



The Next Generation of Parks

Minneapolis Riverfront

minneapolisriverfrontdesigncompetition.com

A competition sponsored by The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and The Minneapolis Parks Foundation, with creative partners The University of Minnesota College of Design and Walker Art Center

Frequently Asked Questions

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How do I stay informed and get involved?

The best place to find information is on our (frequently updated!) website MinneapolisRiverfrontDesignCompetition.com, where you can also **read and participate in – and subscribe to – our blog and sign up for our e-newsletter.**

You can also get involved through social media:

- “Like us” on **Facebook**: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Minneapolis-Riverfront-Design>
- Chat with us on **Twitter**: [@MplsRiverDesign](https://twitter.com/MplsRiverDesign)

And, check out our other Community Engagement avenues:

- Browse “Designer Ask” survey results.
- Get involved with our Partners and Collaborators – visit our website for info and links.
- View and share the designers’ January 27 public presentation at the Walker Art Center.
- Download our Resource List and explore information about the Upper Riverfront.
- Get outside with friends and family and enjoy Minneapolis Parks!

ABOUT THE COMPETITION

Why a design competition?

A design competition is a cost- and time-efficient way to engage landscape and urban design professionals with experience in complex and innovative projects in urban centers around the world; it’s also a source for education and inspiration for the public.

- The MR|DC is both an **ideas competition** and a **project competition**, meaning design teams are to generate innovative ideas for the designated project area, as well as develop a plan for a specific project to be implemented.
- The MR|DC is a **landscape architecture and urban design competition**; architects, ecologists, engineers and other related professions are also be represented on design teams.
- Competition finalists invested much more than the honorarium in preparing design submissions; each team received \$30,000 and delivered an estimated \$250,000 in design expertise and materials.



MINNEAPOLIS PARKS FOUNDATION

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Why not hire a local firm to do the design?

The competition was open and promoted to all landscape and urban design professionals – including Minnesota firms. It's important to recognize that a design team is typically much more diverse than just the “marquee” name of the lead firm suggests. In the case of the MR|DC, three of the four teams selected as finalists in November had Minnesota firms on their teams; by the time submissions were delivered on January 21, 2011, all teams included Minnesota representation. In total, approximately 20 Minnesota landscape architecture, architecture, urban and cost planning, ecological and environmental, and engineering firms participated in the competition.

As competition-inspired parks-based projects continue from 2011 and beyond, we also expect participation from, and economic benefit to, Minnesota companies throughout all sectors of local industry and professional services.

How was a winning team selected?

A jury of design professionals and locally elected officials that represent the community selected the winning team based on the criteria outlined in the Competition Brief and on the five design proposal deliverables:

1. **A framework for development, looking at the entire 5.5 miles of the upper riverfront.** Each team will define and present its framework for entire 5.5 miles of Riverfront. Each team will prepare a 24-page report that describes the visual representation of the themes and layers of features – infrastructure, ecological and environmental conditions, opportunities for development, etc. – unique to the team's proposal.
2. **Design development of critical physical connections from neighborhoods to and across the river.** Physical connections including roads, pedestrian bridges and paths, bicycle routes, public transportation routes and waterways will be emphasized in the final concepts.
3. **Identification of strategic sites reflecting convergences of physical features and latent opportunities for design and development.** “Hot spots,” if you will, where ecological features, infrastructure, cultural or historic buildings of meaning, and other factors come together.
4. **Concept development of the team's highest priority strategic site.** Teams will develop detailed images and supporting descriptions that illustrate a multi-functional park project.
5. **Estimates of the short-term and long-term costs of design features.**

Who is the winning team?

TLS/KVA, a partnership of **Tom Leader Studio** (Berkeley) and **Kennedy & Violich Architecture** (Boston), comprises 17 firms, including eight Minnesota partners: Kestrel Design Group, St. Paul on the Mississippi Design Center, SRF Consulting, LBG-Guyton Associates, Donjek, Economic Development Services, Mortensen Construction, and Solid Gold.

TLS/KVA was first selected as one of four finalists in November 2010, from a pool of 55 Request for Qualifications submittals representing 14 countries on five continents. The other three finalists were award-winning teams led by **Ken Smith Workshop** (New York City), **Stoss Landscape Urbanism** (Boston), and **Turenscape** (Beijing).

What is the winning team's prize?

