

Above the Falls

Policy Review and Implementation Study (ATF-PRIS)

Background. In 2000 a far-reaching vision for the City's upper riverfront, entitled *Above the Falls: A Master Plan for the Upper River in Minneapolis*, was adopted by both the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. The plan calls for continuous park frontage along both sides of the river, new residential neighborhoods, and job growth despite a reduced industrial footprint. Since its adoption, significant implementation steps have been taken, including park and trail expansion, renovation of the Grain Belt complex, and establishment of the Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership. Property redevelopment, envisioned to unfold over several decades, has been modest to date.

City Council Direction. Much has happened in the decade since adoption of the *Above the Falls* plan that bears on its redevelopment objectives. Concern over the cumulative loss of industrial land and jobs resulted in the

2006 topical study entitled *Industrial Land Use and Employment Policy Plan*. Questions have arisen concerning the practicality and cost of sweeping land use conversion along the upper river. And existing property owners have requested more certainty regarding the timeline of redevelopment so that they can make better investment decisions. In response to these considerations, the Minneapolis City Council directed staff to "explore policy and regulatory strategies for providing existing property owners clearer expectations about the phasing of long-range land use transitions", and to analyze "potential impacts of the [*Above the Falls* land use guidance] related to the extent and phasing of the . . . transition from industrial to nonindustrial development."

Phased Work Plan. The Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) is undertaking this study, titled *Above the Falls Policy Review and Implementation Study*, in response to City Council direction. Its objective is to address questions about the redevelopment vision in *Above the Falls*, recommend adjustments to that vision if warranted, and take steps to advance its implementation. The project will be phased as follows:

- 1) **Analysis** of the land use and development recommendations of *Above the Falls*—with a focus on the feasibility and desirability of different development futures
- 2) **Revisions** to *Above the Falls* and related documents as appropriate
- 3) **Rezoning** of property, and consideration of implementation strategies that provide clearer expectations about the timing of development transitions

Process. The project is being led by city staff with broad public and stakeholder engagement. Key stakeholders include the Minneapolis City Council, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership, the Above the Falls Citizen Advisory Committee, neighborhood and business organizations, and property owners. Work began in late 2009.

Study Area. The study area includes property between the Camden Bridge on the North, 8th Avenue on the South, Interstate 94 on the West and Marshall Street on the East.



Above the Falls Implementation Steps Since Its Adoption in 2000

- **Grain Belt.** The Grain Belt Brew House is a historic landmark that was renovated between 2000 and 2002 as commercial office space. The Wagon Shed and Shops Buildings were sold to the Minneapolis Public Library and were renovated as the Pierre-Bottineau Library. The Warehouse and Bottling House structures were sold to Artspace for use as commercial lease space. One historic structure awaits renovation and reuse and that is the Office Building, scheduled for sale and rehabilitation in 2009.
- **Lowry Avenue Corridor Plan.** This 2002 plan established laid the groundwork for the reconstruction of Lowry Avenue, and established land use and development guidance for the corridor.
- **Upper Harbor Terminal Redevelopment Study.** This 2004 study developed and evaluated three scenarios for redevelopment of the Upper Harbor Terminal. It contributed to the thinking concerning how the UHT might be reused, but it was not formally approved by the City Council.
- **Marshall River Run Housing Development.** The Marshall River Run project is a mixed income multifamily housing development constructed in 2005 with ownership and rental components. The rental component is a three story building with 74 housing units. It required pollution remediation and received TIF pay-as-you-go financing from the City of Minneapolis in addition to other gap financing. The ownership component was 11 market rate townhome units fronting on Marshall Avenue.
- **Industrial Land Use and Employment Policy Plan.** This 2006 analysis was partly prompted by Above the Falls and other plans that envisioned industrial to residential conversion. It explored the adequacy of industrially zoned land and proposed policies to preserve certain remaining industrial properties. It adopted Employment Districts that are consistent with the land use objectives of the Above the Falls plan.
- **Edgewater Park.** The Master Plan for this park was approved in 1996 and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board constructed this park in May through October 2006 with funding from the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO). Artistic elements highlighted in this project include: "Park Landmarks" that are interpretive nodes of Minneapolis and St. Paul along the river, signage interpreting cultural and historical stories, no-mow turf, porous concrete, pavers and gravel pave system, and a River Overlook with seating area.
- **UHT Historical Survey.** Completed in the fall of 2007, this survey was done to satisfy, in part, a preliminary analysis in the Upper Harbor Terminal Redevelopment Study that suggested that the Upper Mississippi Harbor Development appeared to meet two National Register criteria. In addition, the ATF Master Plan provides a dramatically different vision for the area than currently exists. This survey will inform potential historic interpretation for this site.
- **Construction of Phase I trails and landscaping.** The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board undertook trail and park construction in 2007 & 2008 on the west bank of the Mississippi between Plymouth Avenue and the Burlington Northern railroad bridge north of West Broadway Avenue. Bicycle and walking trails were constructed consistent with the model used elsewhere in the Grand Rounds system—along with landscaping and park improvements. Other improvements remain to be done in a second phase of construction.
- **Upper River Historical Survey (pending).** This survey is being done in preparation of future redevelopment activities consistent with ATF. This survey will inform future potential historic districts, sites, or interpretive opportunities.
- **Creation of Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership (MRP).** In the fall of 2008, this new nonprofit focused on the Minneapolis Mississippi riverfront was incorporated. ATF recommended the creation of such an organization, and one of its primary activities will be to foster redevelopment activity in the upper riverfront area that is consistent with ATF.
- **BF Nelson.** This 12 acre park received a \$775,000 grant from the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO) to fund the design process and initial construction to convert the property. The earthwork, preliminary trail development and shoreline, wetland and native plan restorations were completed by the end of 2008.
- **Lowry Bridge Design.** The replacement of the Lowry Avenue Bridge is currently awaiting notice from the feds to proceed. A contract may be awarded as early as this fall, with an anticipated completion date in late 2011. The replacement of the bridge may be considered a step in implementing the Above the Falls plan because the design parameters of the ATF plan were used as criteria for evaluating the proposed bridge design.
- **Sheridan Memorial Park.** The Park Board is currently making the area of the Grain Belt Campus that abuts the river into a park. Future park amenities include a memorial reflecting pool and flagpole honoring all U.S. veterans, a peace garden, a picnic area and river overlooks. The City conveyed land to the Park Board for the park in 2008. The demolition of structures on that land is to happen soon. The Park Board also acquired an additional privately-owned parcel for the park.
- **Phase 1 East Bank Trail.** The Park Board acquired some additional land upriver from the Grain Belt for the planned Phase I east bank trail.
- **North Mississippi Park.** This park has undergone additional phases of development since the ATF Plan was adopted.
- **Additional Development Projects.** Other projects completed since ATF approval include the Graco Expansion (which includes provision of an easement for a trail along the river), Riverview Homes, the Alley, and some North Washington Jobs Park projects (DHL, Stremel Manufacturing, and the pending Standard Heating)
- **Coloplast Headquarters development.** The construction of the North American headquarters of Danish medical device company Coloplast, consistent w/ ATF land use and development guidance. The \$35 million campus, located on a 5.4 acre site on the bank of the Mississippi River, will be LEED certified and will include one of the company's three global Innovation Centers. The 178,000 square foot facility will house approximately 500 employees in sales, marketing, and research and development. Public funding for the project consists of \$2.9 million in Tax Increment Financing, \$500,000 from the State of Minnesota Investment Fund loan program, and \$944,500 in environmental remediation grants.
- **The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth.** The Above the Falls land use plan was fully incorporated into the future land use maps of the draft Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth.