Riverfront Vitality Project

A comprehensive look at the Minneapolis Riverfront

What gets measured gets done

minneapolis
RIVERFRONT
partnership

Riverfront Vitality Project
A comprehensive look at the Minneapolis Riverfront

What gets measured gets done

Partner organizations

City of Minneapolis
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
Macalester College
The Humphrey School at the University of Minnesota
Hennepin County
Metro Transit
Minnesota Historical Society

Prepared by Mary Matze for the Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership
October, 2013

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The Riverfront Vitality Project

A note about the project

The Mississippi River is a precious asset to both the City of Minneapolis, the region, and its beneficiaries. Its power as an asset is visible in the Central Riverfront where new developments are announced almost daily. Its beauty as an asset is visible throughout the Lower Gorge. And, its potential as an asset is captured in the visionary *Above the Falls Plan* and the *Above the Falls Regional Parks Master Plan*.

A year ago, the Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership (MRP) launched the Riverfront Vitality Project. The primary purpose of this exciting Project is to examine how well the city is doing in capturing the Riverfront's full potential.

In this report you will find the Project's initial effort to document the "State of the Minneapolis Riverfront" across five key indicators: Economic Health; Environmental Health; Cultural Resources; Riverfront Access; and Public Perception. Taken together, these indicators provide a broad, yet balanced perspective on where we are today. When updated annually, the indicators will track the results of public and private investments, providing a clear understanding of where progress is occurring – or not occurring – toward achieving the goals of city and park plans.

We hope you find the information in the Project report so interesting that you will be inspired to spread the word about the importance of riverfront revitalization. Building public awareness is the critical first step toward inspiring the level of leadership and investment needed to capture the full potential of the Minneapolis Riverfront.

On behalf of everyone associated with MRP, thank you for your interest in our precious asset, the Mississippi River.

Thomas Johnson
Board Chair, Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership
October 2013

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Introduction

Revitalization of the Minneapolis Riverfront is a challenging proposition. While significant progress has been made along the Central Riverfront, it has taken some forty years. Efforts are just now getting underway along the Upper River. But given the recent legislative constraints on the role that local government can play in the development arena, public investment along the Upper River will need to be much more strategic, with private leadership and private financing playing a more significant role.

Enter the Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership (MRP). MRP's legislatively defined purpose is to "support and facilitate the coordinated revitalization of the Mississippi riverfront within the city of Minneapolis."[1] To establish a foundation for fulfilling its purpose, MRP launched the Riverfront Vitality Project. This Project seeks to identify and understand the existing data that captures the Riverfront's current status and, as time passes, will establish the trend lines showing how much progress toward a revitalized Riverfront has being achieved in response to public and private investment.

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[1]   Chapter 314, Laws of Minnesota 2008

The Five Indicators

The Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership identified five indicators to achieve a broad understanding of the current state of the Minneapolis riverfront. Based on data that can be tracked over time, the indicators will provide a clearer understanding of where progress is occurring or not occurring— toward achieving the goals of City and Park plans. The indicators and their measures are:

1. Economic Health
Investment • Change in Property Tax • Jobs and Wages

2. Environmental Health
MPCA Sites • Fishability • Swimmability

3. Cultural Resources
Historic Resources • Venues and Events

4. Riverfront Access
Access Points • Bus Routes • Gaps in Trails and Parkways • Parks Adjacent to the River

5. Public Perception
National View of the Riverfront • Park Usage • Intercept Studies

Terms

***Above the Falls Plan* (2000)** and the ***Above the Falls Plan Update* (2013)** are comprehensive and visionary plans for riverfront development from the Plymouth Avenue Bridge to the northern city limits. The *Above the Falls* plans were created and approved by the City of Minneapolis to guide development of all types along the Upper River.

Above the Falls Regional Parks Master Plan is a joint effort by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and the City of Minneapolis to plan for parks in the Upper River. The update to this plan is currently going through the approval process.

RiverFirst Plan is a 20-year vision for Mississippi riverfront parks. This vision was approved by the Minneapolis Park Board in 2012. Elements of this vision have been incorporated into the *Above the Falls Regional Parks Master Plan*.

The ***Riverfront*** as used in this report includes the area from the river to the park boulevards, plus another one half mile inland. Where no park boulevards exist an equivalent line was used. One half mile is generally accepted as the distance that Americans will walk to a destination (Miller, 1999).

The riverfront is divided into three sections: Upper River, Central Riverfront, and Lower Gorge. The boundaries of these sections are shown on the following page.

Upper River

Central Riverfront

Lower Gorge

3.4 square miles

The Upper River is bounded by Plymouth Avenue Bridge on the south and the border of Minneapolis to the north. This area is also referred to as "Above the Falls" in many City of Minneapolis and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board documents.

2.0 square miles

The Central Riverfront is bounded by the Plymouth Avenue Bridge to the north and the Washington Avenue Bridge to the south.

2.8 square miles

The Lower Gorge is the segment of riverfront south of the Washington Avenue Bridge to the southern border of Minneapolis.

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Economic Health

Investment ● Change in Property Tax ● Jobs and Wages
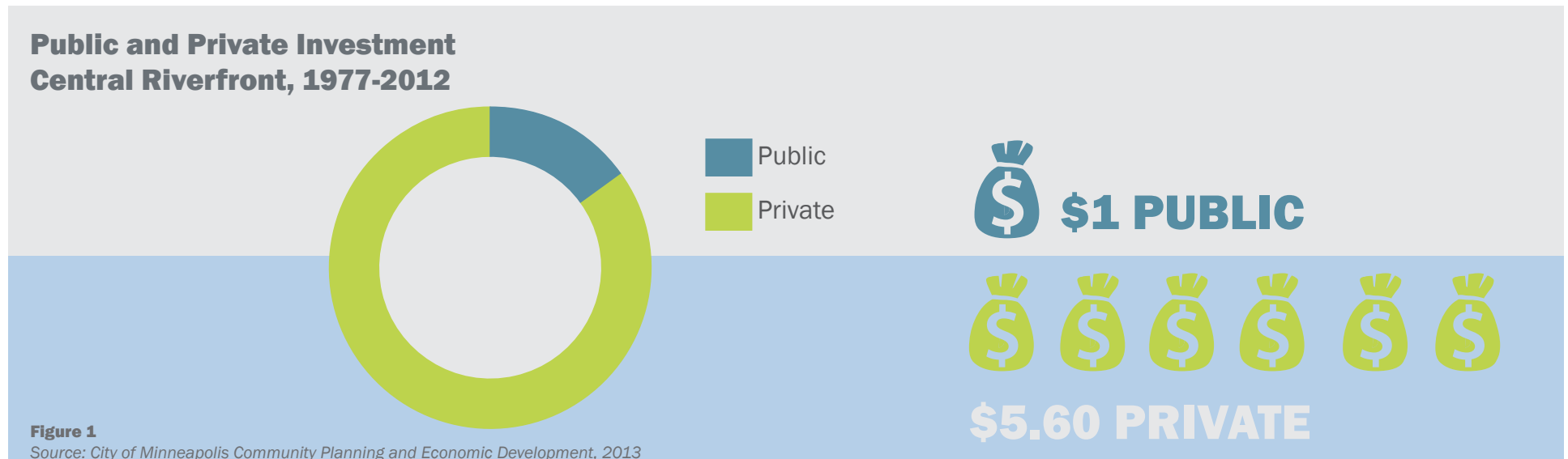
Economic Health
Investment

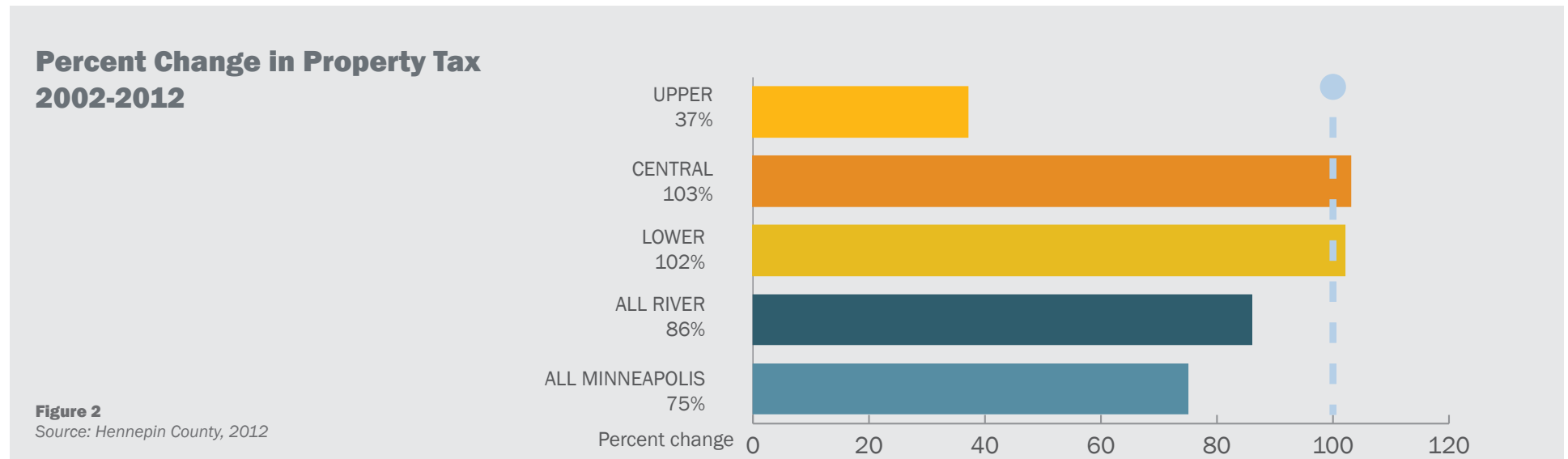**Redeveloping Central Riverfront: Public dollars and private development**

The redevelopment of the Central Riverfront shows the importance of public investment to encourage private sector development. Figure 1, below, shows the relationship between public investment and private development in the Central Riverfront. Since the late 1970's, approximately $340 million public dollars have been invested in the Central Riverfront, spurring $1.9 billion in private development. Expressed as a ratio, for every public dollar spent ($1), the private sector spent $5.60.

