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GREAT RIVER PASSAGE CONSERVANCY



The Importance of Partnerships

Dear Great River Passage Supporters,

As we shared in the debut edition of this newsletter, the age of social distancing has made the Mississippi River an even more important part of Saint Paul as the River Capital.

Today, with COVID-19 restrictions tightening and winter coming on, its importance looks even clearer. For the Conservancy, this drives our work in supporting the river as a safe and welcoming source of respite and recreation for everyone in our community.

In that spirit, this edition of our newsletter keys in on partnership. Especially now, we must focus on knitting together a broad range of perspectives and a diverse community of voices as we pursue our three main projects. I hope you will take that journey with us as we move our projects forward in the new year to make Saint Paul a place where we live not just by the river—but with it. We invite you to make a year-end, tax-deductible contribution by December 31, 2020.

We are the river. Invest in our future.

In partnership,



Eric J. Jolly, Ph.D.

Great River Passage Conservancy Board Chair
President and CEO,
Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation



Mary E. deLaitre

Founding Executive Director
Great River Passage Conservancy





INSIDE THE CONSERVANCY

The Conservancy is excited to expand its leadership with the addition of two new board members, Tanya Bell and Cameron Boyd.



Tanya Bell, the founder of Grand Real Estate Advisors, is an experienced real estate developer, broker, asset manager, and trusted advisor to developers, sellers, tenants, and community leaders. A collaborator by nature, Tanya knows how to assemble the people, ideas, and financing for a successful project. Among the projects she has helped bring to life are Osborn 370, Emerald Gardens, Court International, and the Drake Bank Building.

She has served as a board member and officer for Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity, Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library, the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce, and National Association of Industrial and Office Properties.



Cameron Boyd comes to us from the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) where he works in the General Counsel's Office. While at the MAC, Cameron has overseen a wide range of legal matters, including those related to airport food, retail and passenger service concessions, labor issues, real estate leasing, and airline agreements. Notable projects include legal work related to a new hotel under construction and a major solar power installation, both at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.



Courtesy of Mississippi Park Connection (bottom left, top right, bottom right); Wilderness Inquiry (top left)



The Importance of Partnerships

One of our mottos is “we are the river.” But what do we mean by “we”? Broadly, we mean all of us. But an initiative as complex as the Great River Passage requires an especially thoughtful approach to that collective spirit.

The Conservancy prioritizes a balance of public and private partners to move our projects forward in all the ways they need to move: from fundraising to programming to navigating city or government systems. For everyone to pull in the same direction, every partner must share our vision for making Saint Paul the River Capital.

What does this look like in practice? When we approach projects like the River Learning Center, we collaborate closely with our primary partner, the City of Saint Paul, which owns the land. On the program side, we engage the National Park Service and Mississippi Parks Connection, to drive the programmatic and educational pieces of the project. Just as importantly, we partner with tribal leadership to ensure that our work integrates and celebrates Dakota culture and history.

As we work to support partnerships at several different scales, we are constantly seeking new collaborators. Just recently we initiated a partnership with Wilderness Inquiry, which has deep roots in the community and brings approximately 15,000 people to the Mississippi each year to engage in river-centered activities.

Ultimately, we stay true to the idea that partners come from all corners of the community and bring their time, expertise, and identity to the table, but most importantly each partner feels a sense of ownership and a shared commitment to bringing the project’s vision to fruition.





Living with the River

When it comes to living “with the river,” GRPC Board Member **Peter Myers** has a pretty strong track record. “Most of my life,” he says, “I’ve lived and worked close to the river. I grew up on River Road, and I can see the river right now from my office window. It’s clearly the iconic feature of the Twin Cities. The river is important to me personally—and to maintaining a sense of community in Saint Paul.”

In that spirit, Peter was excited to join the Conservancy’s board of directors in May 2020. A veteran of many boards (Minnesota Zoo, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity, and more), he is eager to join a younger organization like ours. “I’ve seen the value of strong governance, fundraising, and financial responsibility, and I’m hoping to bring that experience to the table,” says Peter. “I’m excited to get in on the ground floor of an organization that has great leadership in Dr. Jolly and Mary deLaittre.”

Peter is especially interested in “supporting nonprofits that provide valuable opportunities for people regardless of income, that offer activities that are free and open to all.” He sees the river as the perfect place for this to play out. “I’ve been excited to watch the river’s transformation over the decades,” he says. “I ride my bike regularly [along the river], and it’s great to see so many people out. The river is really a magnet for activity, and it helps people develop a sense of appreciate for nature and conservation.”

In the COVID-19 era, Peter has noticed even more people getting out into natural spaces. “People are looking for places along the river that are safe. It can really rejuvenate you.” He’s looking forward to being part of Great River Passage projects like the River Learning Center that will make the river even more accessible to all. “St. Paul is so fortunate to have this river,” says Peter. “Slowly but surely, it’s becoming part of the public consciousness. But there’s so much more to be done. These are really ambitious projects we have, and I’m energized by that.”





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P.O. Box 4974, Saint Paul, MN 55101
612-398-5989 | greatriverpassage.org

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Great River Passage Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Donations are tax-deductible to the extent of the law.

About the Great River Passage Conservancy

The **Great River Passage Conservancy** was founded in late 2018 to rally philanthropic support for the Great River Passage Initiative's river-focused projects designed to build economic vitality along Saint Paul's stretch of the Mississippi River.

These three projects—the River Learning Center and National Park Service Headquarters, East Side River District, and River Balcony—respond to the enduring qualities of the Mississippi River that link it to Saint Paul and the wider region's health, well-being, and financial sustainability.

With Saint Paul's 17 miles of river, 26 miles of river edge, and 3,500 acres of publicly owned land, we have a unique opportunity to become the River Capital and unite our region's two greatest assets: its people and one of the three great rivers of the world, the Mississippi. While this has always been a worthy goal, it feels even more essential in the COVID-19 era, when Saint Paul needs new forward-thinking projects to accelerate our city's economic recovery, build community connection, and help our river environment thrive.

Board Members

Eric J. Jolly, Ph.D. (Chair)

Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation

Tanya Bell

Grand Real Estate Advisors

Cameron Boyd

Metropolitan Airports Commission

Shelley Buck

Prairie Island Indian Community

John I. Marshall

Xcel Energy

Peter Myers

Myers Communications Group

Joe Nayquonabe Jr.

Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures

Jake Reint

Koch Companies Public Sector/
Flint Hills Resources

Mike Hahm (Ex Officio)

City of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation

Russ Stark (Ex Officio)

City of Saint Paul