

# Sign Types

## CONTENTS

Existing Sign Systems

Unique District Sign Design

Vehicle Wayfinding Signs

Pedestrian/Cyclist Wayfinding Signs

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Signs

Other Riverfront Sign Types

Options for District Parking Signs

District Marquee Signs

Graphic Elements

Prototype

Information Hierarchy

## SIGN TYPES

### EXISTING SIGN SYSTEMS

#### SIGN TYPES

All wayfinding signage outside the District will direct visitors to the Minneapolis Riverfront District and will use existing sign systems. This approach will simplify wayfinding and also identify and establish the area as a premier destination to the public. These signs will be used at important decision points in the vicinity of the downtown area.

Within the District, uniquely designed signs will direct visitors to primary destinations and parking facilities. Public parking lots and ramps are the end of the vehicle path and the beginning of the pedestrian experience. Pedestrian signs will provide additional information and detail that traffic signs cannot provide. Pedestrian wayfinding signs and kiosks will be used as important education centers for visitors. Uniquely designed signs within the District will help to define the area and establish its identity, add to its historic flavor, improve the quality of the area's design vocabulary, and increase its visitor appeal.



#### MnDOT Exit Signs

On the interstate highways, Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) signs will be located prior to exit ramps that lead to the Minneapolis Riverfront District. These signs will use the standard brown background to indicate the Riverfront's historic designation.



#### City MUTCD Signs

MUTCD signs will be used at other key decision points outside of the designated District to provide direction to the Minneapolis Riverfront District. Examples of these locations would be at the end of freeway exit ramps or nodes outside the District that require a driver to make a turn. The primary purpose of these signs is to point to the District, although a few will also point to key destinations in close proximity.



#### Downtown Wayfinding Signs

Within downtown Minneapolis, a unique wayfinding system has been established to point the way to many of the large public destinations. These small blade signs will be used in the downtown area at intersections where a driver must make a turn.

## SIGN TYPES

### UNIQUE DISTRICT SIGNS



Within the Minneapolis Riverfront District, a unique design was created to assist traffic and pedestrian wayfinding and to work as a “framework” for the other graphic identities that are part of the area. A unique design will stand out from typical streetscape signage, help define the boundaries of the area, and reflect the historic designation of the District.

The design of the sign system took its form from the distinguishing elements of the District and the characteristics that held special value.

