

MINNEAPOLIS RIVERFRONT DISTRICT
Signage & Wayfinding Master Plan

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Introduction

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LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board, I am pleased to present this Signage and Wayfinding Master Plan for the Minneapolis Riverfront District. This Master Plan is an important contribution toward ensuring the successful revitalization of the city's central riverfront.

From 1880 to 1930, Minneapolis was known as the Mill City, the flour producing capital of the world. As the mills lining the Mississippi River began to close in the 1930's, the area gradually deteriorated. By the 1960's, abandoned industrial buildings and desolate streetscapes defined Minneapolis' central riverfront. This was a place where few would venture to explore the barricaded, ghostly reminders of the city's beginnings and its importance to a region and the nation.

Today, through a remarkable partnership between the public and private sectors, the Minneapolis riverfront is enjoying a renaissance and is emerging as the heart of a thriving community. It is now a place where past and future unite, where restored structures serve as anchors for new neighborhoods—a place where opportunities for good business and recreation abound in a historically significant and scenic environment.

The Minneapolis Riverfront District possesses a broad spectrum of diverse resources including the Mississippi River and the Falls of St. Anthony, the St. Anthony Falls Historic District, two National Historic Landmarks—Washburn A Mill (1880) and the Pillsbury A Mill (1881)—and the Stone Arch Bridge (1883), a National Civil Engineering Landmark. Along Historic Main Street, buildings dating from the 1850s remind visitors of Minneapolis' oldest community, the Village of St. Anthony. An archaeological park, developed by the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, reveals the remains of former mills and their intricate

waterpower systems. The Stone Arch Bridge, converted from a railway to a pedestrian walkway, is part of a 1.8 mile-long Heritage Trail that circles the riverfront and provides information about the significant history of the area. The Minnesota Historical Society's Mill City Museum constructed within the ruin of the Washburn A Mill offers visitors year-round opportunities to discover the people and industries that built Minneapolis, transformed a region, and influenced our world. The riverfront is also host to community festivals and celebrations such as the annual Aquatennial fireworks display deemed to be among the best in the nation. Lodging may be found within a former train depot, or a window sash factory. New shops and restaurants line East Hennepin Avenue. Recent planned additions, such as the major theater and education complex being developed by the Guthrie Theater, promise to bring even greater vitality to the area.

Despite this remarkable development, the wonders of the Minneapolis Riverfront District are among the state's best-kept secrets. Until a sign system is put into place that clearly marks the area and communicates its identity, the District will remain hidden to many potential visitors. When implemented, this sign system will ensure the riverfront's emergence as a dynamic presence for the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County and the State of Minnesota.

The members of the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board are recognized for their support and allocation of funds for the development of this Master Plan. The expertise and commitment of our consultant Larsen Design and the project's steering committee and its advisors brought this plan from concept to completion. Our challenge going forward is to make this Master Plan into reality.



Nina M. Archabal
Chair, St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board

ST. ANTHONY FALLS HERITAGE BOARD

The St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board was established in 1988 by the Minnesota Legislature for the purpose of preserving and interpreting the historic and architectural features within the Minneapolis central riverfront defined as the area between the Plymouth Avenue Bridge and Interstate 35W. The Board's numerous projects have enhanced public access and enjoyment of the riverfront.

For further information contact Heritage Zone Coordinator John Crippen at (612) 341-7648, 704 South Second Street, Minneapolis, MN 55401 or via email at deborah.johnson@mnhs.org.

2003 MEMBERSHIP, ST. ANTHONY FALLS HERITAGE BOARD

Nina Archabal

(Chair) Director of the Minnesota Historical Society

R.T. Rybak

Mayor, City of Minneapolis

Mike Opat

Chair, Hennepin County Board of Commissioners

Bob Fine

President, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

Mary Merrill Anderson

Superintendent, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

Keith Ellison

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Linda Higgins

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Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission

Donna Stephenson

Hennepin History Museum

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Deputy Director, Minnesota Historical Society

Don Nikkola

Sage Cowles

John Sarna

Citizen Advisor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT GOALS AND SCOPE

This Signage and Wayfinding Master Plan has two main goals:

- > Establish a wayfinding plan, both within the defined district and outside of the Minneapolis Riverfront District
- > Design a unique, unified sign system to be used within the District

This plan will define and identify the District, create a strong sense of place, help visitors find their way to and around the District, and enhance the experience of its many historical, recreational, cultural and commercial amenities. The ultimate goal is to enable the Minneapolis Riverfront District to become a defining element of the city, Hennepin County and the state.

Boundaries

The Minneapolis Riverfront District stretches from Plymouth Avenue NE to Interstate 35W and along both sides of the Mississippi River, generally from Washington Avenue South to 4th Street SE. It stretches out to include the retail district of Old St. Anthony and steps back to Boom Island Park on its northwest corner. The boundaries were stretched to include critical retail and residential developments, major streets, and areas which, due to continued development, may also be important for future wayfinding and signage within the District. The map on page 10 outlines the working boundaries of the District, described in general terms here.

