

May 4, 2013

Dear President Erwin, Members of the Park Board, Superintendent Miller, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Staff Partners, Minneapolis Parks Foundation,

Congratulations to you for undertaking the RiverFirst project and acknowledging the importance of the 13-mile stretch of one of the three greatest rivers in the world, the Mississippi River.

The selected 13-mile-long riverfront is a unique opportunity in our city to focus our attention to the birthplace of Minneapolis. It is an opportunity to acknowledge the historic importance to our region. It is an opportunity to preserve and improve the ecological and environmental systems. It is an opportunity to connect our rich past and our future by sensibly acknowledging that not all existing structures need to be included in our preservation efforts.

The 13-mile study has examined the bowels of the underutilized sites in order to revitalize challenged areas of our city such as the Fairview Park expansion to the river, and the upper harbor terminal. Careful analysis of such areas in order to add vitality, living wage job opportunities, and an expansion of our tax base for support of parks and city services need to be pursued and evaluated as another means to revitalize and reshape this area of our city.

The Park Board's wise decision to purchase the former Scherer Lumber Company site adjacent to the Boom Island Park and BF Nelson Park and the current improvements underway, will allow greater connectivity to both parks, Graco Corporation's International Headquarters, and the newest park in the Minneapolis Park System, the Sheridan Memorial Park. As part of the planning however, we must include complete connections to the Lowry Avenue Bridge and northward toward the City's edge.

The Plymouth Avenue Bridge (that connects the North West River road in North Minneapolis across the river to Northeast Minneapolis between the Boom Island and former Scherer Brothers site) was funded for repairs that were completed for vehicle traffic in 2012 by the City of Minneapolis. The remaining repair work affords a unique opportunity for the Park Board and the city of Minneapolis Public Works department, and the Third Ward Council office to include the extension and connections between North and Northeast biking and walking as a part of the bridge repair. The inclusion also connects North Minneapolis across the Plymouth Ave Bridge to BF Nelson and Boom Island Parks going North to the former Scherer Brothers site and along Graco headquarters to Sheridan Park going North to the city's edge.

In addition, the Plymouth Avenue Bridge connects to the Boom Island BF Nelson Parks Bike Trails going South along the Riverfront to Hennepin, 1st Ave Northeast to Downtown and to the Stone Arch Bridge across to South Minneapolis and the Downtown business district. Going East the Boom Island BF Nelson Parks trails connect to 5th Avenue NE bikeway which connects to 5th Street Northeast and extends

the bike trail South into Southeast Minneapolis, 1st and Hennepin, Central Avenue to the University of Minnesota, and the Stone Arch Bridge, into South Minneapolis and the Downtown business district and the University of Minnesota West Bank district. These important connections in collaboration with the Plymouth Avenue Bridge repair expands biking/walking experience to a broad range of users, and connects North, Northeast, Southeast, and South Minneapolis thus completing critical connections to and around our city.

The unprecedented opportunity to collaborate in order to extend our biking options in this area, to expand our boulevards, trees and other green amenities, and to include Graco and others in the greening of this area for our city should not be missed. The Parks Superintendent, the Public works director, and President John Erwin and I have informally committed to such a plan, but the Plymouth Avenue bridge repair plans do not include a formal commitment to such a strategy. The potential of extending the trails planned for the Boom Island, BF Nelson Parks, and former Scherer Brothers site Park along an easement by the Graco Headquarters to the Sheridan Memorial park and the Bridge needs to be included in the RiverFirst plan as a top priority or this opportunity will be missed!

The former Scherer Brothers site is the most, “project ready,” with the advance work of the park board to secure funding for cleanup and trail connections, however the realistic, economic, and practical needs of the community need to be coupled with the romantic, glossy pictures of the ideal.

The former Scherer Brothers site, BF Nelson Park, and Boom Island Park are located in successful residential and commercial nodes that enjoy the respect of the gentle combination of ecological, residential, commercial, and recreational functions coexisting and thriving. The community would expect no less in the future. I cannot stress the importance of the economic commitment that has been made by the residents, businesses of this area, and my commitment to work with the Parks Board and their staff, our businesses, and our residential community toward mutual success.

We are all stewards of our great riverfront, a riverfront that birthed a great city. It is the heart and soul of how we define ourselves and is how the world finds us on the world map.

It is the fly-over zone for thousands of migratory animals and it is our namesake. In all of this, we are defining our legacy. It is our string of pearls. It is not only the 13 defined miles in the RiverFirst project, but it the River, as we look North or South to our commitment beyond.

The St. Anthony Falls area is beyond the scope of the project, but due to the historic, natural and economic potential I encourage be included in the project planning area. To separate and or ignore the unique sites in the city and the world would be a mistake. The St. Anthony Falls Historic District is an economic, ecological, and a historic opportunity. The most recent designation of the Pillsbury A Mill one of the 11 most endangered historic buildings in the United States has added National significance to

the development of the Mill District area. To put the Pillsbury A Mill in a historic context equivalent to Mount Vernon also retains the same historic designation. Several development proposals are in actively examining this area. It is in the interest of the Minneapolis Parks system, the National Parks Service, the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board, the University of Minnesota, the University of Minnesota District Alliance, our Neighborhoods, others, and the city of Minneapolis to collaborate in order to insure the full potential is accomplished along with the proposed 13-mile identified area in the RiverFirst plan.

In recognition of our past, I encourage the Park Board to embrace the history of our indigenous people who held our great assets, for generations, close to their hearts. It was the roar of the St. Anthony Falls that stifled the cries of the women in the birthing area along our river, and it was the lost Islands such as the Spirit Island where family members were honored and buried; it is our obligation to celebrate and thank those who were our intergenerational caretakers.

As this project unfolds, I ask that we all commit to the exceptional and not the expedient, remembering our legacy, significance, and potential of this unprecedented opportunity.

I thank each of you and pledge my support to work toward a Riverfront that wows each of us with natural wonder, that is a place to reflect in the quiet that only our natural environment can supply, that encourages us to look up to the sky, that we share with world, and welcome the glory that is accomplished by thoughtful decisions.

Diane Hofstede

610 Ramsey St.

Minneapolis, MN 55413