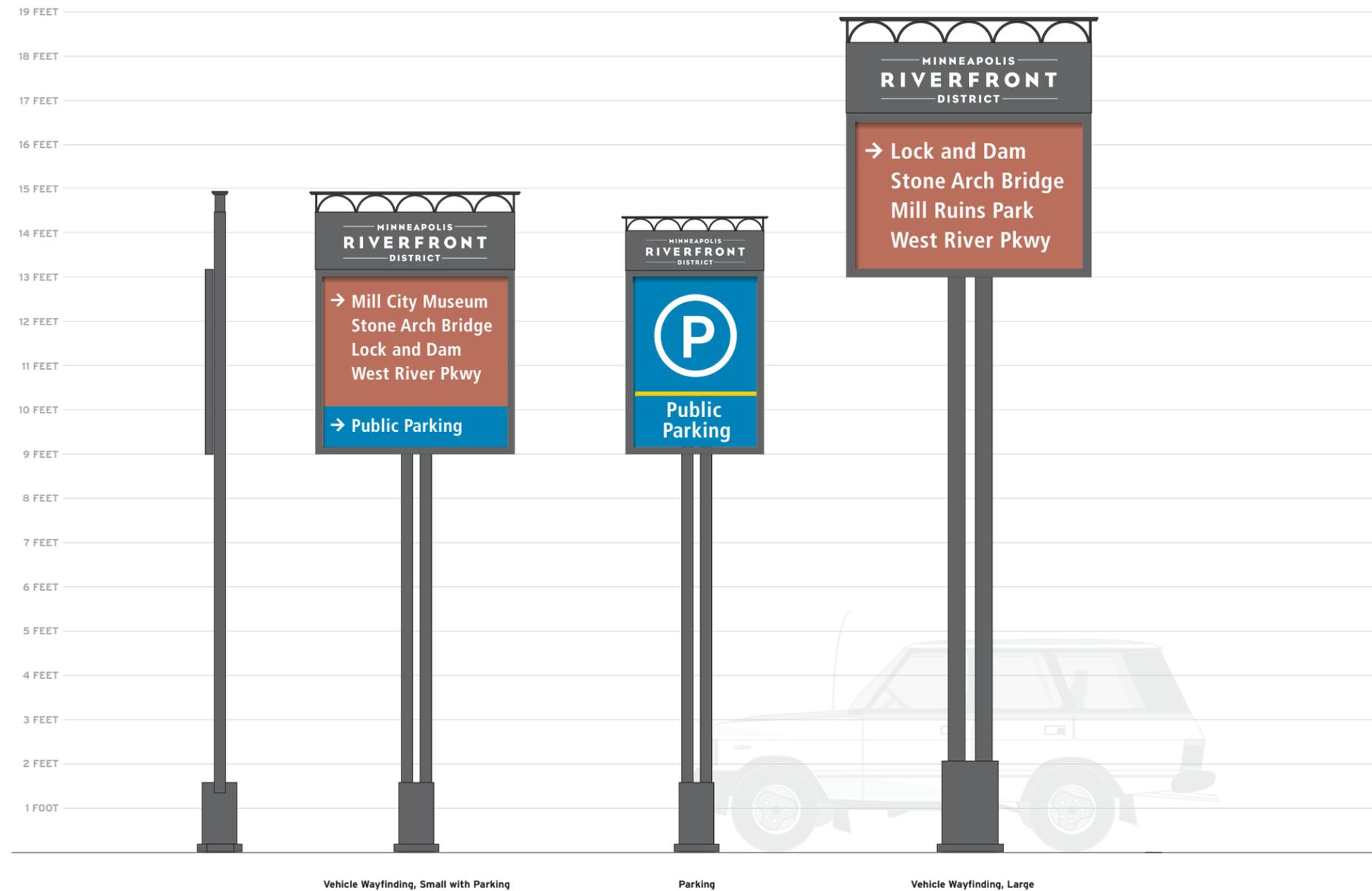
#### **Distinguishing elements**

- The River and St. Anthony Falls
- History — the industrial roots of the city
- Unique cultural, architectural and commercial assets
- Parks, parkways, trails and greenspace
- Outdoor recreation, activities and events
- Residential development and neighborhoods

#### **Riverfront brand attributes**

- Historic “industrial”
- Authentic (not artificial)
- Diverse and dynamic
- Natural and beautiful
- Family-friendly

## MINNEAPOLIS RIVERFRONT DISTRICT SIGN TYPES VEHICLE WAYFINDING SIGNS



Within the Minneapolis Riverfront District, a series of uniquely designed signs will help establish the boundaries of the District and add to its character and quality.

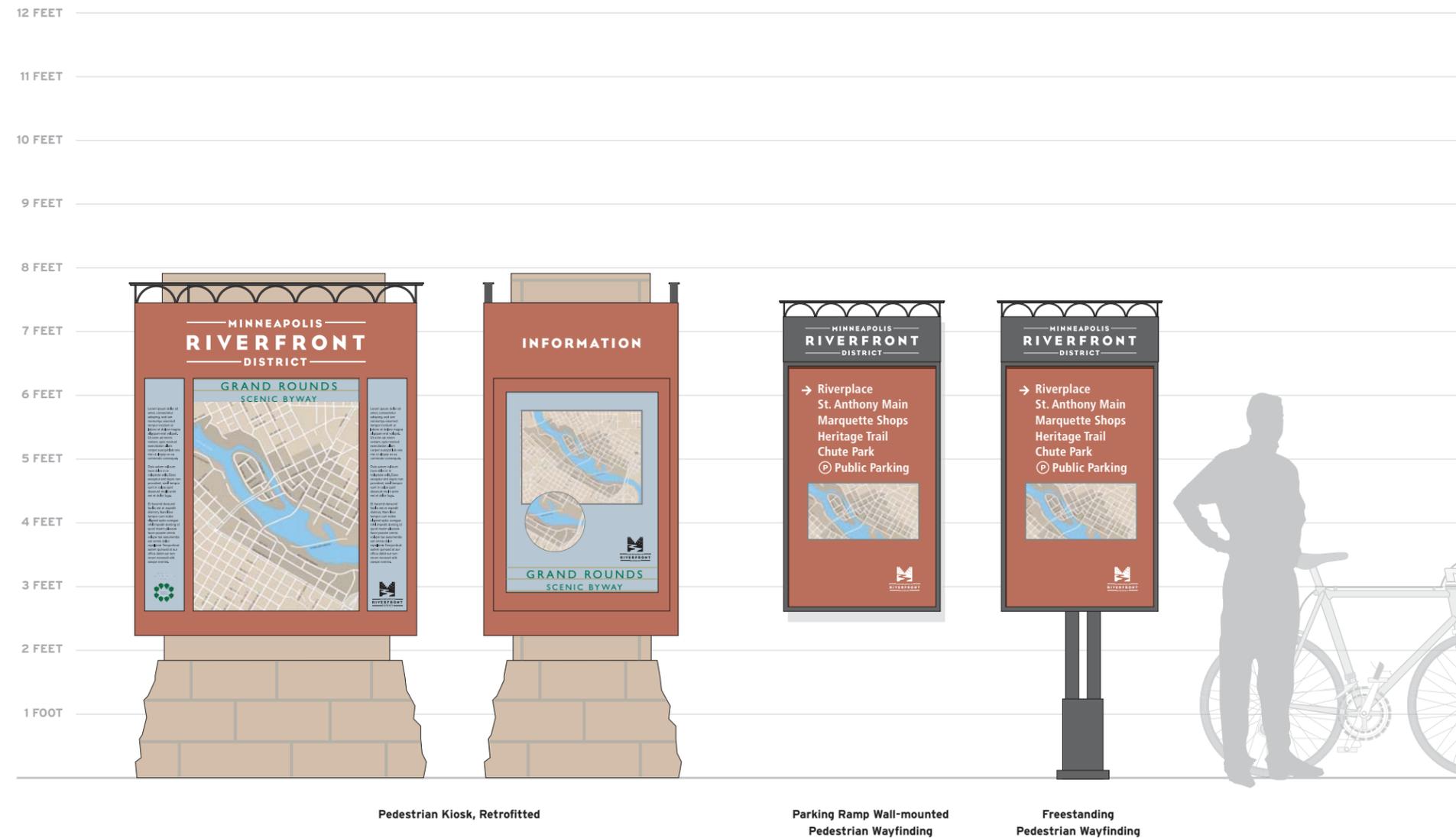
Larger directional signs will be used at multiple-lane intersections and where critical navigation decisions must be made, especially along the edge of the District. Their size and height will be easy to see from a distance and are positioned above the clutter of the urban environment. Information will be simple and straightforward. Smaller directional signs will be used at lesser intersections within the District. These signs are scaled for slower traffic and are intended to direct vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists around the Riverfront.