$340 Million - - - - - - - - - - - → **$1.9 Billion**

Public and Private Investment
Central Riverfront, 1977-2012

- Public
- Private

$1 PUBLIC

$5.60 PRIVATE

Figure 1
Source: City of Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development, 2013

Percent Change in Property Tax

Figure 2 shows the change in property taxes from 2002 to 2012. The City of Minneapolis experienced a 75% increase, while the Central Riverfront and Lower Gorge changed by 103% and 102%. The Upper River experienced the lowest increase in property taxes.

Percent Change in Property Tax 2002-2012

UPPER
37%

CENTRAL
103%

LOWER
102%

ALL RIVER
86%

ALL MINNEAPOLIS
75%

Percent change   0   20   40   60   80   100   120

Figure 2
Source: Hennepin County, 2012

Economic Health

Jobs and Wages

Jobs in the Riverfront

In 2011, the total number of jobs in the Minneapolis Riverfront area was 70,757. Figure 3, on the following page, shows the total number of jobs by riverfront segment. The Central Riverfront has the highest number of jobs in the study area at 40,881, followed by Lower Gorge at 11,878, and the Upper River at 9,498. Figures 4-6 on the following page show the distribution of jobs in each section of the riverfront. Figure 7 shows the distribution of wages within each section of the river.

Figure 8, below, shows the top three types of jobs in each segment of the riverfront. The highest percentage of jobs in the Upper River are in manufacturing at 27%, followed by wholesale and health care at 12%. The Central River has the highest percentage of jobs at 38%, primarily from the University of Minnesota, followed by professional jobs at 10%, and health care jobs at 9%.

Further research on the Economy

- Worker residence location
- Impact of parks on tax revenue
- Tracking public and private investment in all sections of the river
- Residential and commercial investment in existing properties
- Number of housing units

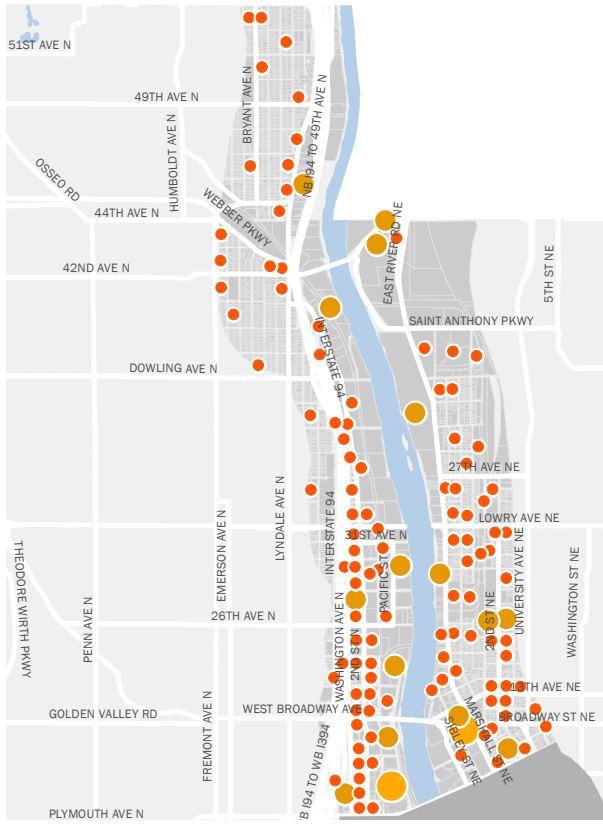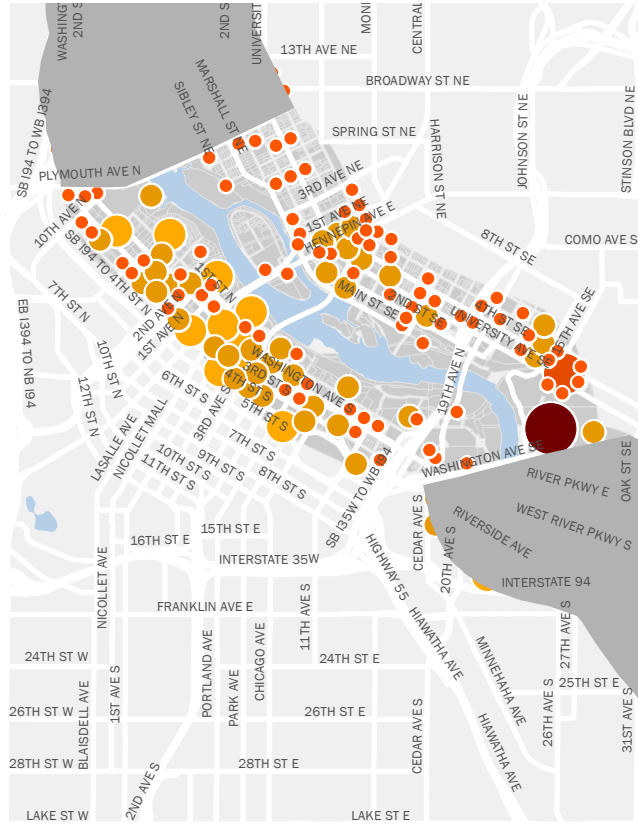*Figure 3-8* Source U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, 2011

Top three job types in each section of the Riverfront

Upper River

- Healthcare
- Wholesale
- Manufacturing
- All Others

12% 12% 27%

Central River

- Healthcare
- Education
- Professional
- All Others

9% 38% 10%

Lower Gorge

- Healthcare
- Education
- Management
- All Others

46% 17% 12%

Figure 8

Jobs and Wages
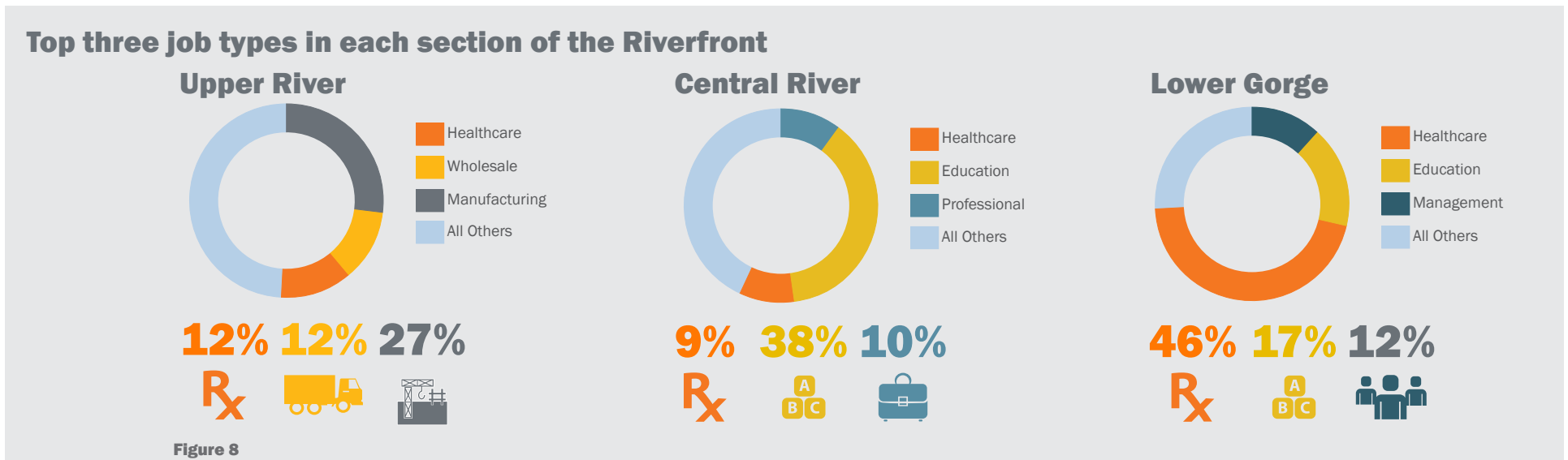
Upper River

Figure 4

Central Riverfront

Figure 5

Lower Gorge

Figure 6

Total Jobs

UPPER
9,498

CENTRAL
49,881

LOWER GORGE
11,378

Figure 3

Wages
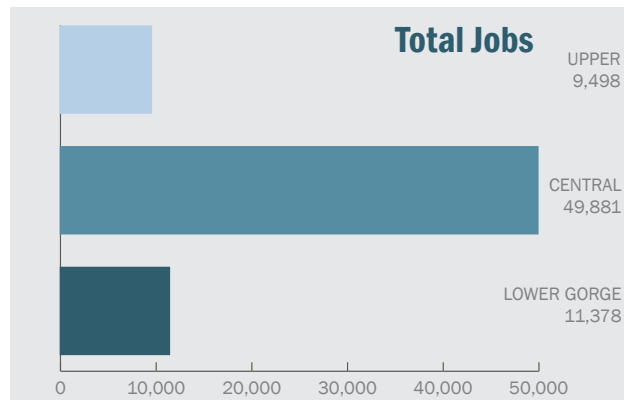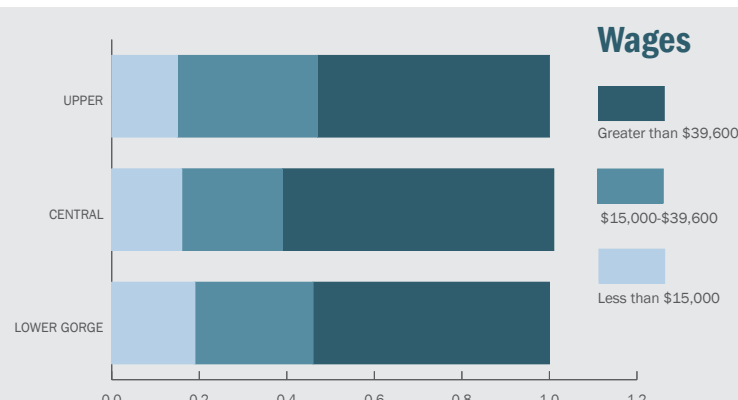
UPPER

CENTRAL

LOWER GORGE

Greater than $39,600

$15,000-$39,600

Less than $15,000
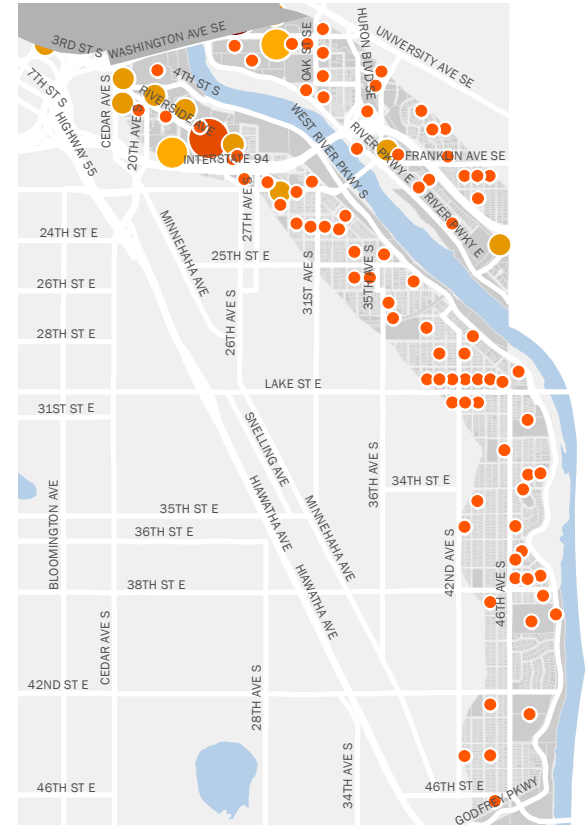
Figure 7

Number of Jobs by Census Block

- 1-168
- 169-654
- 655-1,497
- 1,498-5,887
- 5,888-17,499
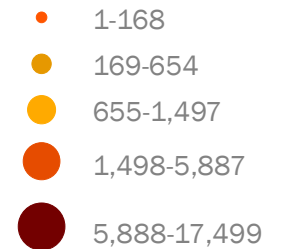
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Environmental Health

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Sites • Fishability • Swimmability
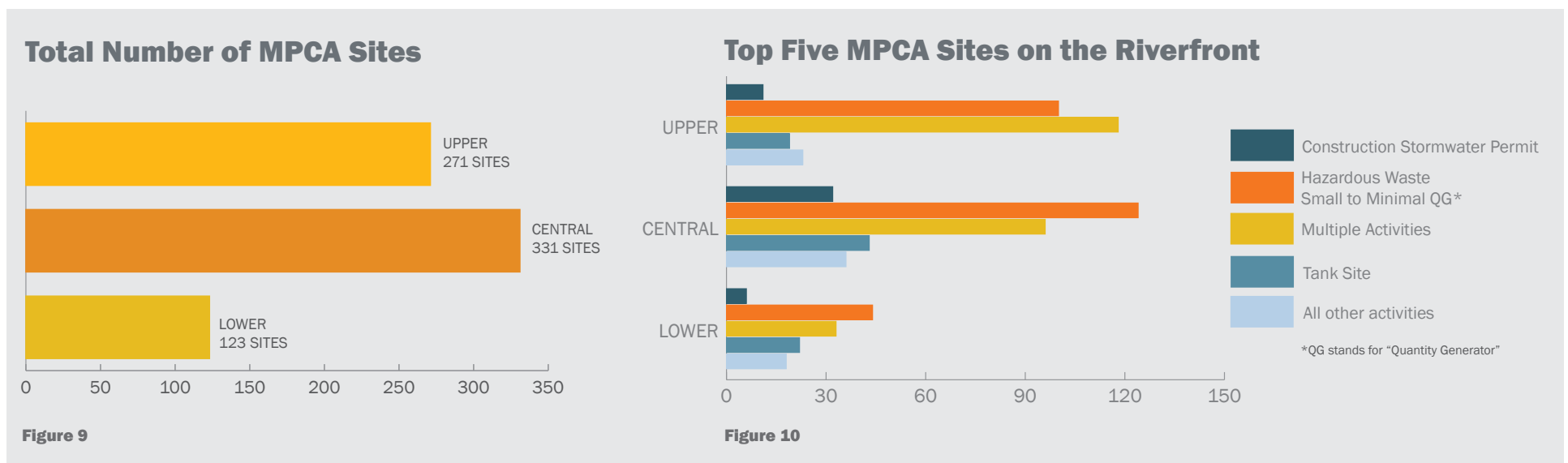
Environmental Health
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Sites

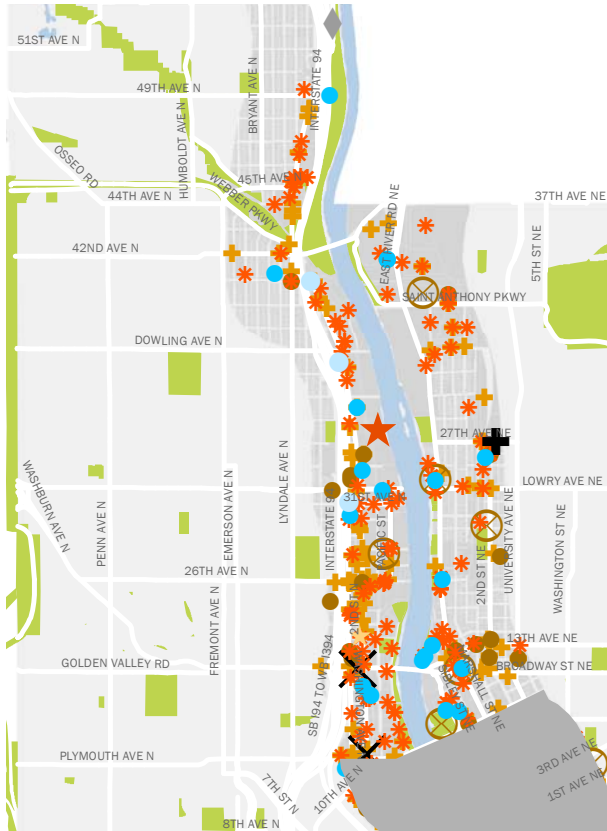**Potentially contaminated sites and environmental permits and registrations**

Figure 9 shows the total number of sites listed by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) that are potentially contaminated or have registered environmental permits with the MPCA (activities). The Upper River and Central Riverfront have the highest number of sites that are potentially contaminated or have registered environmental permits, at 271 sites and 331 sites, respectively. Figures 11-13 shows MPCA activities that are occuring in each segment of the riverfront.

Figure 10 shows the top five types of MPCA activities by riverfront segment. Due to the varied historical and contemporary uses of the riverfront, all three segments show similar types of activity trends. The Upper River has the highest number of sites that have "multiple activities", or categories of MPCA activities, while the Lower Gorge has a wider distribution of "all other" activities.

Figures 9-13 *Source: "What's in My Neighborhood?" Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Mapping Tool, August 2013*
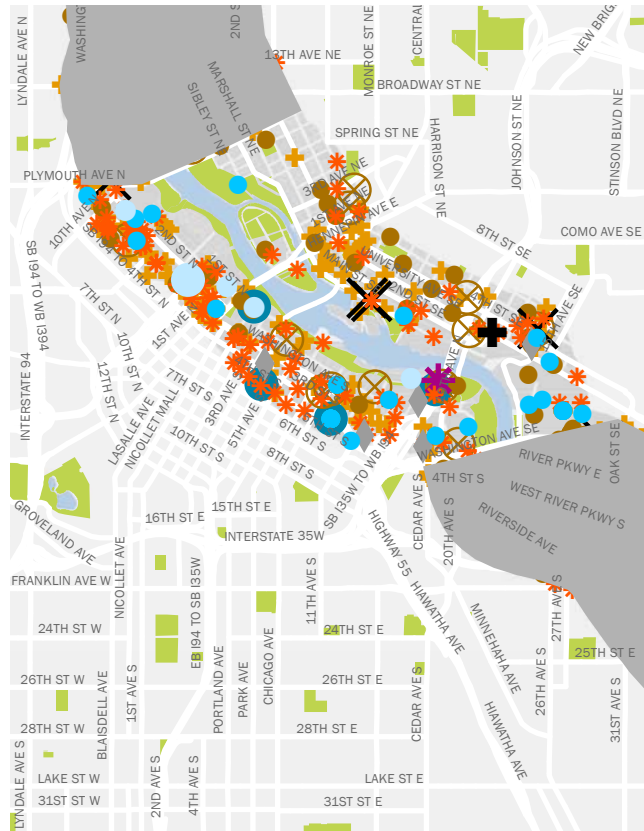
Total Number of MPCA Sites

UPPER
271 SITES

CENTRAL
331 SITES

LOWER
123 SITES

Figure 9

Top Five MPCA Sites on the Riverfront

UPPER

CENTRAL

LOWER

- Construction Stormwater Permit
- Hazardous Waste Small to Minimal QG*
- Multiple Activities
- Tank Site
- All other activities

*QG stands for "Quantity Generator"

