riverfront gathering grounds for residents of northeast Minneapolis. The top of the bank is a mosaic of naturalized and maintained areas, with more active uses such as picnicking programmed at the linear park node leading from the gateway at 22nd Ave. Trails pass behind the revamped Polish Palace tavern, with parking removed to a side lot and bays along Marshall. Overlooks along the bluff-top greenway offer views of the river, the Lowry Bridge, and the restored bank and Mississippi Promenade on the other side.



#### Gluek to the BN Bridge

Thick plantings along and atop the steep banks at Gluek Park allow quiet space for humans and wildlife alike. In the middle of the expanded park, Gabby’s Saloon and Eatery brings hundreds of people to the riverbank each week. The enlarged patio fills at sunset, and nearby steps lead patrons down to the banks of the Mississippi. Frequently boaters dock and climb the stairs to dine. South of Gabby’s the river can be experienced on either the formal trails at the upper level or along the sand bank at water’s edge.



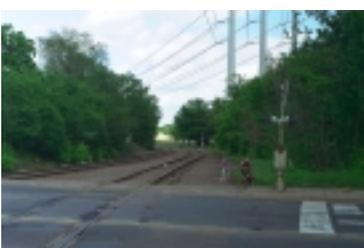
#### BN Bridge

Realizing one of the great opportunities on the Upper River, the former Burlington Northern Bridge is a wide boardwalk connecting the east and west banks. The trestles of the old railroad bridge form an appropriate transition from the modern River City to the historic Grain Belt. Long views up and down river are available for those who linger. The boardwalk invites a stroll to the other side just for the fun of crossing. Recreational trail users appreciate the vehicle-free span, with flags flying atop a festive observation tower marking the junction on the east side. With the Broadway Bridge only a third of a mile away, the pair of bridges form a quick loop uniting the two banks, focusing attention on the river and activities on each side.