Parking lots and ramps are the end of the vehicle pathway. Guiding visitors to parking has been identified as an important issue to enhance the access to and enjoyment of the District. Public lots and ramps would be identified with unique District signage to connect with the rest of the sign system and the District experience.

The “framework” style of the sign design allows for other graphic identities to exist harmoniously with the Riverfront. By applying this framework to as many signs as possible, a strong sense of place will be established and visitors will know when they are in the District.

During the implementation phase of this project, the height and clearance of each sign will be finalized, dependent on its exact location, distance from the curb, and other factors as based on requirements and/or recommendations from Public Works, Zoning, and HPC. A variance to the code may need to be established with the city in regard to these signs.

## MINNEAPOLIS RIVERFRONT DISTRICT SIGN TYPES PEDESTRIAN / CYCLIST WAYFINDING SIGNS

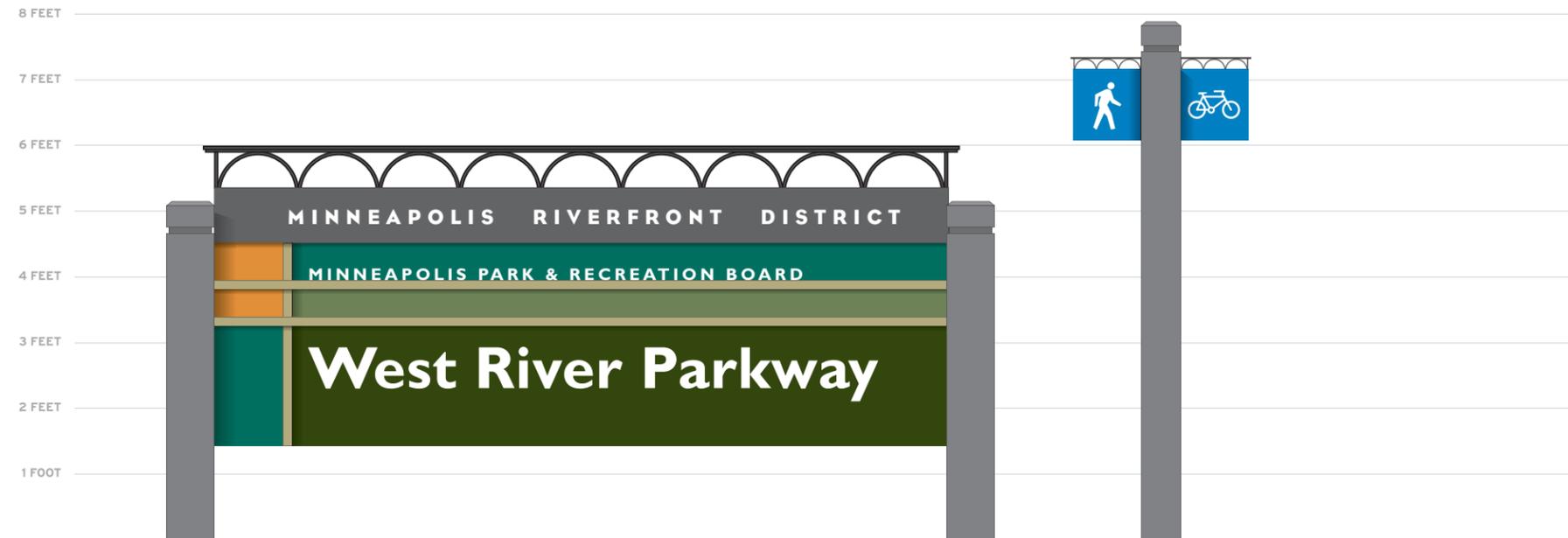


Pedestrian wayfinding signs and kiosks will be used to provide visitors with more detailed information about the District. Their primary goals will be to educate visitors about what the District has to offer and guide them from place to place.

