Our Mission

The Minneapolis Parks Foundation transforms human lives through parks and public spaces by aligning philanthropic investment and community vision.
Horace Cleveland’s initial plan for the city envisioned the Grand Rounds as an interconnected park system linked by a parkway.

The Mississippi River from the Northern border to downtown was left unfinished.

When complete, RiverFirst will link North and Northeast Minneapolis to the River through parks and trails for the first time in the city’s history.
Water Works Stories: Mill District Water Power
Mississippi River to Grand Rounds
RiverFirst Signature Projects

[Map and images of various projects along the river]

RiverFirst Campaign

Minneapolis Parks Foundation

Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board
Mississippi River Central Riverfront – Water Works
Historic Mill District ca. 1933

Canal & Gatehouse Foundations (buried)
Bassett Boiler House
Columbia Mill (2 levels)
Occidental Mill Outer walls (buried)
Scale Shed Foundations (buried)

Footings from Trestle Bridge (buried)
Wheel House Foundations (buried)
Stone Wall West Riverbank intact

RiverFirst Campaign
Minneapolis Parks Foundation
Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board
Columbia Mill Ruins
Water Works - phasing strategy
Water Works Overview
Water Works – restaurant interior

THE SIoux CHEF™
Water Works – Mezzanine Lawn & City Steps
Water Works Pavilion
Water Works – construction

Photos Courtesy of Doug Verdier
Hall’s Island & Scherer Site ca. 1955
The site of a former lumber yard, Hall’s Island will be reclaimed as a biohaven for native riparian species and as the first public beach serving Northeast Minneapolis.
Hall’s Island & Graco Park
When completed, the Great Northern Greenway River Link will provide a pedestrian crossing connecting North and Northeast Minneapolis neighborhoods across the Mississippi River and along the length of the River – fulfilling a 140-year vision.
Great Northern Greenway River Link
Upper Harbor Terminal – down river view
Upper Harbor Terminal – down river view
Community Engagement

We prioritize engaging community members with RiverFirst so all benefit from the park and trail improvements and new jobs provide relief for neighborhoods that have traditionally been left out of the Minneapolis economy.
RiverFirst as a National Model
Mississippi River to Grand Rounds

The RiverFirst Vision will transform lives through parks and the public realm, made possible by creative public private partnerships.