TLS/KVA will be awarded a “commission” for a riverfront park project. The location, features and scope of the project will be determined after the competition, by the Park Board, with considerable input from the public and private sectors, the community, and additional stakeholders. The selected project will be within the Metropolitan Council's Regional Park System and will require its approval prior to funding and implementation.

What comes next?

While the team's *RiverFIRST* proposal contained many specific design schemes, no particular location, project or feature has yet been identified for development. As the design competition concludes, the Park Board and its partners will engage in a four-month transition phase to identify next steps

During the transition phase, the Park Board will establish a steering committee made up of individuals and organizations with experience stewarding large-scale, multi-disciplinary public projects or who have a vested interest in the riverfront. The steering committee will work along several parallel tracks: organizational development; planning, design and construction; resource identification; and on-going community engagement and two-way communication.

In June 2011, the Park Board will announce the next steps in the initiative.

COMMUNITY INTEREST & ENGAGEMENT

Did the public have a say in choosing the winning team?

The MR|DC was a juried design competition; selection of the winning team was made by the jury, which included national design and parks professionals and representatives elected to state, county, city and Park Board positions, based on the deliverables and criteria outlined in the Competition Brief. The public will have a vigorous and direct influence on the Park Board's selection of a post-competition riverfront project.

Does the jury's selection reflect community interest?

We worked hard to engage the public on several meaningful levels in order to provide the designers with the most detailed and accurate image of our city to reflect in their proposals. That active community engagement, coupled with the high caliber of the design teams competing, and the tremendous list of community-based resources provided to them in the Competition Brief, was a strong foundation for a well-received winning proposal.

Feedback shared with competition partners from all sectors suggest that TLS/KVA is a well-received choice. The community generally appears to respect the team's sincerity, along with its commitment to enhance the river's ecology and build on its potential as an economic engine. The team's *RiverFIRST* proposal demonstrated a depth of research and proactive outreach to the community, as well as commendable skill at creating a many-layered design framework and project ideas. (See the Comment page on our blog for specific insights from the community.)

How did you engage the community?

The public was involved in the competition and will also be engaged during the transition phase and beyond. The Park Board and our partners strongly believe that an informed and involved community is essential to the success of all parks projects.

Competition Community Engagement

The Park Board and our partners implemented several levels of community engagement aimed at **soliciting individuals' input, encouraging collaboration among organizations and neighborhoods with an interest in the river, solidifying major private sector intent to support project funding.**

“Designer Ask” (December 2010) Online and printed 25-question survey for the community from the design teams.

Community Meeting (7 December 2010) Question and answer session with MR|DC sponsors and project team, plus small group discussion of select Designer Ask questions.

Youth Engagement (November/December 2010) Two groups of young people in Minneapolis engaging in a multi-session design process to create their vision for the riverfront, using an innovative curriculum called “SiteSeeing.” Finished designs will be presented alongside the designer’s work at the public presentation and during the Walker exhibition, as well as several other online and offline venues.

Public Presentation (27 January 2011) The four competing design teams will present of their proposed designs to the public at a free event.

Design Advisory Group (Ongoing) Comprising public and private community leaders who have experience with parks and development projects in Minneapolis.

Organizational Collaborators The MR|DC has formalized relationships with community organizations active along the Mississippi Riverfront and in related communities. These groups, and their members and stakeholders, share a vested interest in the riverfront with the people of Minneapolis and the MR|DC partners. They play an important role in disseminating information and gathering community feedback.

Resource List (Ongoing) The public has access to the most comprehensive compilation of plans, proposals, projects, data, images, history and more about the Upper Riverfront and how it integrates with the surrounding communities and environments. Contributions include district, neighborhood, conservation and transportation plans provided by the **City of Minneapolis** and others; plans and historical information from the **Mississippi National River and Recreation Area** and the **Mississippi Watershed Management Organization**; research from the **University of Minnesota’s River Life Partnership, Institute on the Environment (U of M)**, and; historical information from the **Minnesota Historical Society** and **Preservation Alliance of Minnesota**.

Post Competition Public Engagement

The public will have a vigorous and direct influence on the Park Board’s selection of a post-competition riverfront project. As with the design competition, several avenues of community engagement will be developed to tap into the community’s knowledge about the river and the neighborhoods, and help connect the community to the process in a meaningful way. More information about how the public will be involved will be addressed when the Park Board announces the process for the riverfront initiative in June 2011.

How does this project impact me (or my neighborhood or park)?