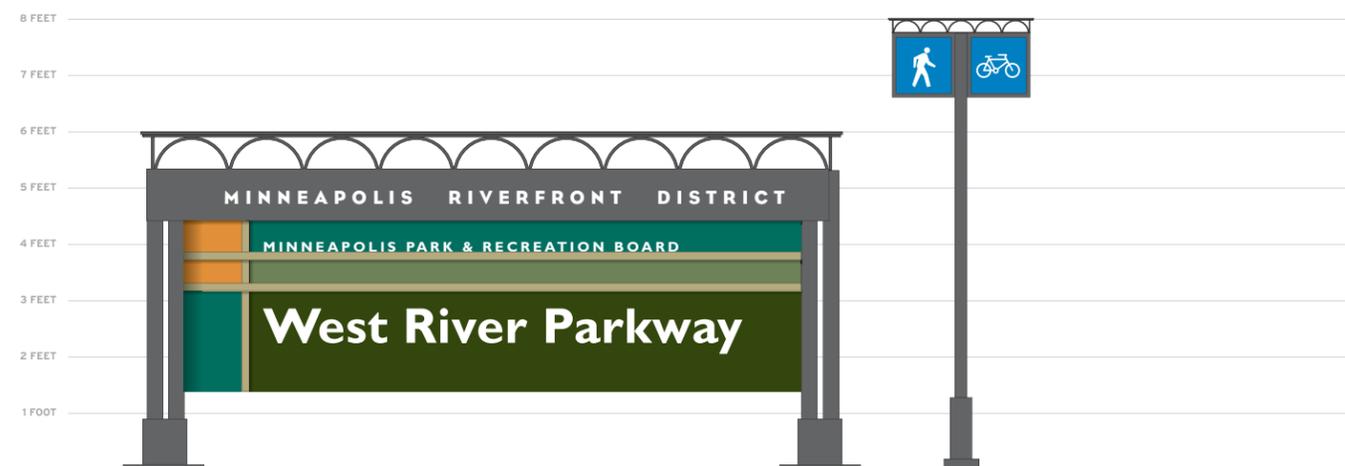
The wayfinding plans calls for modifying the existing Heritage Trail kiosks with the Riverfront style. Modifications would include wrought metal ornament, color scheme and typography, largely leaving the overall structural design intact. Interpretive trail and historic information will stay, maps will be updated to reflect all of the amenities of the area and other panels will be replaced with other pertinent Riverfront information.

Smaller wayfinding signs scaled for pedestrian and cyclist use will provide similar information. More detail, direction and maps will show visitors the different historic, cultural and commercial amenities of the area. These informational panels can also be installed in the first floor stairwells (or other pedestrian exits) in area parking ramps to help orient visitors right away.

## SIGN TYPES MINNEAPOLIS PARK AND RECREATION BOARD SIGNS



**Option 1**  
Incorporation of District features into Park Board Grand Rounds Signs and trail markers.



**Option 2**  
Addition of District-style sign post, if desired, to new installations.

Two of the original goals of this project were to incorporate existing graphic identities and to find unique ways to unify the District. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board properties, including its Grand Rounds Scenic Byway, make up a large and critically important asset of the Minneapolis Riverfront District. By incorporating the District “framework” concept, Park Board, Grand Rounds, and Great River Road graphics can maintain a visual consistency with those larger systems which pass through the District. At the same time, use of the Riverfront name and iconography with these graphics and the District framework help to further define the area.

The design option presented in this plan brings Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board signage into the Riverfront District framework while leaving its distinctive graphics and identity intact. The primary option presented here shows the addition of the District name and distinctive ornamental arched top to existing Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board signs. This approach would be relatively low-cost and would not require the removal of existing signs. Construction details would need to be prepared to direct the fabrication and installation of these additions. A means for adding District symbology to the Grand Rounds wayfinding blade signs would also need to be developed, if desired.

The secondary option shown could be implemented at the choice of the Park Board if existing signage is to be replaced at some point in the future. This option incorporates the District post style, name, and arched top into the Grand Rounds signage system. Again, construction details would need to be prepared in order to direct fabrication of these signs.