GRAPHIC REVIEW OF THE AREA

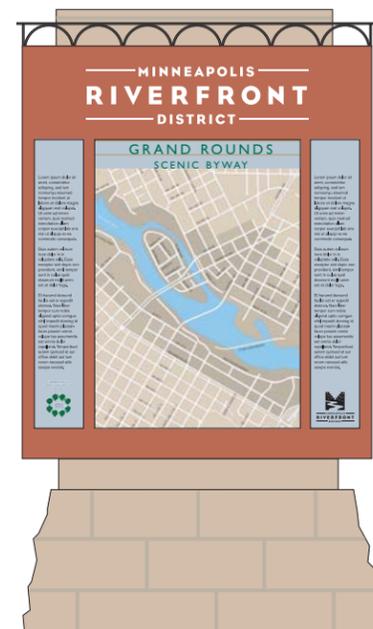
Graphic Standards

The graphic standards for existing signage and identity programs that pass through or reside within the Minneapolis Riverfront District were reviewed in the creation of this plan. This plan recognizes the need to support, protect and include the equity of these significant assets, while planning for a district identity and sign system. The intent is to integrate these graphics into a framework that helps unify the diverse assets within the District. A primary goal of this project is to define the District as a large area containing many assets and destinations. The identities reviewed include Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Grand Rounds Scenic Byway, Great River Road, Mississippi River Trail, Mill Quarter, St. Anthony Falls Heritage Trail and City of Minneapolis parking standards.

Codes and Approval

The formal approval process is outlined in this plan. The steps of the various entities that may have to approve the Master Plan, approve permit applications, approve installation and fund the project were investigated.

The paths of approval for this project overlap many jurisdictions, property owners, businesses and neighborhoods. Potential paths of approval are dependent on a variety of circumstances. To gain insight and to mitigate problems, an informal review process with potential approving organizations was completed during the last phases of this project.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For formal approval, the Master Plan will be reviewed by MnDOT, the State Historic Preservation Office, Hennepin County, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the Heritage Preservation Commission, Minneapolis Public Works, and the Minneapolis City Council.

The review process consists of both staff reviews and formal approvals by elected/appointed bodies. Reviews and approvals by other entities may also be required depending on implementation funding resources.

Site Review

A number of site reviews were completed to gain a better understanding of the area, its amenities, its size, how traffic flows through the area, and visual appearance. The design of the signs was developed after a thorough understanding of the history and diversity of the area and its destinations, comparing them with other destinations in the Twin Cities and around the country.

Case Studies

In preparing to create a wayfinding plan and designing a unique sign system, other city-based signage projects were reviewed, both within the Twin Cities and outside of the area. They included Washington D.C.; downtown Los Angeles; the Quad Cities in Iowa and Illinois; Sault St. Marie, Michigan Riverfront; 50th & France, Edina; Excelsior and Grand, St. Louis Park; downtown St. Paul; Nicollet Mall; LynLake Neighborhood; and downtown Minneapolis. Comparing the Riverfront District to the other environments allowed us to create a system that is unique within the city but with a familiar hierarchy for ease-of-use.

WAYFINDING

Traffic Review

A traffic pattern review was done to understand the different pathways to the Minneapolis Riverfront District. By looking at these different pathways and overlapping them, we can pinpoint key roadways and nodes. By focusing the signage plan on these key areas, we can reduce the number of signs and simplify the pathways, eliminating conflicting messages and multiple options.

Information Hierarchy

The wayfinding plan presents a simplified plan, focused on the first-time visitor. A simple plan will reduce the amount of signage needed, eliminate confusing options and alternatives, get people to the area with the least amount of turns and will integrate with verbal and written directions.

The plan is based on these principles.

Outside of the District:

- > Employ existing signage systems — MnDOT exit notification signs and city traffic directional signs that follow the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and the unique downtown Minneapolis wayfinding signs
- > Direct visitors to the Minneapolis Riverfront District
- > Use only at decision points (exits, turns)
- > Get visitors to the central part of the District

Within the District:

- > Identify the District
- > Guide visitors around the District
- > Educate them about the District

DESIGN

Sign Types and Locations

The wayfinding plan is focused on the first-time visitor and establishes a simple, straightforward path. A well-focused path will be established to help reduce options, choices and conflicting information and will reinforce published directions. These tactics will result in a pleasant experience for the first-time visitor and:

- > Help visitors exit the Interstate
- > Guide them toward the central part of the District
- > Help them find a place to park
- > Inform them of what the Riverfront has to offer
- > Enhance the experience of its many amenities

The signs identified in this program that will accomplish this include:

- > Interstate and city MUTCD signs
- > Vehicle wayfinding
- > Parking locations
- > Pedestrian/cyclist wayfinding
- > Pedestrian/cyclist kiosks

Framework options for trail signs, banners and street signs will complete the signage program to fully unify the District and enhance the overall experience of this unique and beautiful place.

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

Minneapolis Riverfront District Signage and Wayfinding Master Plan Multi-Agency Staff Steering Committee

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Deborah Johnson
Erin Vasseur
Minnesota Historical Society

Ann Calvert
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