Figure 10

MPCA Sites

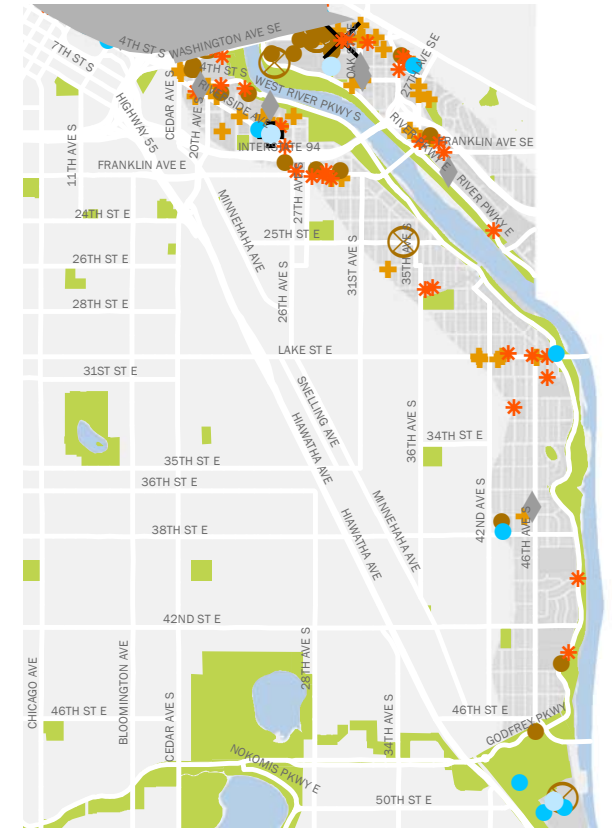## Upper River

Figures 11

Central Riverfront

Figures 12

Lower Gorge

Figures 13

MPCA Activity

- 🔵 Air Permit
- 🟧 CERCLIS Site
- 🔵 CSW Site Subdivision
- ◉ MS4 Project
- 🔵 Construction Stormwater Permit
- 🔵 Industrial Stormwater Permit
- 🟢 Feedlot

- ✚ Hazardous Waste, LQG
- ⭐ Landfill, Permitted By Rule
- ⭐ Landfill, Open
- ⭐ Landfill, Closed
- ◆ Leak Site
- ✳ Multiple Activities
- ✕ Petroleum Brownfield
- ⊕ RCRA Cleanup

- 🟢 State Assessment Site
- ✳ Superfund Project
- 🟤 Tank Site
- △ Unpermitted Dump Site
- ⊗ Voluntary Investigation & Cleanup (VIC)
- 🔵 Wastewater Discharger
- ➕ Hazardous Waste, Small to Minimal QG

Definitions of MPCA Activities are listed on their web site at:

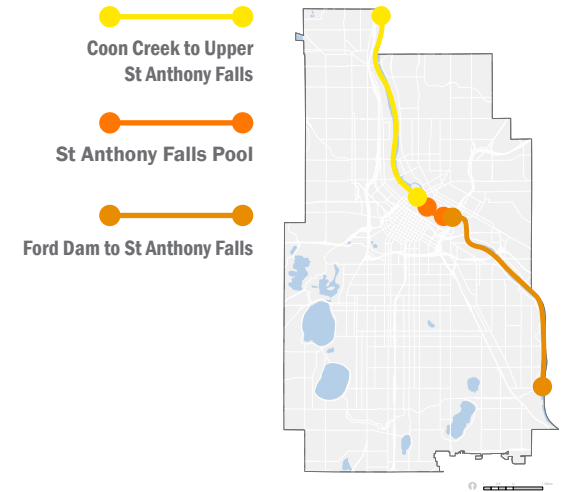http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/data/wimn-whats-in-my-neighborhood/whats-in-my-neighborhood-glossary.html

Environmental Health
Fishability

Fish Population

While there is no current, comprehensive survey that looks at the overall populations of fish in the Minneapolis sections of the Mississippi River, fish populations have rebounded since the early 20th century (Russell & Weller, 2013). A 2009 survey from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources looked at the population of fish from the St. Anthony Falls to the Ford Dam. Figure 14 shows the results of the survey. http://www.epa.gov/owow/tmdl/guidance.html Bass, Common Carp, and Freshwater Drum were among the highest volumes of fish caught.[1]

Coon Creek to Upper St Anthony Falls

St Anthony Falls Pool

Ford Dam to St Anthony Falls

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[1]   Researchers noted several limitations to their data sampling. First was in ineffectiveness of electromagnetic fishing at depths greater than 20 feet, preventing measures beyond the shorelines of the Mississippi; second was the increase in electromagnetic technology since 1995; third was the inconsistency of populations measured from 1995 to 2009. Finally, the assessment of fish population was completed on one day, not over a series of days. Given these limitations to the data, we cannot fully understand how fish populations have changed over recent time, and at this time we don't have a complete understanding of existing, thriving populations.

Populations and diversity
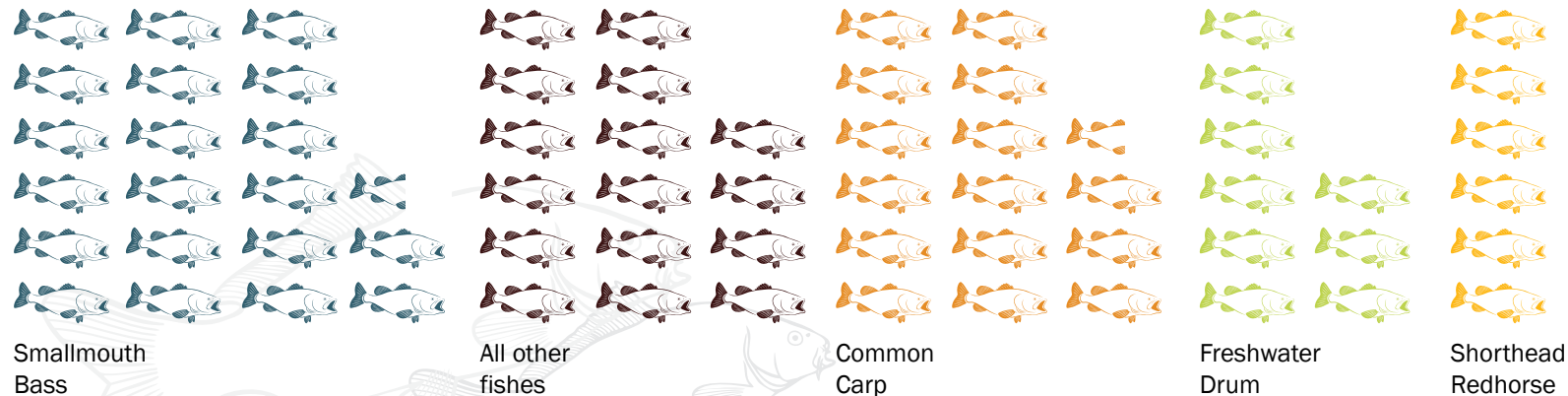## Ford Dam to St Anthony Falls

Smallmouth Bass

All other fishes

Common Carp

Freshwater Drum

Shorthead Redhorse

Figure 14 Fish species found on August 10, 2009 in the Ford Dam to St. Anthony Falls pool.
Source: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

=10 Fish

Fish Consumption

There are still restrictions on fish consumption for the general population and even tighter restrictions for pregnant women and children. Figure 16 shows the recommended consumption guidelines for fish caught in the Mississippi River between the Coon Rapids Dam and the Ford Dam. Most fish caught in this portion of the river can be consumed, but residents must monitor the frequency of consumption.

"For an urban area the Twin Cities is **a bountiful fishery**, with some of the **cleanest river water** in the country."

—Dennis Anderson, *Star Tribune*

what can we eat?

1 x week
Northern Pike
Carp
Largemouth bass
Walleye
Smallmouth Bass
Channel catfish

It is recommended that mothers and children follow size guidelines for weekly consumption of smallmouth bass and channel catfish.

1 x month
Smallmouth Bass - larger than 13"
Channel catfish - larger than 20"

365 days / year
Bluegill

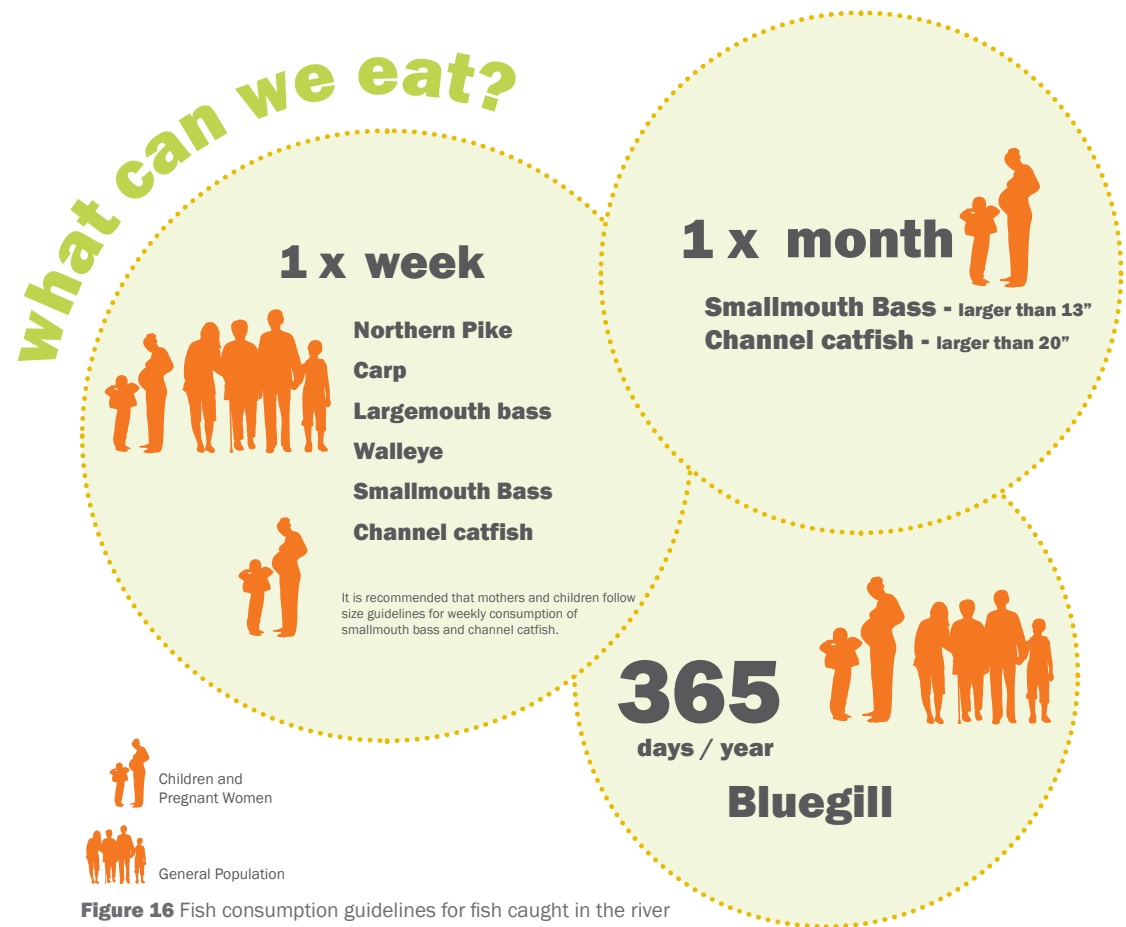Children and Pregnant Women

General Population

Figure 16 Fish consumption guidelines for fish caught in the river between the Coon Rapids Dam and the Ford Dam.
Source: Minnesota Department of Health, 2012.