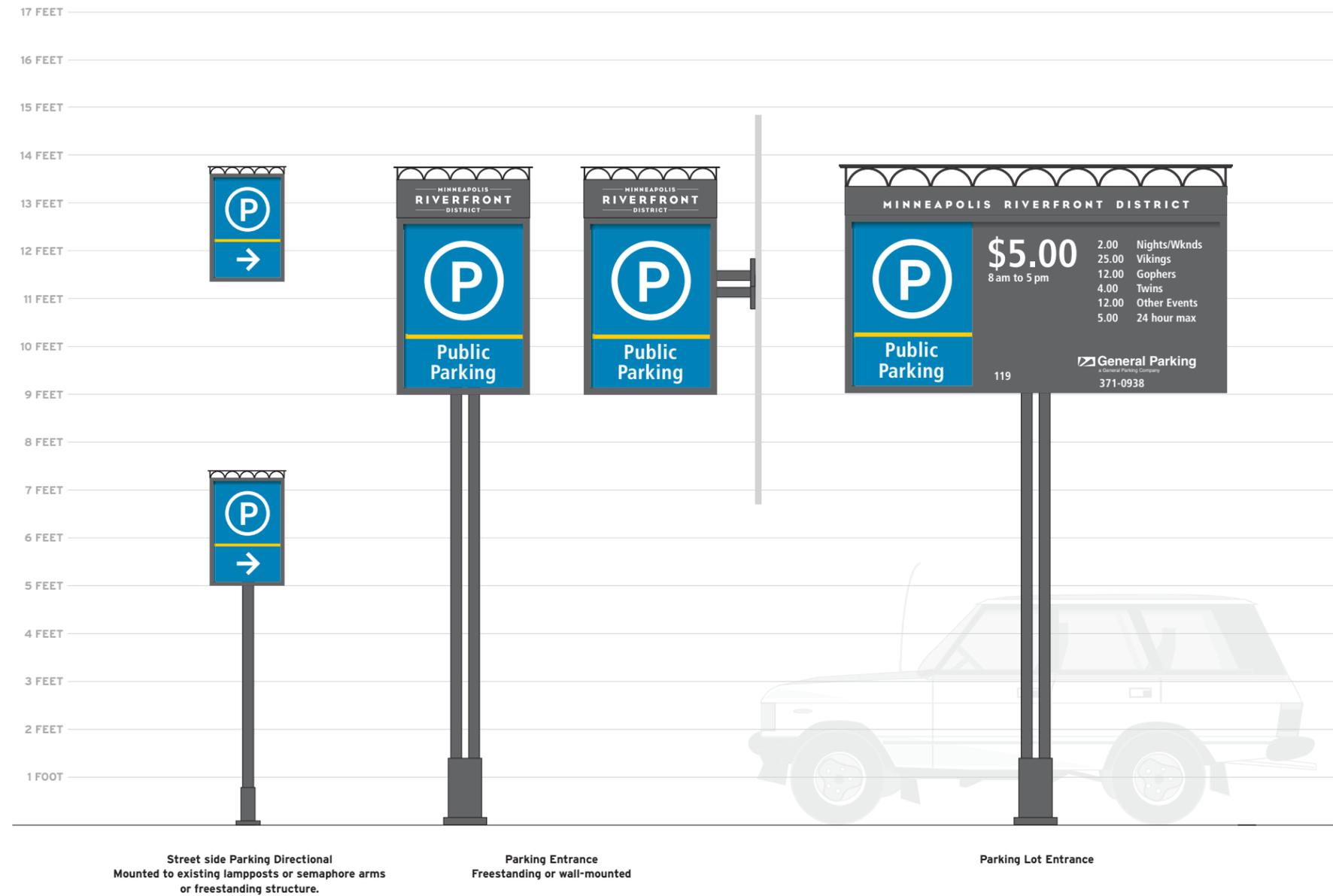
## SIGN TYPES

### OTHER RIVERFRONT SIGN TYPES

Going beyond directional signs, this system can be extended to further unify the area and create an even stronger sense of identity for the Minneapolis Riverfront District. The framework concept can be applied to a wide variety of sign types used in the area. These items are less critical than the wayfinding signs and will likely be phased in over time.



## SIGN TYPES OPTIONS FOR DISTRICT PARKING SIGNS



At the end of the path for vehicles traveling to the Minneapolis Riverfront District is a place to park. Parking is one of the most frequently cited concerns for visitors to the area. Visitors want to park close to their destination and want to be confident they won't be towed away. By incorporating a unique District style, these signs can help unify the system and provide a finishing point for the first part of their visit.

This plan also incorporates the Minneapolis standard circle-P symbol in a square blue field that is used throughout downtown to signify public parking. In addition to a sign marking the parking facility entrance, small street side signs can be incorporated to aid visitors in their quest.

The Minneapolis Licenses Department has a set of particular requirements for commercial pay lot signs. This Master Plan describes an proposed alternative to the standard requirements. Size, height, illumination and other specifications of the pay lot requirements have not changed. Only the color scheme, incorporation of the blue circle-P parking symbol and the Riverfront District frame structure have been added.

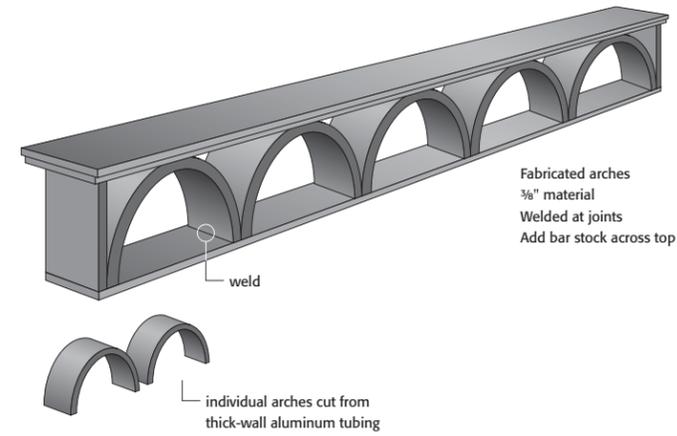
**SIGN TYPES**  
**DISTRICT MARQUEE SIGNS**  
Design concept, for consideration



Another concept to expand the sign system is the addition of marquee identification signs. Potentially located at high-traffic, high-visibility gateway locations, these unique signs will help to identify the area and add a splash of energy. These neon-tube channel letter signs are reminiscent of the sign types used throughout most of the 20th century and are consistent with the historic designation of the area.