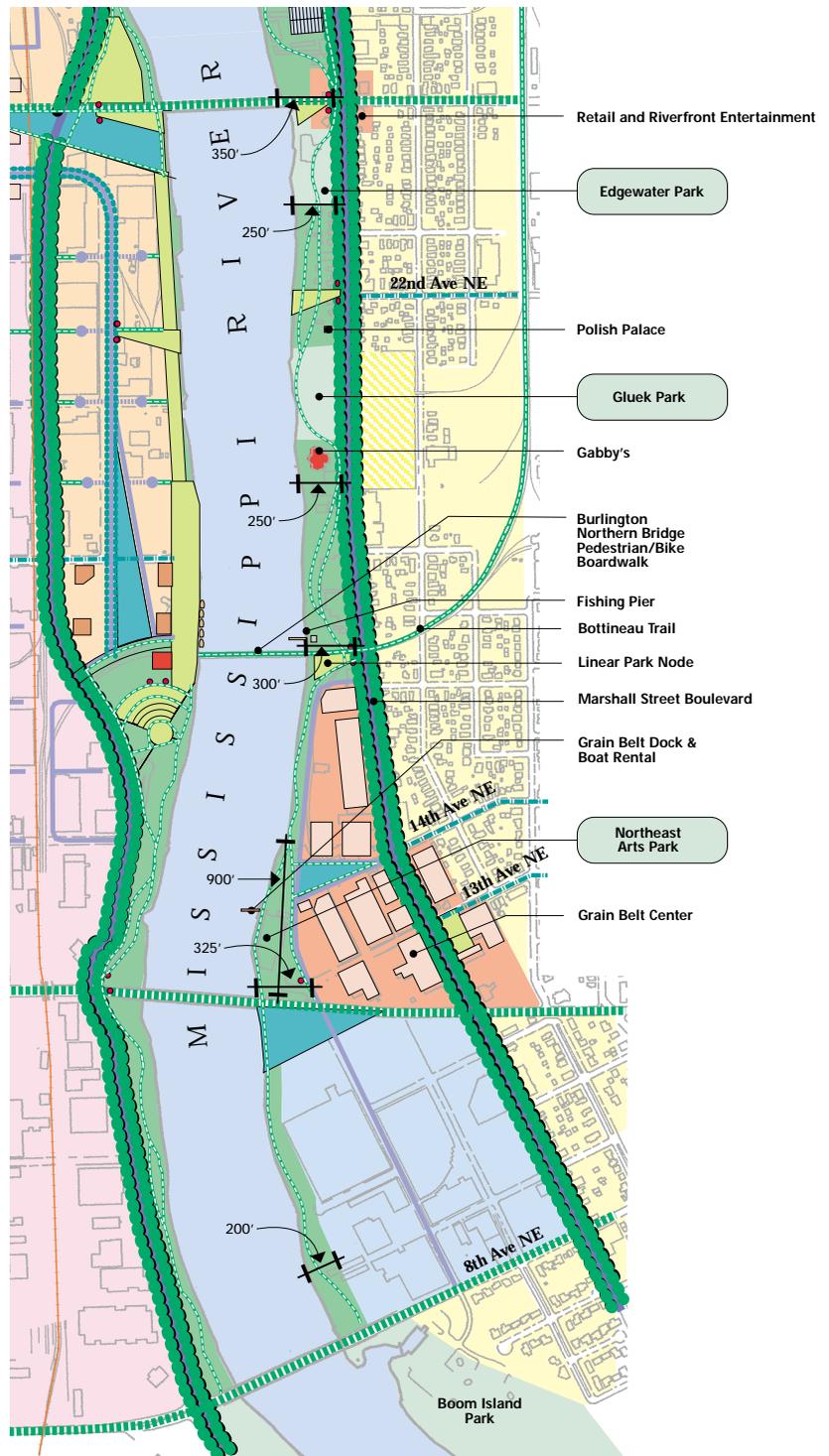
#### Bottineau Trail

Forming a nexus of trails in all four directions, a paved path proceeds east from the BN Bridge into the old BNSF railroad corridor. An actualized signal allows trail users to stop traffic on Marshall St. so that safe crossings are possible. The trail swings northeast, then north, joining the riverfront to Bottineau Park. Continuing north in the corridor, Bottineau Trail serves local access needs, intersecting with Riverway Streets.



**Northeast Arts Park**

A flamed orange-red in fall, sumac fills the river edge trail from the BN Bridge to the Arts Park behind the Grain Belt Center. Outdoor sculptures, created by artists in residence at the Grain Belt and elsewhere in northeast Minneapolis, range in tone from serious to whimsical. Placed along the riverbank, trails, and water quality ponds, the sculptures claim part of the open space for arts sake. Other park features too are festooned: benches, drinking fountains, trail markers and railings, nothing is safe from the Northeast artist's touch!



**Grain Belt Boating Facilities**

With dozens of riverfront destinations on the Upper River, boating is a popular way to tour the area, taking in parks, restored banks, restaurants, and riverfront entertainment. The boat rental concession facility at Grain Belt Center rents canoes, kayaks, and paddle boats, also providing the necessary life vests and expert information on river currents, channels, sand bars, and drop-offs. Recognizing that the Mississippi River is the only water body in the City of Lakes open to motorized recreational boating, the facility also rents shallow-draft fishing boats, pontoons, and personal watercraft. Renting a boat is a popular diversion for those attending events at the Grain Belt Center, with radio-dispatched assistance available if needed. Boat slips too can be rented at the facility, with area corporations and residents finding easy access to the water a useful amenity.

### Marshall Boulevard

Paralleling the river from Grain Belt to NSP, Marshall Boulevard serves a variety of purposes in the local and regional community: Marshall Boulevard is a thoroughfare connecting downtown and northeast Minneapolis to Anoka County; it is a residential street and a place of business; it is a commercial truck route; a park border; and commuter bicycle facility. The redesign, accomplished in conjunction with development of riverfront parks, balances an increase in the width of right of way with competing desires and needs.