Environmental Health
Swimmability

Bacteria in water

The MPCA monitors the presence of *E. Coli* in the Mississippi River—a bacteria from human and animal sources commonly found in waterbodies. *E. Coli* levels are indicators of waterborne pathogens that can be harmful to swimmers (LeFevre, et al., 2013). The EPA notes that fecal coliform is the primary cause of impairment for aquatic recreation in the Twin Cities (Environmental Protection Agency, 2010). Generally, the bacteria levels in the Mississippi River between "Coon Rapids and St. Paul have *average* bacteria levels that are too high," for aquatic recreation (Russell & Weller, 2013).

The Mississippi River segments in Twin Cities metropolitan area have the highest levels of bacteria in the state (*ibid*). Figure 17, below, shows that humans and pets account for the highest sources of bacterial water contamination in the Minneapolis segments of the river.

Further research on the Environment
- Refinement of soil contamination due to land uses over time
- Refinement of types of pollution at MPCA sites
- Understanding fish populations
- Comparison of swimmability of local lakes to the river

Potential Bacteria (E. Coli) Sources to the Mississippi River by Sub-Watershed

Metropolitan Watershed Name	Human		Livestock Requiring Registration				Livestock not requiring registration	Pets		Wildlife		
	Raw Sewage	Land application of treated sewage	Grazing	Partially Housed; no runoff Controls	Land Application of manure; no mixing into soil	Land Application; Mixed into soil	Partially housed; No Runoff Controls	Impervious Surfaces	Pervious Surfaces	Impervious Surfaces	Pervious Surfaces	Water and Wetlands
Coon Creek to Upper St Anthony Falls	↗	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	▲	↓	↓	↓	↓
Upper Saint Anthony Falls to Lower Saint Anthony Falls	▲					↓		▲	↓	↓	↓	↓
Lower Saint Anthony Falls to Lock and Dam # 1 (Ford Dam)	▲	↓	↓	↓		↓		▲	↓	↓	↓	↓

↓ Low (accounts for 0-25% of runoff in river segment)	↗ Medium-high (accounts for 51-75% of runoff in river segment)	▲ High (accounts for 75-100% of runoff in river segment)	◯ No data

Figure 17 Source *Upper Mississippi River Bacteria TMDL Study and Protection Plan,* Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, February 2013.

Coon Creek to Upper St Anthony Falls

St Anthony Falls Pool

Ford Dam to St Anthony Falls
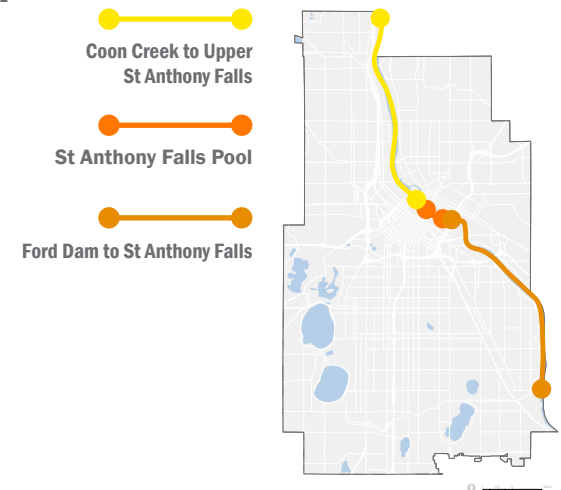
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Cultural Resources

Historical Resources ● Venues and Events

Cultural Resources
## Historical Resources

History of the River

Figure 18 shows a list of historic landmarks and districts recognized by the City of Minneapolis in the riverfront. The Central Riverfront is one of the city's most historic areas. The St. Anthony Falls Historic District includes a large number of significant structures and landscape features that are protected by the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission and the National Register of Historic Places. Preserving and interpreting the area's history has been a major goal of the city's 40-year redevelopment efforts.

The history of the Upper River is less well known but also rich. Both the river itself and its shores were used by Native Americans, early settlers, traders, and the business community as a trade route. Lumbering, manufacturing, and brewing also shaped the Upper River. There is a need to further research, identify and protect the history of the neighborhoods, entertainment and commercial areas, and river edges in the Upper River.

Historic Landmarks and Districts in the Study Area

Upper River	Central	Lower Gorge
Kinnard-Haines Press Company	Saint Anthony Falls Historic District	Cappelen Memorial Bridge (Franklin Avenue Bridge)
Grain Belt Brewery (Minneapolis Brewing Company)	North Loop Warehouse Historic District	Jacob Hafstad House
Little Sisters of the Poor Home for the Aged	Fifth Street SE Historic District	Malcolm Willey House
Concrete Block Row Houses	University of Minnesota Greek Letter Historic District	
	Milwaukee Road Depot and Freight House	
	Northern Implement Company	
	Advance Thresher/Emerson-Newton Implement Company	
	Minneapolis City Hall / Municipal Building	
	Grain Exchange Building (Chamber of Commerce Building)	
	Flour Exchange Building	
	Augsburg Old Main	
	John A Widstrom Tenement	
	Green DeLaittre Wholesale Grocery Company Warehouse	

Figure 18 Source: Heritage Landmarks and Districts Landmarks Map, City of Minneapolis, 2013

Route   Alternate Route
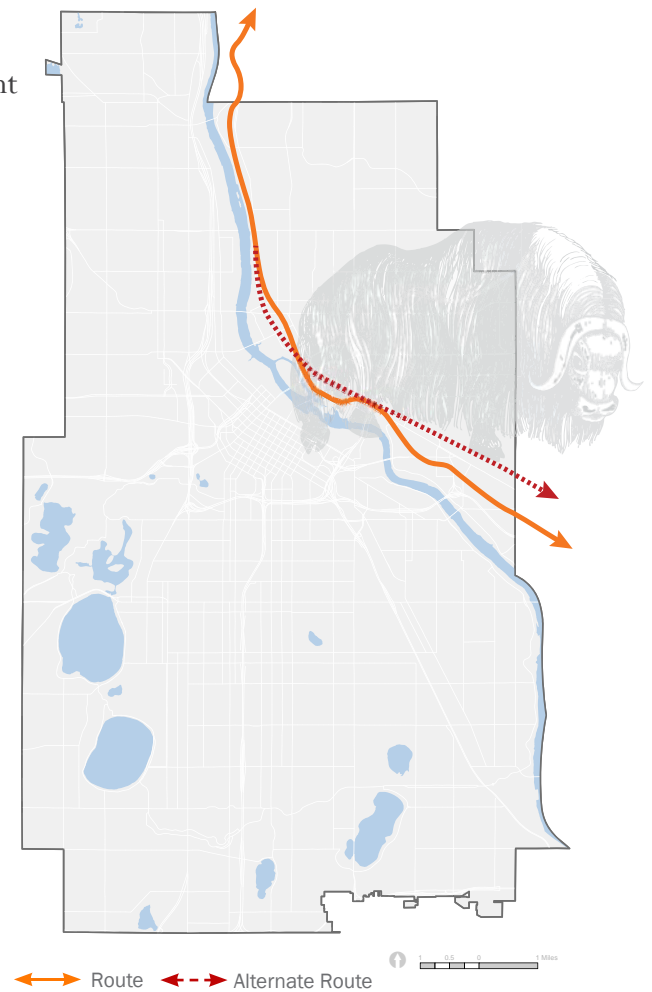
Red River Oxcart Trail Route

Figure 19 The Red River Oxcart Trail is an example of a historic trade route shaping the landscape of the river. Source: The Red River Trails: Oxcart Routes Between St. Paul and the Selkirk Settlement 1820 - 1870, pub 1979.

Venues

The number of art galleries, museums, and theaters within the riverfront were counted. Figure 20 shows a comparison of venues the three segments of the riverfront. Central River has more theaters than both Upper River and the Lower Gorge. It is also home to the only two museums in the study area. Appendix A shows a listing of all the venues that were included in the count.

Events

The riverfront is a resource for public events. The Metropolitan Council's annual parks survey shows that the Lower Gorge Parks (Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail, Minnehaha Regional Park, Mississippi Gorge Regional Park) hosted 51 events in 2012, Central Riverfront (Central Riverfront Regional Park) hosted 29 and Upper River (North Mississippi Regional Park) hosted a total of 6 events (Figure 20). Many of these events are races, as shown in Figure 22.