These signs are still in the concept phase and will require more work to finalize mounting structure, electrical and illumination needs, on-going maintenance costs, permitting and zoning issues. Although illustrated here as being attached to existing street lampposts, a dedicated, specially engineered structure will be required.

## SIGN TYPES GRAPHIC ELEMENTS



The primary unifying element of the sign system is the wrought metal ornament that adorns the top of the signs. The design is inspired by the historic bridges spanning the Mississippi River. The ornament is built from sections of thick-wall tubing and flat plate material welded together. This element is also inspired and reminiscent of metal railings, structural details, fences, and gates, such as the Hennepin Avenue Bridge railing shown in the photo below.

**SIGN TYPES**  
GRAPHIC ELEMENTS

———— **MINNEAPOLIS** ————  
**RIVERFRONT**  
———— **DISTRICT** ————

———— **MINNEAPOLIS** ————  
**RIVERFRONT**

Other graphic elements of the system are also derived from unique areas within the District and will add both character and consistency to the signage.

A Minneapolis Riverfront District identifier was created as a header graphic for the signs. This header unmistakably identifies the District to visitors. By intentionally exaggerating the word “Riverfront,” we reduce the very long full name, making it easier to see and read when traveling in a car. This graphic was created with a type font that reflects the history of the area and provides a unique personality.

The font used for text is a simple sans serif font. It is slightly condensed to help fit long names and is bold and easy to read. Having a font with slightly condensed letterforms allows names to be set with extra letterspacing, making them more readable from a distance.

The deep red color used in the sign system is derived from the painted railing on the Stone Arch Bridge and is reminiscent of terra cotta or brick. The charcoal gray was a common color for metalwork in the 20th century and contrasts nicely with the red.