Already, our parks are tremendous resources for connecting with nature and getting involved with the community. The design competition will seek to enhance that relationship by increasing the ways in which citizens connect to the parks through innovative infrastructure, new and improved uses, improved safety and more.

After the design competition is completed, riverfront projects will be implemented with a high level of community engagement.

On a broader level, the Park Board and its partners will continue to work strategically toward the goals outlined in the Comp Plan; this is one project among many the Park Board is working on simultaneously throughout the system.

How was history and culture addressed in the design competition?

The history of the Mississippi, and that of the people who live by it, is intrinsic to its character and its future. Included in the extensive resource list provided to the design teams, and available to the public via the competition website, are many materials reflecting the diverse history of the people, cultures, and practices that shaped the river in the past and continue to influence it today.

FUNDING

How was the design competition funded?

The MR|DC was funded by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board with funds from the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund allotted to the Metropolitan Council for Regional Park development.

How will the winning teams' commission and selected project be funded?

Once the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board selects the site and scope of the project, a commission award will go to the winning team chosen by the jury. The budget for the design and construction phase will be developed at that time. Possible funding sources for design and construction include metropolitan regional park funds, Legacy Amendment parks and trails funds, State bonds, watershed district funds, and private sector partnerships.

THE RIVERFRONT OPPORTUNITY & BENEFITS

Why was the MR|DC done now?

The Park Board and the Minneapolis Parks Foundation created the design competition after recognizing convergence of several factors:

- Park Board leadership – Superintendent Emeritus David Fisher saw the opportunity to replicate the success of the Central Riverfront, where public investment in parks and public space led the way for a downtown riverfront transformation and revival;
- The Minneapolis Parks Foundation's "Next Generation of Parks" initiative, which seeks to educate the public about 21st-century parks design;
- Shared vision to create parks that solve current problems Minneapolis faces: a "built city" with an aging infrastructure and *ad hoc* development; environmental and climate concerns; changing demographics (older population, fewer children, more people living alone, more diversity); changing recreational trends, etc.;
- The Park Board's acquisition of the Scherer Brothers land north of Boom Island;
- Availability of public funding for both the competition and a riverfront park projects;
- Enthusiasm of private sector partners, providing material support and working to involve the philanthropic community in enhancing the city's natural resources and parks heritage.

The project is also opportune because:

- Parks development has historically emphasized the lower Mississippi gorge, the Central Riverfront, Chain of Lakes, Minnehaha Park, Lake Nokomis and the Grand Rounds Parkway system; this project has the potential to complete the Grand Rounds.
- North and Northeast Minneapolis have fewer parks and less access to natural water features abundant in other parts of the city.
- These same neighborhoods as a whole have lower property values and have been hardest hit by the ongoing housing crisis.

Why does this project (or the parks) merit attention?

Our parks are one of the most significant contributors to the civic and economic health of Minneapolis. In a 2009 study of Minneapolis residents, 99 percent see our parks as “a unique and valuable asset for the city.” For Minneapolis to maximize the benefits of our Park System, maintaining the Park Board’s status as a “premier Park System” requires new thinking and innovation in response to current trends and future needs.

There is considerable vision and leadership throughout the community to realize the full potential of the river:

1. Park Board’s Above the Falls Master Plan (2000) and Comprehensive Plan (2007-2020);
2. Citizen involvement in neighborhood revitalization, river renewal and heritage preservation;
3. Business interest in vital neighborhoods with desirable housing and amenities and adequate infrastructure;
4. Breakthrough global landscape and urban design projects that integrate recreational, environmental, housing, transportation, cultural, and business development uses, and emphasize sustainability.

There is also renewed recognition of the tremendous power the river has in our region and beyond:

- The Mississippi is a global icon, mesmerizing natural asset and proven economic engine.
- It’s one of the three great rivers of the world: There’s the Amazon, the Nile and the Mississippi.
- It’s America’s “fourth coast,” a waterway that shaped a continent and helped shape a nation.

What is “MR|DC”?

The Minneapolis Riverfront Design Competition is an identity, shared by competition sponsors and partners, created to give shape and voice to the first phase in the process of creating a 21st-century parks framework for the Mississippi Riverfront.

The creation of the unique MR|DC identity conveys how new and unique the competition is for the Park Board and its partners, allows for participation on different levels for multiple organizations and gives the public and partners a single point of reference, and can be morphed into a new identity post-competition to accommodate project permutations.