Venues
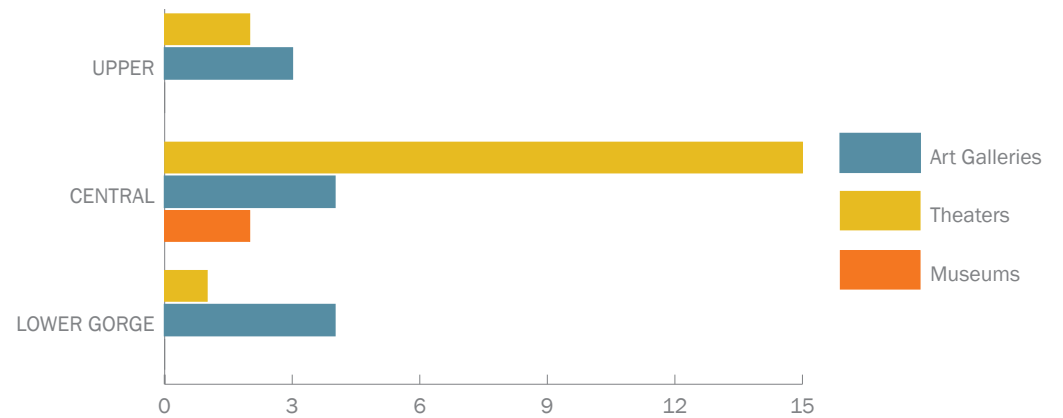### Art galleries, museums, theaters

Figure 20
Source: Twin Cities Fine Arts Gallery Guide; Theater in Minneapolis; City by Nature.

Further research on Cultural Resources
- Identification and protection of historic resources in the Upper River
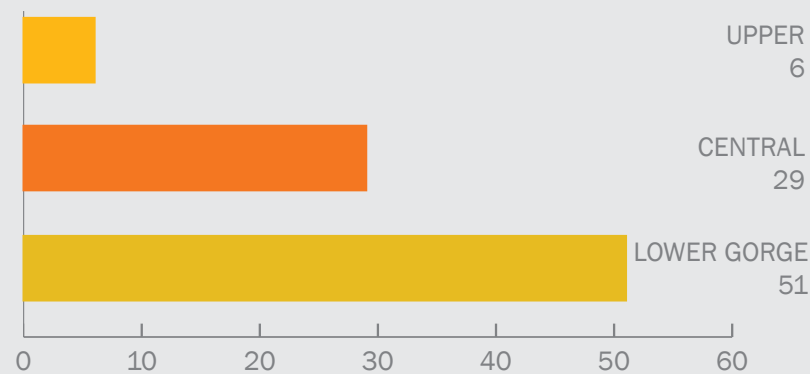
Total Events

Figure 21
Source: Metropolitan Council Regional Park Survey, 2012

Percent of events that are races

Upper River   Central River   Lower Gorge
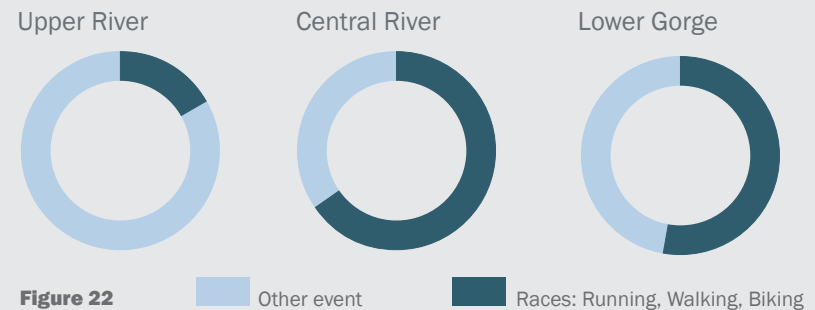
Figure 22   Other event   Races: Running, Walking, Biking

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Riverfront Access

Access Points • Bus Routes • Gaps in Trails and Parkways • Parks Adjacent to the River
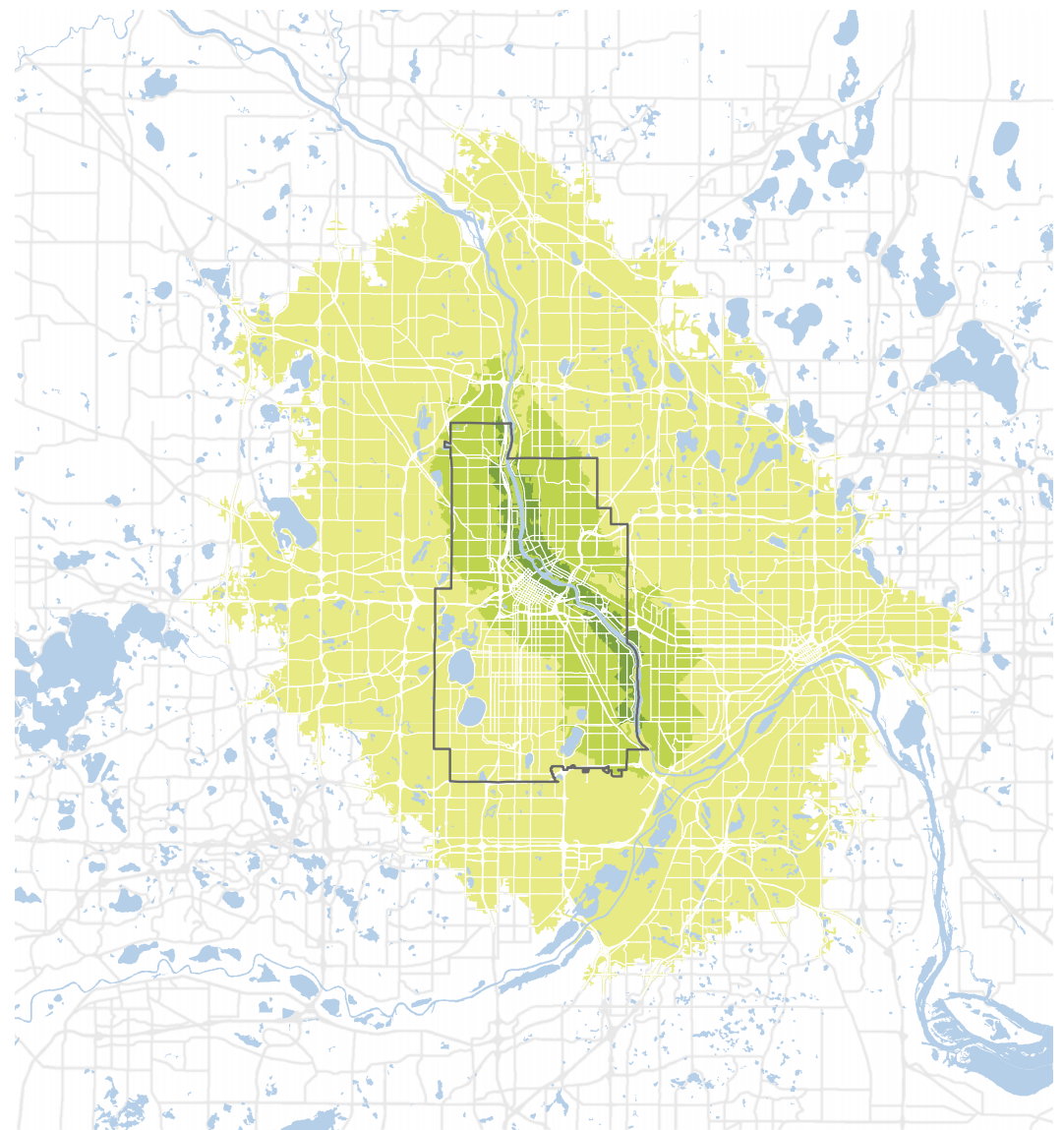
Riverfront Access

1.36 million people...
12 minutes to the river

Traveling to the River

Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership worked with the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs to assess the ease at which residents of Minneapolis could get to the river. Based on a walking speed of 2.5 miles per hour, it was determined that it would take someone 12 minutes to walk one half mile (Hoisington Koegler Group, 2008)[1]. The distance that could be traveled by bicycle and by car in 12 minutes was also calculated. Researchers based travel time by bike on an average speed of 12 miles per hour and travel time by car was based on average travel times legally posted speed limits.

Figure 23 shows the area covered by a 12 minute drive, bike, or walk. A total of 1.36 million people live within a 12 minute drive to the river.

12 Minutes of Travel

- Walking
- Biking
- Car

Figure 23

---

1   To complete these calculations, students used the Network Analyst tool in the program ArcMap, version 10.1, produced by ESRI. The Network Analyst tool is used in the public and private sector to determine travel times and increase efficiency in travel networks. Learn more about the Network Analyst tool here: http://www.esri.com/software/arcgis/extensions/networkanalyst.
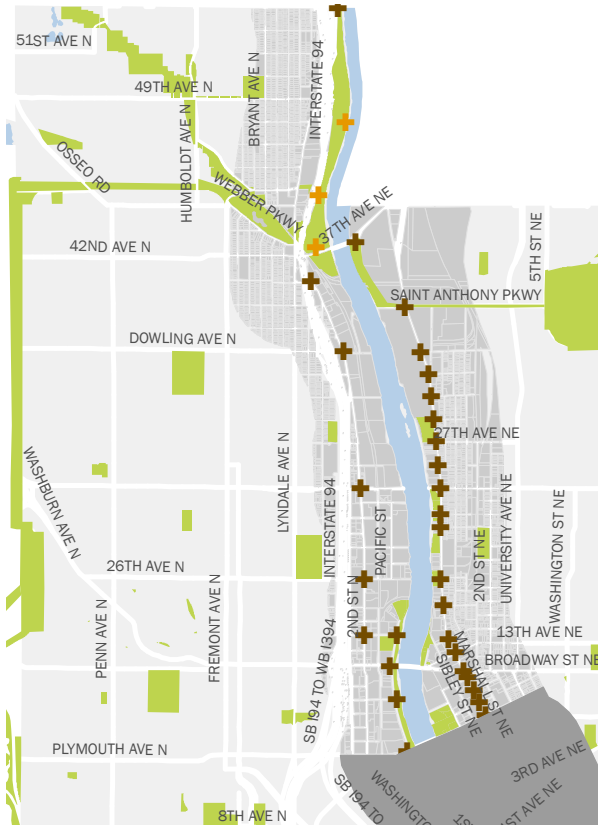
Upper River