#### Traffic

Although its position along a major park facility leads to consideration of Marshall as a parkway, traffic levels and the inability to force commercial trucks onto other routes necessitates that Marshall remain a four-lane roadway. The multiple lanes are especially important to avoiding backups at the heaviest traffic intersections at Lowry and Broadway. Keeping traffic moving also allows platooning of cars, providing breaks in traffic for crossing and relief along the road, rather than steady congestion. New park facilities and a general improvement in the environment along Marshall also brings increased use for pleasure drives, especially on weekends.

#### East Boulevard

One of the most important improvements to Marshall is the installation of a boulevard, or planting strip, on the east side of the roadway. This five-foot-wide planting area lies between the sidewalk (moved four feet to the eastern boundary of public right of way) and the curb. This space allows the introduction of street trees, grass, and flowers, greening and softening the streetscape and providing a buffer between traffic and houses.

#### Bicycle Lanes

North and south bound bicycle lanes are a second improvement, widening the right of way by five feet each. Known as “Class A” bike lanes, this on-street facility is utilized by high-speed bicyclists—commuters and recreationalists—whose presence on park trails is disruptive. The addition of these lanes not only encourages a non-polluting mode of transport, but also provides a safe space on the high-traffic street and widens the buffer between traffic and houses.

#### Right of way and constraints

A number of constraints limit the roadway in regard to the width of right of way. First are the cultural landmarks and hospitality destinations retained on the west side of Marshall: the River Garden and Polish Palace. Because these brick buildings were constructed when the road had fewer lanes, the resulting increases moved the road closer to their front doors. In order to retain these structures, the roadway jogs a few feet to the east at the Lowry intersection and south of 22nd Ave. This new alignment is accomplished in conjunction with improvements to the Lowry intersection and a housing redevelopment project across from the Polish Palace and Gluek Park.

