

# MINNEAPOLIS PARKS FOUNDATION: AN OVERVIEW

## MISSION

Our mission is *to enhance the quality of life for the greater Minneapolis community as the private sector advocate for the next generation of parks and open spaces.*

## HISTORY

An early cadre of Minneapolis leaders methodically began to purchase and seek donations of property around the city's lakes, focusing on connecting various parts of the city by greenway. This connectivity of multiple parks into a linear system was then, and remains today, highly unusual; it positioned **Minneapolis as a visionary leader in park planning and design.**

## URGENCY

*Who are the visionaries for the next generation of Minneapolis parks?* Other park systems and even individual parks have strong philanthropic entities that support their work; the East London Green Grid, New York's High Line, and Chicago's Millennium Park are excellent examples. Led by businesses and community members, park-focused nonprofits raise funds, enhance parks, and drive toward **a long-term vision.** Because Minneapolis has not had such a parks-focused nonprofit, we have lagged behind in looking ahead. And with the current economic conditions, both the need and the opportunity are great at this moment in time.

## WHY WE EXIST

Now, however, we have the **Minneapolis Parks Foundation.** To retain our leadership in urban parks, Minneapolis must actively plan for and invest in innovations to our park system. What seemed revolutionary in 1883 when our park system was established, what met the community's needs a century later—will these ideas and landscapes still be current at the *second* century mark, in 2083? The Minneapolis Parks Foundation exists to examine that question, and to help **shape a vision for the city's parks** that incorporates everything we are learning about changing demographics, health concerns, environmental sustainability, and more.

## CURRENT FOCUS

MPF's major focus now is a design competition that addresses the Upper Riverfront of the Mississippi, from the Stone Arch Bridge to the Minneapolis northern city limits, along both sides of the river. The winner of the competition will be announced in February. For this project—the first design undertaking of MPF's ***Next Generation of Parks*** initiative—our organization is partnering with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, along with our creative partners Walker Art Center and University of Minnesota.

The competition encourages a comprehensive, integrated approach to evaluating the larger river-park system, creating a vision that:

- Establishes parks as the engine for economic development along the river
- Knits both sides of the riverfront together with their surrounding communities, thereby transforming the river from a barrier to a connector;
- Refocuses the city toward one of the three great rivers of the world—the Fourth Coast of the U.S.—an extraordinary environmental amenity that defines Minneapolis's civic identity: past, present and future.

## LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Collaboration and private sector participation are essential to shape parks and open spaces for our changing city. MPF's unique position is to serve as the private sector's voice in work that, until recently, has been deferred largely to the public sector. Because the public sector cannot carry this responsibility alone, Minneapolis Parks Foundation plays an increasingly vital role.