

## River First Initiative and Waterworks Park

*“The RiverFIRST proposal is critical to the creation of a larger regional parks and trails network, as well as ecological and infrastructure system. ... When realized, the RiverFIRST proposal will enhance our regional identity and reinforce our role as civic leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”*  
(Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board 2012)

**Key features:** Restored shoreline, riparian plantings and stormwater management

**Location:** Minneapolis, Minnesota

**Lead entity:** Minneapolis Park Foundation

**Status:** Design phase complete

**Cost:** \$23,800,000 (estimated construction cost)

**Size:** 4 acres (Walljasper 2014)



Figure 1, Waterworks park conceptual design.

### 1.1 RIVERFIRST INITIATIVE AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The RiverFIRST (R1) initiative has a 20 year vision to improve 5.5 miles of riverfront for both human enjoyment and wildlife habitat. The plan consists of “8 interconnected riverfront park-based projects, which will connect with 6 regional or national parks, trails, or byways” (RiverFirst 2015). These projects aim to:

- Utilize parks as an engine for economic development.
- Transform the river from a barrier to a connector by integrating parks into existing infrastructure and connecting both sides of the river.
- Re-establish the Mississippi as a defining feature of Minneapolis’ civic identity.

(Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board 2012)

Each project will follow the four R1 design principles:

- **Go with the Flow:** Focus on the benefits of a subtractive approach, stripping away unnecessary infrastructure in a natural setting to reveal the true character of a place.
- **Design with Topography:** Use the topographic setting to your advantage. Design habitat, urban, and recreational features through a range of topographies that will optimize desired outcomes such as energy harvesting or stormwater management.
- **Both/And:** Seemingly conflicting entities, such as an industrial park and nature reserve, can co-exist in close proximity to each other.
- **Park Plus:** R1 parks go beyond the classic view of parks as simple gathering places. R1 parks will reduce our energy consumption by promoting environmental stewardship, reducing maintenance costs, and supporting health and safety.

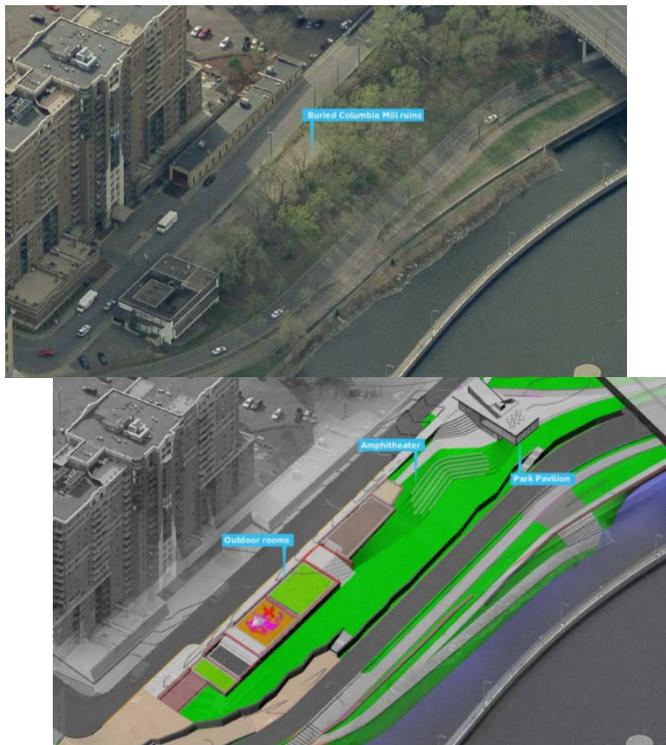
(Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board 2012)



Figure 2, Northside Wetlands Park, a RiverFIRST priority project.

## 1.2 WATERWORKS PARK

Waterworks Park in Minneapolis, Minnesota is a R1 Signature Park. This park is situated on the Mississippi River adjacent to St. Anthony Falls, the only true waterfall on the river. Waterworks Park aims to increase recreational opportunities, improve stormwater management, and protect historical monuments. Recreational opportunities include an outdoor amphitheater, outdoor rooms for programmed activities, a pavilion, improved bike paths, and pedestrian access to the river.