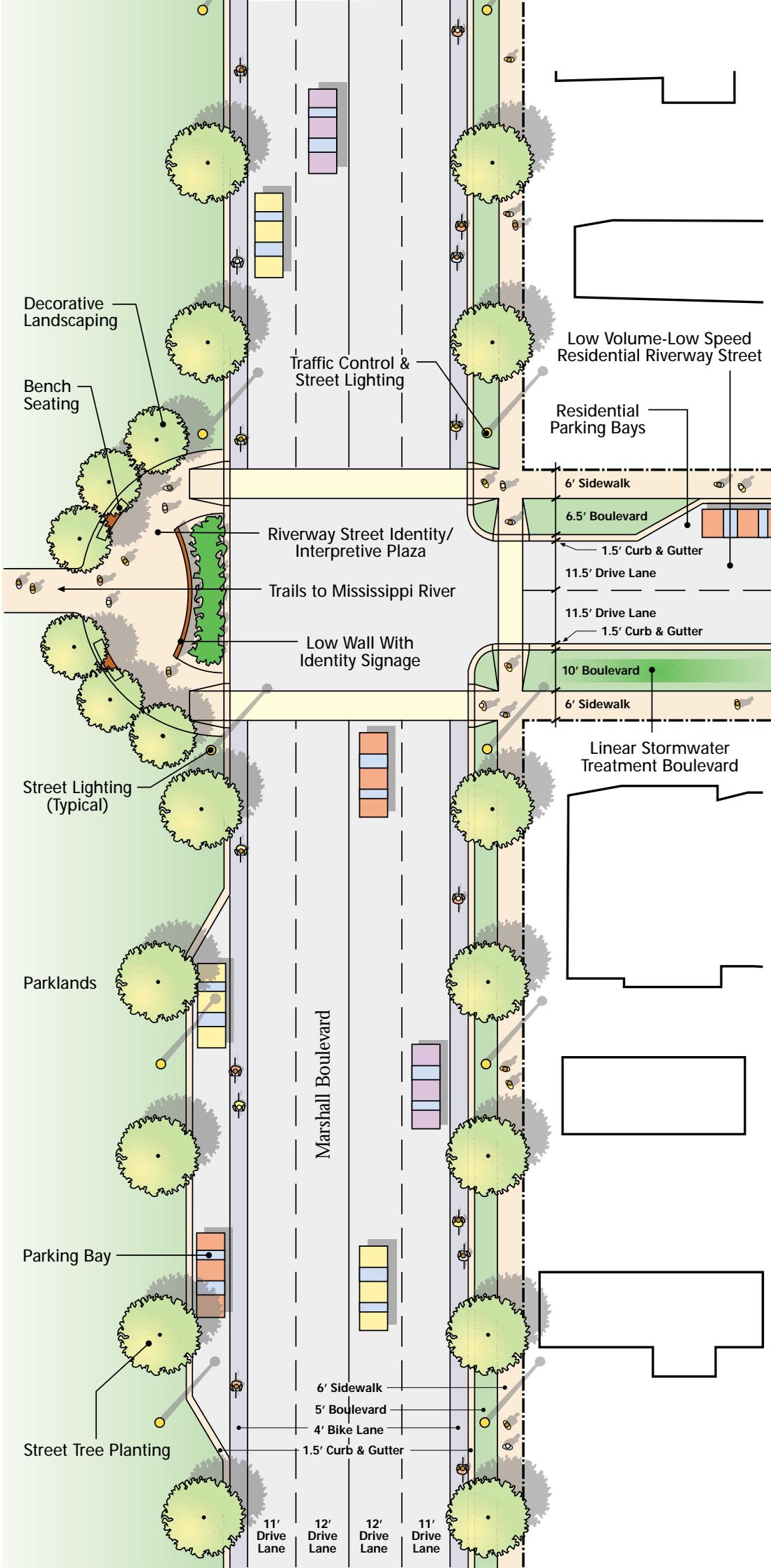
The new Marshall Boulevard is as narrow as possible to avoid significant encroachment into the riverfront parks, while still providing necessary bicycle lanes and a planting strip to buffer housing on the east side. Parking bays are also provided along portions of the west side of the street for use by park visitors, precluding construction of surface lots in the parks themselves, while allowing the green of the park to reach out to the street with trees and other plantings.

#### Other improvements

The balance struck between roadway, parks, and private lots on Marshall Boulevard creates a whole new aesthetic on the street. Additional measures, such as the removal of all power and communications lines and poles from the streetscape—buried during reconstruction—is a vast improvement over previous conditions. New decorative street lamps, transit shelters, and Riverway Street signage adds much of the charm of a true parkway between the hundreds of maturing street trees.



# Marshall Boulevard and Riverway Street



### Grain Belt Center

Called “the most significant landmark in Northeast Minneapolis” in a *Star Tribune* article a few years after brewing operations ceased, the historic Grain Belt Brewery complex is the cultural focal point of the Upper River. The brewhouse, with its varied five-to-six-story façade, embodies the eclectic spirit of the area, its renovation a testimony to perseverance. Artists were the first to take advantage of the old brick and limestone buildings, filling warehouses renovated by the MCDA. Park development projects behind the complex and across the river encouraged private investors to tackle the final step: the brewhouse itself.

### Conference Center

Perceiving a market niche for a unique conference destination along the Mississippi in Minneapolis, developers of the Grain Belt Conference Center realized that difficulties inherent to any reuse of the multi-level brewhouse could be turned to an advantage. The street level serves as a lobby with reception area for directing conference attendees to meeting rooms on other levels. The remains of original staircases, railings, doors, and brewery artifacts continue the enchantment begun by the exterior architecture.