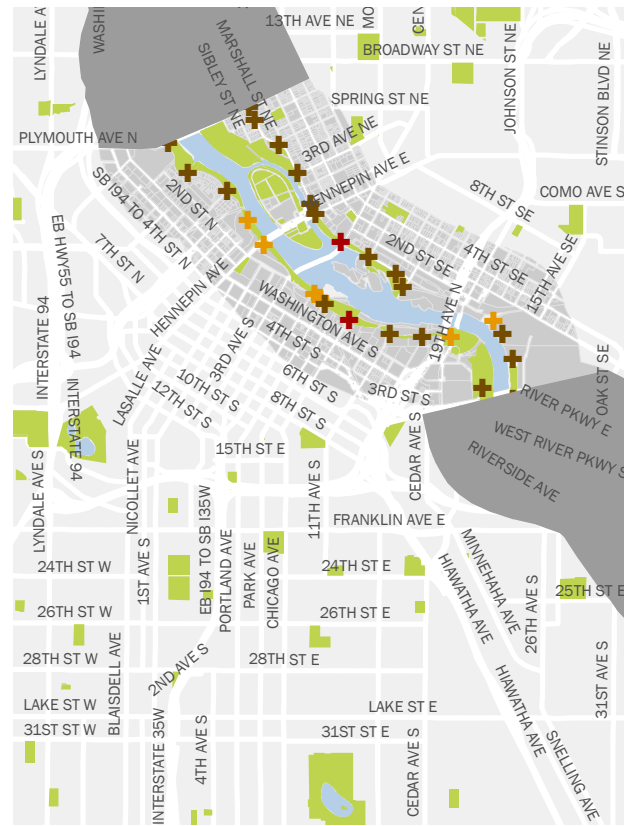**Figure 24**

Central Riverfront

Figure 25

Lower Gorge

Figure 26

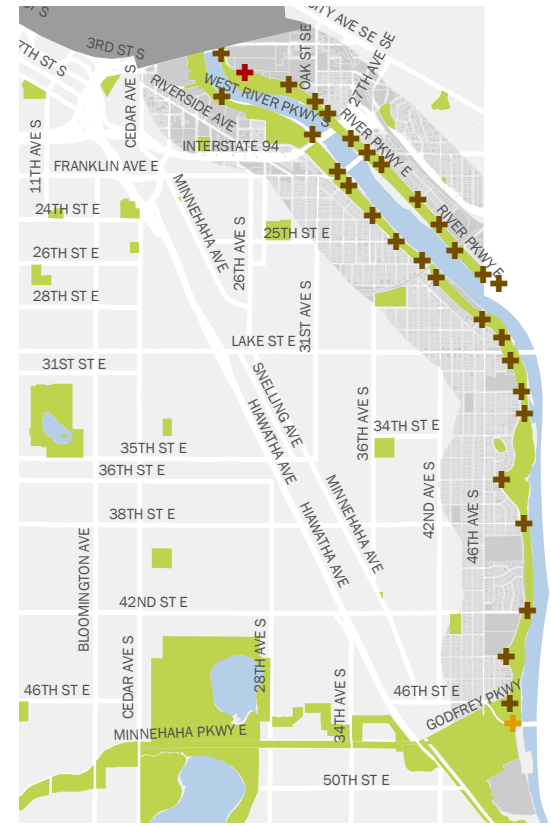### Type of Access

+ Walk

+ Walk, Bike

+ Walk, Bike, Car

Figure 23-27
Source data: *Mississippi Riverfront : Indicators of Accessibility & Use (2013) Petesch, Chen et. al.*

Access Points: Where can you reach the river?

The point where roads intersect the parkways along the river were documented. The results of this analysis are shown in Figures 24-26. Figure 27 breaks down the access points by river segment to show the average number of access points per mile. Northeast Minneapolis has the highest number of intersection points per mile at 8.7 while North Minneapolis has the lowest at 2.9 points per mile.
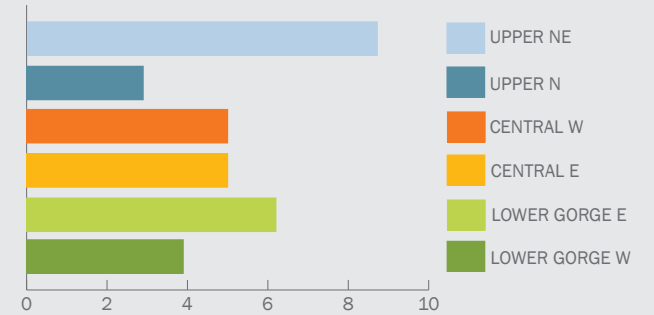
Average access points per mile

UPPER NE
UPPER N
CENTRAL W
CENTRAL E
LOWER GORGE E
LOWER GORGE W

Figure 27

Riverfront Access
Parks and Trails

Gaps

Figures 28-30 show the gaps in the trails and parkways along the riverfront. The Upper River has the longest gaps, while the Lower Gorge maintains continuous trails and parkways. Figure 31 shows the percent of riverfront adjacent to parks. The Riverfront in the Lower Gorge has the highest percentage of riverfront adjacent to parks while less than half of the Upper Riverfront is adjacent to parks

Further research on Access
- Footpaths
- Experience of reaching the river

Bus Routes

North of Hennepin Avenue, the majority of public transit routes travel in a North-South direction. Of the four bridges north of Hennepin Avenue, only Lowry Avenue and Broadway Avenue are serviced by a single bus route (Route 32). Bus route number 32 is a low frequency stop bus that runs from 6:15 AM to 7:47 PM (Metro Transit). Figure 32 shows the number of bus routes that cross the river in each segment.

Total number of bus routes that cross the river

UPPER
1 Route

CENTRAL
25 Routes

LOWER GORGE
6 Routes

0   5   10   15   20   25
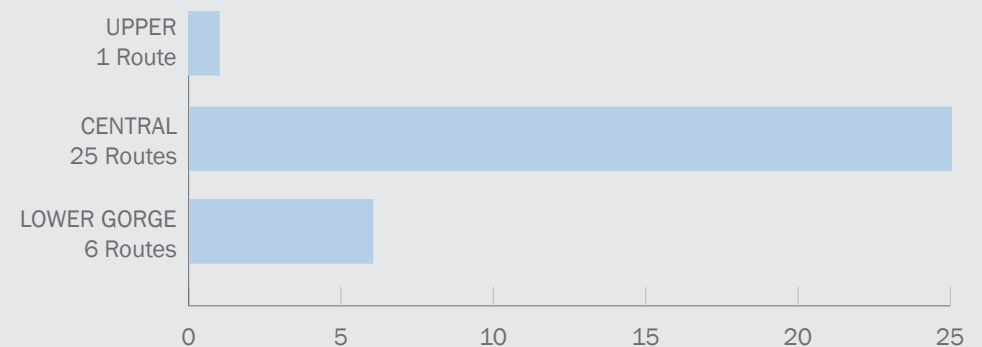
Figure 32, *Source: Metro Transit, 2013*

Upper River

Figure 28

Central Riverfront
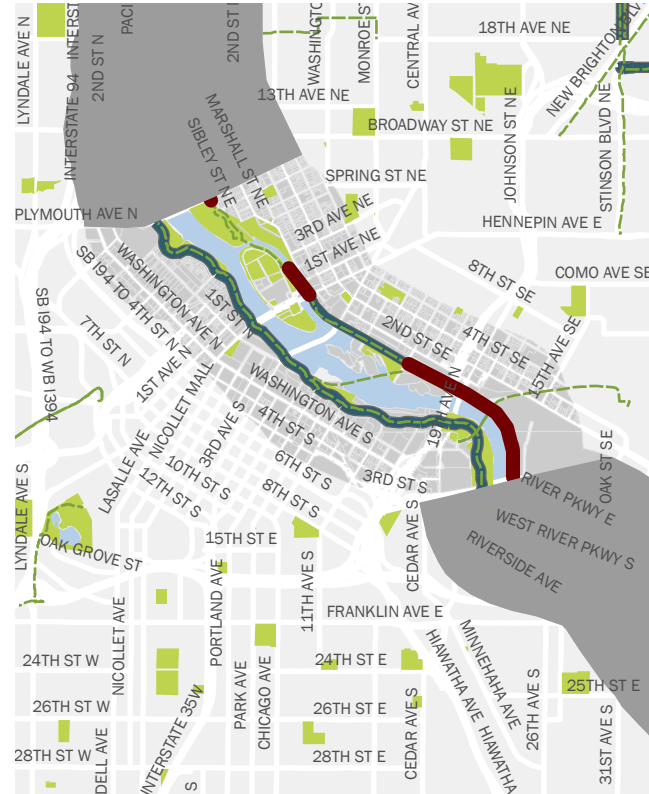
Figure 29

Lower Gorge

Figure 30

Legend

- Gaps
- Trails
- Parkway
- Parks
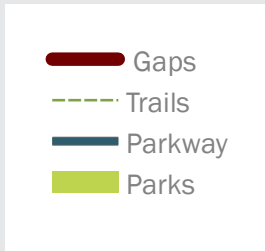
Figures 28-31
Source data: Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, 2013

Figure 31

Percent of Riverfront Adjacent to Parks

Riverfront adjacent to parks

Riverfront not adjacent to parks

Upper River
40%

Central River
70%

Lower Gorge
100%

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Public Perception

National View of the Riverfront • Park Usage • Intercept Studies

Public Perception
National and Local Trends

National Representation of the Riverfront

Understanding how people perceive the riverfront is critical to achieving effective revitalization efforts. As the public's value for all the riverfront increases, momentum will build for revitalization. The river is receiving national recognition as an asset and icon for Minneapolis. *Forbes*' August 2013 profile of the city includes the river in its descriptions, and organizations are beginning to feature the river as part of their branding strategies (Figure 33).