**Frutiger Bold Condensed 67**

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

1234567890

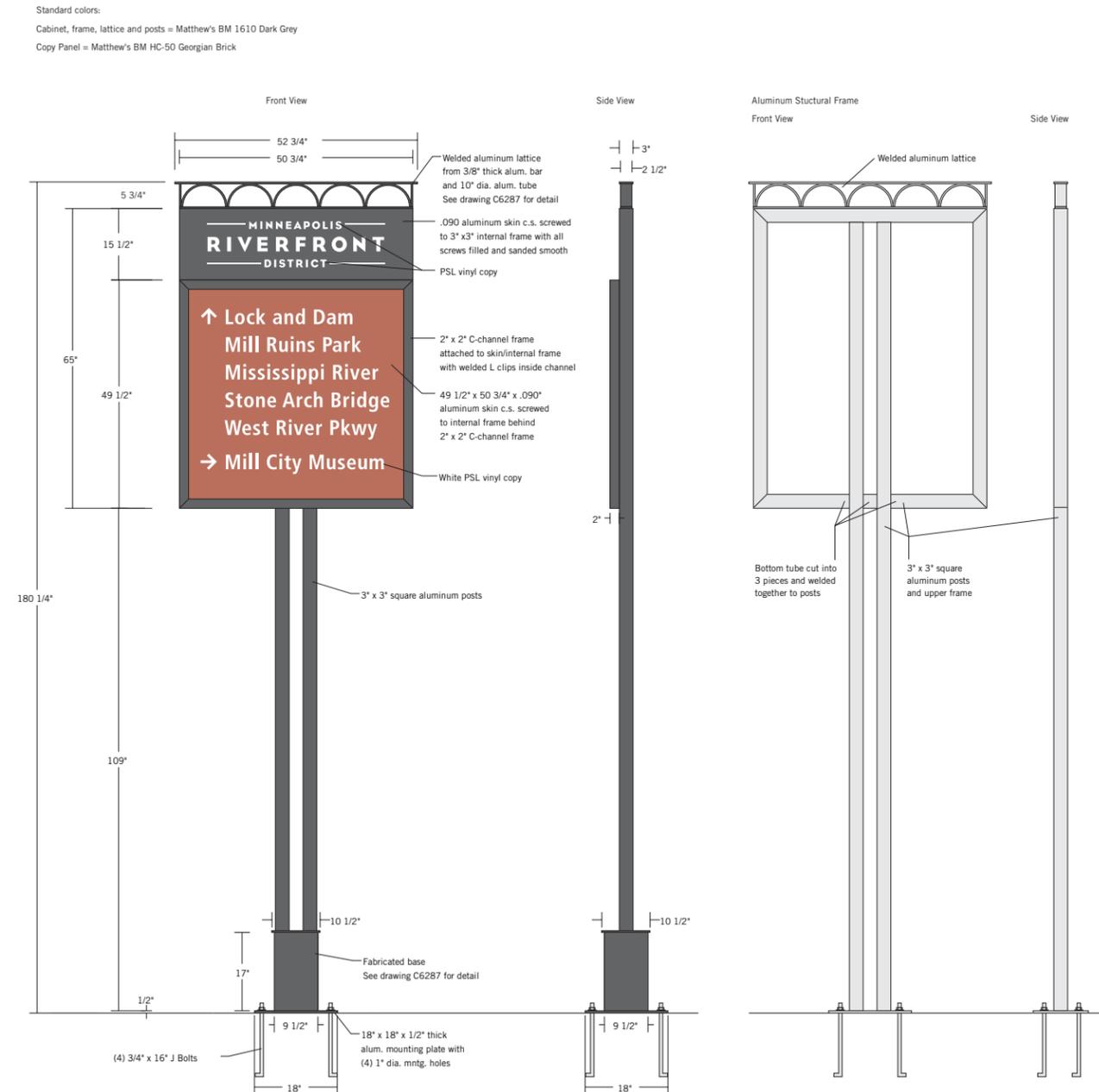


Deep Red  
BM HC-50



Dark Gray  
BM 1610

## SIGN TYPES PROTOTYPE



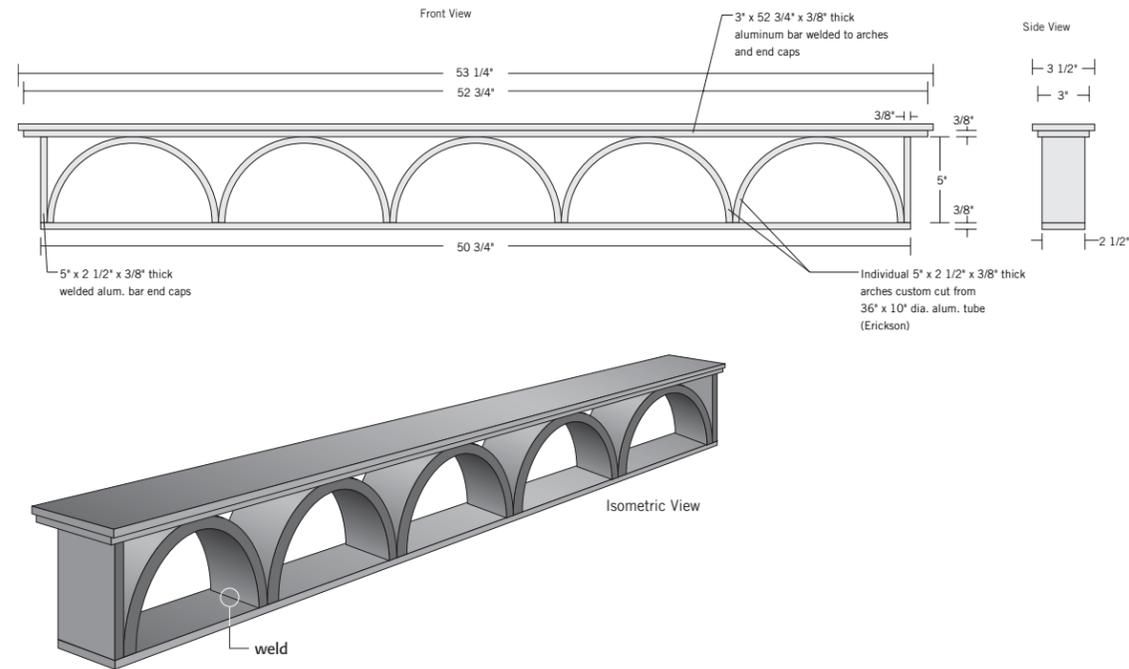
Photograph of prototype

To the left is a shop drawing created for the small traffic directional prototype sign. It illustrates intended fabrication methods, materials, finishes and graphics. The design is constructed of a simple post and frame structure with an ornamental metal lattice attached to the top. Aluminum construction is rust resistant and vinyl graphics applied to face panels on both sides are easy to change and update as the District continues to evolve.