But the renovation is not all about the past. Contained within the nineteenth-century walls is twenty-first-century infrastructure: high-speed communications technology for Internet conference calls, portals for individual modem interface, satellite feeds and up-links. The state-of-the-art conference facilities bring gatherings of national and international organizations, as well as local businesses holding networked meetings and training sessions

On-site entertainment facilities enliven the atmosphere after sundown: banquet halls serviced by an in-house catering kitchen, digital cinema and video arcade, a rooftop patio with river and downtown views, and, of course, a reopened beer garden outside the shining kettles of its own microbrewery. Many facilities are open to the general public, and rooms are available for wedding receptions and community events.

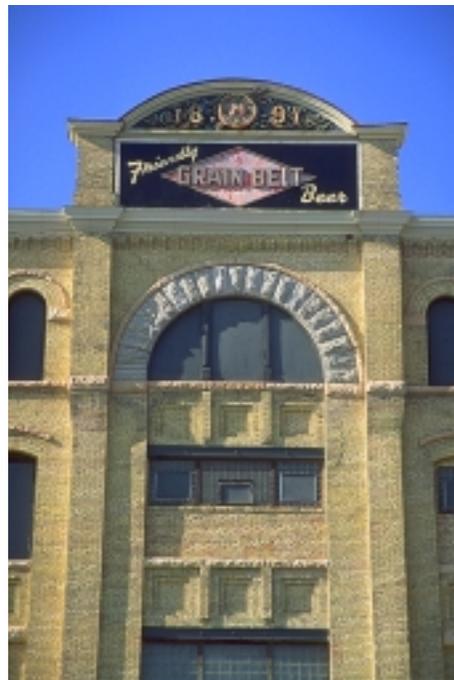
A national chain rents business suites behind the brewhouse, with additional rooms available a short distance away at River City. Parking for hotel guests and conference participants is found to the south of Broadway, in a ramp shared with Graco headquarters, constructed as part of the public-private partnership to revitalize the Grain Belt.