Further research on Public Perception
- Use of the river in Minneapolis branding
- Crime statistics
- Different perceptions of all three river segments
- Intercept surveys to fully understand how people "see" the Riverfront

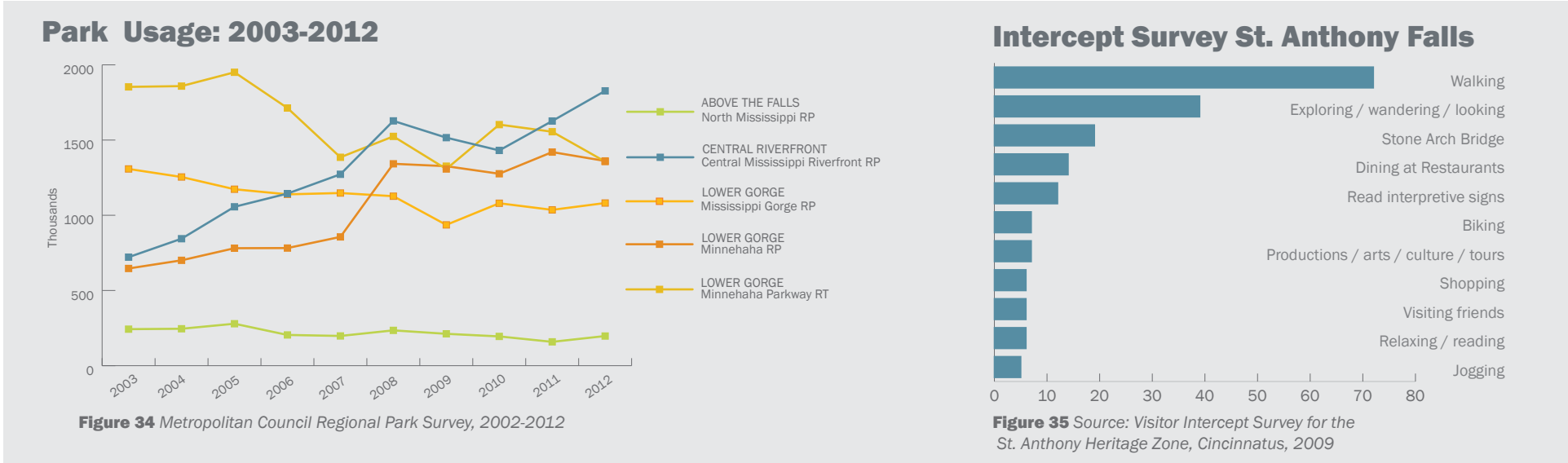**Figure 33** St. Anthony Falls is featured in The Minneapolis-St. Paul Host logo for the 2008 Republican National Convention.

"The cities are abundantly rich in water with over twenty lakes and wetlands, the **Mississippi River**, creeks and waterfalls, many connected by parkways in the Chain of Lakes and the Grand Rounds Scenic Byway."

—**Forbes.com**, *City of Minneapolis profile, August 2013*

Park Usage

Usage of riverfront area parks from 2003-2012 is shown in Figure 34. The Central Mississippi Riverfront Park and Minnehaha Regional Park saw a consistent increase over time. North Mississippi Regional Park saw consistent attendance while Mississippi Gorge Regional Park and Minnehaha Parkway Regional trail saw declines in attendance. Figure 35 shows the results of a 2009 intercept survey that asked park users their purpose in using the park. Walking and exploration were the two top reasons for their visits.

Park Usage: 2003-2012

ABOVE THE FALLS
North Mississippi RP

CENTRAL RIVERFRONT
Central Mississippi Riverfront RP

LOWER GORGE
Mississippi Gorge RP

LOWER GORGE
Minnehaha RP

LOWER GORGE
Minnehaha Parkway RT

Figure 34 *Metropolitan Council Regional Park Survey, 2002-2012*

Intercept Survey St. Anthony Falls

Walking
Exploring / wandering / looking
Stone Arch Bridge
Dining at Restaurants
Read interpretive signs
Biking
Productions / arts / culture / tours
Shopping
Visiting friends
Relaxing / reading
Jogging

Figure 35 *Source: Visitor Intercept Survey for the St. Anthony Heritage Zone, Cincinnatus, 2009*

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Summary of Findings and Going Forward

Summary of findings

Economic Health

- In the Central Riverfront, $340 million of public funds generated $1.9 billion of private sector investment, a 560% return. These figures tell a compelling story about what public investment can leverage in other segments of the riverfront, particularly the Upper River.
- During the past ten years, in comparison to the City of Minneapolis as a whole, properties in the Central River and Lower Gorge saw tax value increases that were 27% higher than the Minneapolis average. While properties in the Upper River saw increases, they were 38% less than the Minneapolis average.
- The Upper River and Lower Gorge provide a similar number of jobs with a similar wage distribution. The types of jobs vary considerably, with the Upper River providing more manufacturing jobs and the Lower Gorge segment providing more healthcare jobs. Both areas provide far fewer jobs than the Central Riverfront.

Environmental Health

- The number of contaminated or historically contaminated sites is much higher in the Upper River and Central Riverfront compared to the Lower Gorge.
- Fish are known to be generally edible, a sign of a recovering eco-system. However, research on fish population and diversity is very limited.
- Conditions for aquatic recreation must be monitored. While areas of the river may be safe to swim, bacteria is the most significant contaminant and comes from an aging sewage infrastructure and pet waste that washes into the river during storm events.

Cultural Resources

- There are numerous historic sites and districts in the study area. Strong preservation efforts have restored significant structures in Central Riverfront's Saint Anthony Falls Historic District, including the landmark Washburn-Crosby A Mill and the Stone Arch Bridge. Other buildings such as the Pillsbury A Mill are currently being redeveloped.
- The historical significance of the region along the Upper River remains under-recognized despite its significance to the development of the city as a major transportation corridor.

Riverfront Access

- For over 1.3 M people in the metro area, the Minneapolis Riverfront is within a 12-minute driving distance.
- Public access is unevenly distributed throughout the riverfront. The most opportunity for improved access exists in the Upper River.
- Public transportation exists throughout the riverfront but East-West transportation across the Mississippi is very limited.

Public Perception

- There is growing national recognition of the importance of the Mississippi River to the City of Minneapolis.
- Park usage in the Central Riverfront has seen the largest increase of any river segment over the past ten years. Usage in the Upper River, an area underserved by parks, has remained flat; the usage rate is less than one fifth that of the Central Riverfront.
- Additional research needs to be done on public perception. Current data is limited to usage counts or intercept surveys for particular segments of the riverfront.

Going forward

The Minneapolis Riverfront is one of the city's most significant assets. As competition among cities deepens, amenity-rich environments become more and more important in attracting and keeping residents and jobs.

The city's Upper River provides one of its most compelling opportunities for positive urban growth. The potential is huge: healthier places to live with access to green space, trails and the river itself; jobs that provide residents a good living; cultural venues and gathering places that enrich the community. Unlike many parts of the city, the neighborhoods along the Upper River lack many of these assets.

Redeveloping the Central Riverfront was a challenging, 40-year effort jump-started by public investment. Redeveloping the Upper River as outlined in the *Above the Falls Master Plan Update* promises to be even more challenging. Since the early 2000s, the legal authority of public bodies to bring about large scale change in land use has been significantly weakened.

The *Above the Falls Plan Update* identifies four primary challenges:
- State laws[1] now limit the legal power of government to acquire land for private development.
- Many public funding sources are tied to short term redevelopment.
- Private property owners with nonconforming use permits now have stronger rights to maintain land in perpetuity.
- Public sector budgets have become increasingly limited. The *Above the Falls Plan* notes that public funding sources are primarily committed to fixed route transit service (CPED Long Range Planning Division, 2013).

Overcoming these challenges will be difficult. While there is no silver bullet, certain directions are apparent. Investment and leadership will need to come from the private sector. Public investments will need to be more strategic, with a higher return. Establishing the importance of riverfront revitalization is a critical first step. It is the Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership's belief that the data and trendlines generated by the Riverfront Vitality Project will facilitate and support these directions.

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1   Minnesota passed eminent domain reform legislation in 2006. The new law states, "eminent domain may only be used for a public use or public purpose," and "public benefits of economic development, including an increase in tax base, tax revenues, employment, or general economic health, do not by themselves constitute a public use or public purpose." A more comprehensive discussion of this distinction can be found at http://www.leg.state.mn.us/lrl/issues/issues.aspx?issue=eminentdomain.

Going forward

Enhancing the Riverfront Vitality Project

The data from this report is intended to facilitate and support coordinated revitalization of the riverfront in the City of Minneapolis. To that end, Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership will share the data from this report broadly throughout the community. This will be achieved through traditional means of dissemination but also through coordinated efforts to connect with community and civic groups, local and state officials, and other organizations.

Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership will continue its efforts to fill in missing data in this report; will begin the work of expanding the Project to include other obvious indicators of revitalization—such as the number of housing units—and will continue to partner with other organizations to track the changing conditions of the Riverfront.

Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership expects this report will raise questions and provide a basis from which future examination of the riverfront can be explored and developed. Questions and suggestions for improving the Project are welcome.

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Appendix

Appendix A - Venues

Art Galleries

Upper River
NE Minneapolis Arts Association; Minneapolis
Photo Center; Easel Street Art and Sundries

Central Riverfront
Traffic Zone Center for Visual Art;
Form + Content Gallery;
Inside Out Gallery and Interact Center;
Soap Factory

Lower Gorge
Coffman Gallery; Frederick R. Weisman Art
Gallery; Katherine E Nash Gallery;
Augsburg College Art Galleries

Theaters

Upper River
Burlesque MN;
Lundstrum Center for the Performing Arts

Central Riverfront
Minnesota Sinfonia; Lab Theater; Minnesota
Opera; Interact Center; Circa Art Gallery;
Minnesota Film Arts; Soap Factory; Southern
Theater; Theater in the Round; Rarig Center;
Open Book; Northrup; Guthrie; Tedd Mann
Concert Hall; Varsity Theater

Lower Gorge
Theater Unbound

Museums

Central Riverfront
Mill City Museum;
Bell Museum

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