**Figure 3, Waterworks Park conceptual design, existing (left) and proposed (right).**

Stormwater will be managed at Waterworks Park through use of rain gardens and permeable paving to increase infiltration into the subsoil. (Minneapolis Parks Foundation 2014)

Historic preservation is a major focus of the Waterworks Park design. Ruins from two historic mills, a canal and gatehouse, and a historic seawall are located within park boundaries. (Minneapolis Parks Foundation 2014)

The historic Cataract Mill and its canal and gatehouse are situated within Waterworks Park at the southeastern end. A ruin wall from the Cataract Mill will be incorporated into the final design, while currently buried canal and gatehouse ruins will be unearthed and incorporated into a fountain and event space. (Minneapolis Parks Foundation 2014)



**Figure 4: Incorporation of historic canal and gatehouse into fountain and event space.**

The Columbia Mill is also located within the park on the south side, with ruin walls still visible today. Part of the wall has been incorporated into the historic Fuji-ya building. The design includes removing and historically recording the Fuji-ya building (bottom left of figure 3), while treating the walls to preserve them. The Columbia Mill walls will be incorporated into the outdoor rooms in the final design. (Minneapolis Parks Foundation 2014)



**Figure 5, Columbia Mill ruins.**

## References

- Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. "RiverFIRST: A Park Design Proposal and Implementation Framework for the Minneapolis Upper Riverfront". RiverFIRST. March 15, 2012. Web. September 3, 2015. <[http://riverfirst.com/wp-content/themes/riverfirst/docs/MRDI\\_Book\\_April\\_2012.pdf](http://riverfirst.com/wp-content/themes/riverfirst/docs/MRDI_Book_April_2012.pdf)>
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## Figure References

- Figure 1: Minneapolis Parks Foundation. *Waterworks park conceptual design*. Digital Image. Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. October 23, 2014. Web. September 4, 2015. <[https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/project\\_updates/2014/10/15/255/view\\_october\\_presentation](https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/project_updates/2014/10/15/255/view_october_presentation)>
- Figure 2: Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. *Northside Wetlands Park*. RiverFIRST. Digital Image. March 15, 2012. Web. September 3, 2015. <[http://riverfirst.com/wp-content/themes/riverfirst/docs/MRDI\\_Book\\_April\\_2012.pdf](http://riverfirst.com/wp-content/themes/riverfirst/docs/MRDI_Book_April_2012.pdf)>
- Figure 3: Minneapolis Parks Foundation. *Buried Columbia Mill ruins*. Digital Image. Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. October 23, 2014. Web. September 4, 2015. <[https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/project\\_updates/2014/10/15/255/view\\_october\\_presentation](https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/project_updates/2014/10/15/255/view_october_presentation)>
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Figure 4: Minneapolis Parks Foundation. *Canal Programming/Events*. Digital Image. Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. October 23, 2014. Web. September 4, 2015. <[https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/project\\_updates/2014/10/15/255/view\\_october\\_presentation](https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/project_updates/2014/10/15/255/view_october_presentation)>.

Figure 5: Minneapolis Parks Foundation. *Columbia + Bassett Mill Ruins/Now and Then*. Digital Image. Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. October 23, 2014. Web. September 4, 2015. <[https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/project\\_updates/2014/10/15/255/view\\_october\\_presentation](https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/project_updates/2014/10/15/255/view_october_presentation)>.

## Image References

Columbia Mill Ruins: Minneapolis Parks Foundation. *Columbia + Bassett Mill Ruins/Now and Then*. Digital Image. Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. October 23, 2014. Web. September 4, 2015. <[https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/project\\_updates/2014/10/15/255/view\\_october\\_presentation](https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/project_updates/2014/10/15/255/view_october_presentation)>.

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Waterworks historic gatehouse: Minneapolis Parks Foundation. *Canal Programming/Events*. Digital Image. Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. October 23, 2014. Web. September 4, 2015. <[https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/project\\_updates/2014/10/15/255/view\\_october\\_presentation](https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/project_updates/2014/10/15/255/view_october_presentation)>.

Waterworks park conceptual design: Minneapolis Parks Foundation. *Waterworks park conceptual design*. Digital Image. Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. October 23, 2014. Web. September 4, 2015. <[https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/project\\_updates/2014/10/15/255/view\\_october\\_presentation](https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/project_updates/2014/10/15/255/view_october_presentation)>.

Waterworks park ruin location: Minneapolis Parks Foundation. *Buried Columbia Mill ruins*. Digital Image. Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. October 23, 2014. Web. September 4, 2015. <[https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/project\\_updates/2014/10/15/255/view\\_october\\_presentation](https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/project_updates/2014/10/15/255/view_october_presentation)>.

Waterworks park ruin location after: Minneapolis Parks Foundation. *Buried Columbia Mill ruins*

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