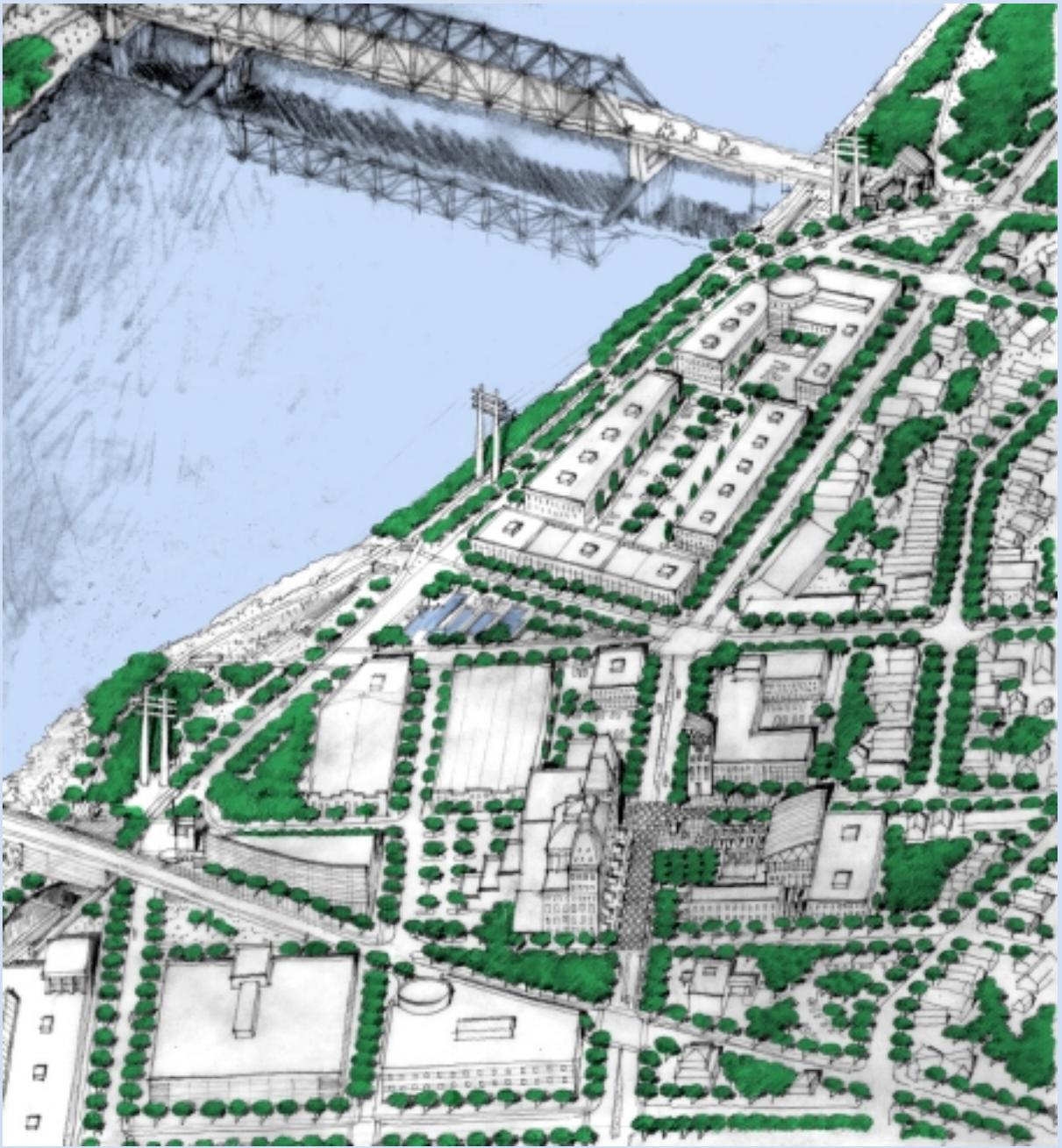
### North of Grain Belt

A small development including residential units, studios, and offices lies just north of Grain Belt Center, between Marshall and the river. This development supports the conference, entertainment, and arts uses at Grain Belt by increasing the urban vitality of the surroundings.

### Brewery Square

Opening a space across Marshall opposite the brewhouse, Brewery Square is a European-style plaza setting the building into the context it always deserved. Stepping back onto the checkerboard plaza, it is possible to find the needed perspective to view the huge façade. Carrying on this Old World theme, new brick row houses front on the Square, with small shops, including a traditional bakery and deli, below some of the living units.





*Grain Belt Center*

## Parks and Urban Design Conclusions

The Upper River in Minneapolis is a unique stretch of the Mississippi. The Upper River Parks and Urban Design Plan recognizes the opportunities inherent in the topography of the land, its location in the city, and the local cultures of adjacent communities. Where the land provides a low and flat bank, with existing environmental constraints, an urban riverfront promenade and mixed-use district is proposed. The natural terrace on the eastern slopes of Perkins Hill has the potential for community design that makes the most of the sloping terrain, so unusual in a generally flat region, and maximizes views to the river and downtown skyline. The Plan designates routes as Riverway Streets, to be enhanced to lead residents of north and northeast Minneapolis, and the region, to riverfront parks and carry the value of waterfront amenities to nearby properties. The concept of “taverns on the green” along the east bank, celebrates a culture of neighborhood meeting places in northeast Minneapolis and retains destinations that bring people to riverfront parks. The Plan identifies the *genius loci*, or spirit and flavor, of the Upper River, offering a variety of experiences to residents and visitors.

The Upper River Parks Plan continues the Minneapolis tradition of connecting larger parks to each other via parkway segments; the system is completely integrated so that all the open spaces, including Water Filtration Parks, are connected to the whole. Within the parks, and along West River Parkway, the Plan suggests a variety of programming, including areas for passive recreation, riverbank stabilization, landscape restoration, and new wildlife habitat. Each bank also has a major park attraction, with Skyline Amphitheater to the south and Botanical Gardens to the north. The trail system offers opportunities for loop trips up one side of the river and down the other, with the special feature of a pedestrian and bicycle facility on a retrofitted BN Bridge.