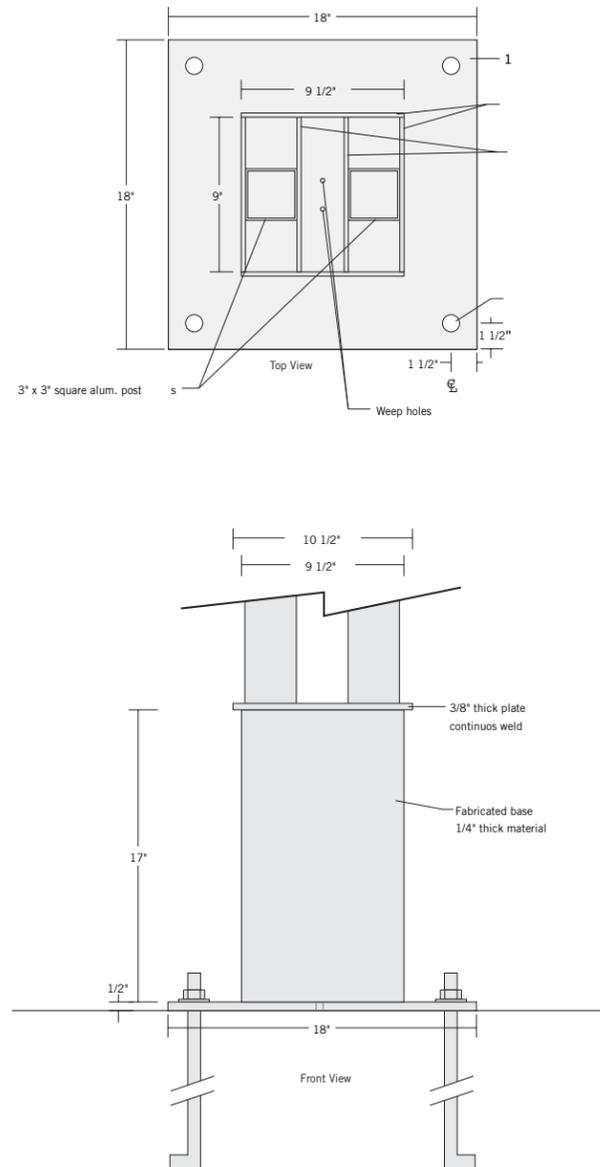
This shop drawing does not show all final details. Mechanical details for the post, frame and lattice attachment, and the footing are not included. Final mechanical specifications and details will be worked out after review of the prototype by city staff and with input from the sign vendor awarded the contract. Final specifications are part of the implementation phase.

## SIGN TYPES PROTOTYPE

Fabricated Aluminum Lattice Detail



Fabricated Aluminum Base  
Scale: 1/8" = 1'



For a small traffic directional sign, the ornamental lattice is made up of thick-wall aluminum tubing cut into 3" lengths, then cut in half to create the arches. Aluminum tubing comes in enough diameters and thicknesses to accommodate all sign types and the dimensions of the ornamental lattice element would be sized appropriately to accommodate the sign types within the program. The arches and matching plate material are welded together to form the lattice and finished with an acrylic polyurethane paint. Due to aluminum construction, signs should not rust even if the paint becomes chipped or marred.

The bottoms of the posts are mounted into a thick-wall aluminum base that will also protect them from being nicked or bent by a passing snowplow. The base is secured to a concrete footing with anchor bolts.

## SIGN TYPES

### INFORMATION HIERARCHY FOR SIGNS

#### WAYFINDING AND INFORMATION HIERARCHY

Setting up a hierarchy of information is critical to the success of a signage plan. It is simply not feasible to provide direction to all destinations on all signs. In addition, the biggest problem with readability regarding signs is too much information. People are much more apt to read a single word than a long list.

By matching provided directions and critical decision points we can keep signs to a minimum, first directing visitors to the Riverfront and then toward individual destinations. Destinations will be applied by proximity, and grouped by direction (all of the destinations that require a right-hand turn).

#### Single Identity

“Minneapolis Riverfront District” will be used as the formal identification for the area, with emphasis on the word “Riverfront.” In maps, written descriptions and even conversations, the singular Riverfront will be the easiest name to remember and recognize. The name is itself descriptive, connotes history and highlights the focal point of the District — the Mississippi River.

Creation of a strong identity will be critical to the success of this project. Too many descriptors and layers of information will only dilute the concept. Like other retail and entertainment venues, one destination with many assets will be the most successful approach.

#### Connect the Destinations with the District

Once at the edge of the Riverfront District, and within the District boundaries, the signs will guide visitors toward destinations. Highlighting these important assets along the edge of the District will help define the area and educate the public about its amenities.

Vehicle directional signs will be used as reinforcement of decisions and will not guide people from one end of the District to a specific destination.

#### Parking

Parking is a critical component to this area and one that has been identified by past visitors as a problem. Because primary destinations have parking very nearby, wayfinding signage will direct people toward the destination first and parking facilities second. Most people will make the assumption that there is parking near destinations. Where this is not true, parking facilities will be pointed out.

Unique Riverfront District parking facility identification signs will be used to reinforce to the visitor that they are within the District and close to primary destinations. Unique parking signs are also a valuable tool in establishing the identity of the area.

The parking identification signs will incorporate the familiar blue circle-P symbol used throughout downtown Minneapolis, to indicate public parking for visitors.

#### Pedestrian Signage

Pedestrian level wayfinding signage and kiosks will provide the visitor with the most detailed information about the District. Maps and lists of destinations organized by each side will educate visitors what the Minneapolis Riverfront District has to offer, informing visitors about other destinations, and helping them plan their next trip.

Pedestrian wayfinding signs will be added throughout the area, especially near public parking ramps and lots to help orient visitors once they have left their vehicle. These signs will also be used along walking trails where traffic directional signs are not visible.

#### INFORMATION HIERARCHY CHART

District Name

Minneapolis Riverfront District

Current Destinations

Ard Godfrey House	Lock and Dam
Boom Island Park	Mill City Museum
Father Hennepin Bluffs Park	Mill Ruins Park
First Bridge Park	Mississippi River
Guthrie Theater	Nicollet Island Park
Historic Main Street	Old St. Anthony
James I. Rice/ West River Parkway	St. Anthony Falls
	Stone Arch Bridge