While carrying on the Minneapolis parks development legacy and utilizing traditional models, the Plan also calls for innovations in the way Minneapolis approaches space along this waterfront. The Mississippi Promenade is a unique opportunity to create a public right of way at the very edge of the water, with places of residence and hospitality having direct access to the riverfront without an intervening roadway. The impact of traffic on Minneapolis parkways is growing; the Plan proposes to separate vehicles from a section of the riverfront and give it over completely to pedestrians. Private venues opening onto the public Promenade keep the waterfront safe and lively throughout the day and evening hours. The Plan urges that the riverfront not be a monolith representing a single model for interaction between the city and river, but rather a tapestry that weaves in the best of the old and makes the most of the land for new development. Minnesota is blessed with an abundance of rivers and lakes for outdoor experiences; the Upper River can not and should not try to compete as a pristine riverfront—what the Upper River in the City of Minneapolis can offer is an experience where the best qualities of river, park, and city are combined.

The urban design contained in the Plan and the six specific guidelines focus on the large-scale interaction of planned land uses and the river. View corridors to the river and downtown are shown as no-build zones, which play a double role as necessary water filtration areas. Density recommendations follow from the potential amenities at various sites. At the River City development, 10-to-20 story high-rises will build three-dimensional space to multiply the best viewshed available on the Upper River. At Dowling Place the intensity of use proposed is in direct response to the excellent regional access from the interstate. Sketches of new development in the Plan suggest how development *might* occur in accord with the Land Use Plan, displaying a belief in the area’s potential, and challenging the private market to respond. With the build-out of the Plan sure to take many years, more detailed guidelines regarding architecture and site planning are not provided, however the Plan does promote the value of the land in the Upper River corridor in a way that has never been presented before: future public and private development partners need to ensure that the substantial public investments required to implement the Plan are matched by the finest quality twenty-first-century engineering, architecture, and landscape design.

The Upper River Master Plan creates *continuous* access and views along trails paralleling both banks of the river: every possible view of the river will be available to visitors along these trails. In addition, regular access will be created, where none now exists, through development areas from streets meeting the river at a perpendicular, with overlooks and special features marking access points. It should be noted that carefully designed high-density or high-rise dwellings do not block visual or physical access to the water any more than private lots with single-story structures lining a parkway—access is always possible along the riverfront and at the public right of way that forms development blocks. The Upper River Master Plan meets its primary objectives of total access along a riverfront park corridor, and related objectives of developing new tax base, increasing the value of existing neighborhoods, and providing a rich variety of riverfront destinations.

## Recommendations Summary

- Create a continuous and integrated riverfront parks and open space system along the Upper River.
- Construct recreational trails along both banks of the river.
- Provide space in parks for riverbank, landscape, and habitat restoration.
- Develop waterfront features in new parks, and nodes of interest at regular intervals along trails.
- Preserve hospitality uses within parks corridor.
- Establish a Riverway Street System, with common streetscape elements and signage that identify streets leading to and paralleling the riverfront.
- Ensure consistent river access with public right of way developed on the regular street grid.
- Designate no-build zones to hold view corridors to the river and downtown skyline.
- Design and construct an urban riverfront promenade between the BN Bridge and Lowry Ave.
- Extend West River Parkway to North Mississippi Regional Park.
- Align West River Parkway as a vegetated buffer between light-industrial and residential uses between the BN Bridge and Lowry Ave.
- Convert the BN Bridge to a pedestrian and bicycle facility linking both banks.
- Reconstruct Marshall Street as a boulevard, with new landscaping and bicycle lanes.
- Maximize the potential of river and downtown skyline views on the west bank at the BN Bridge by allowing high floor-to-area ratios.