

Currently

GREAT RIVER PASSAGE CONSERVANCY



Flowing Into Spring

PLUS A LOOK BACK AT 2020

Dear Great River Passage Supporters,

As we write, temperatures have climbed well above zero, and by the time you read this, spring will be back in Saint Paul and along our great river.

In this edition of *Currently*, we share what spring brings for the Conservancy, including new partners like Wilderness Inquiry who will play key roles as our capital projects continue to build momentum. As you will read on page 3, our participation in the High Line Network's Equitable Impacts Framework will create ongoing opportunities to develop those projects with equity at their center.

The coming of spring also means we have passed another milestone: one year of the pandemic. While COVID-19 upended our lives and our work over the past year, the Conservancy was proud to adapt in ways that drove our vision forward. On page 6 we take a brief look back at our 2020 accomplishments, which have set the tone for an ambitious 2021. As the river flows into a new season, we look forward to sharing new milestones that continue to unite Saint Paul's two greatest assets: its people and the Mississippi.

With the river,



Eric J. Jolly, Ph.D.
Board Chair
Great River Passage Conservancy
President and CEO,
Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation



Mary E. deLaittre
Founding Executive Director
Great River Passage Conservancy



PARTNER PROFILE

As we shared in our previous edition, strong partnerships are at the heart of the Conservancy's work. Our recently formalized partnership with **Wilderness Inquiry** will play an essential role in bringing outdoor education and recreation to our River Learning Center project.

Starting with schematic design, Wilderness Inquiry will collaborate with the Conservancy throughout the entire project, as they determine the best approach to hosting their programs at the River Learning Center. "We are excited to be partnering on this monumental project that will truly act as a national destination for river recreation, history, culture and ecology," says Wilderness Inquiry Executive Director Kim Keprios. "Nothing like this exists along Minnesota's 650 miles of the Mississippi, and we look forward to better connecting communities to our state—and our nation's—greatest natural asset."

The organization's mission—connecting people from all walks of life to the natural world through shared outdoor adventures—is the perfect fit for the River Learning Center, which aims to be the gateway to the Mississippi for thousands of students and other community members.

Designing for Equity

The Great River Passage Conservancy is a proud member of the **High Line Network**.

The High Line Network brings together a group of infrastructure reuse projects (and the people who are bringing them to life) with the goal of transforming underused infrastructure into new urban landscapes. Membership offers both practical implementation support and inspiration for members to build these positive impacts for as many people as possible.

GRPC was selected, through a competitive process, as one of six initiatives across the country to take part in the High Line Network's **2021 Equitable Impacts Framework (EIF)**.

The Equitable Impacts Development Framework will support GRPC to define our organizational approach and to set specific, meaningful, and measurable goals that maximize community benefits for our projects and programs.

To kick off this year-long engagement, we are working with Harvard Graduate School of Design students, whose research will lead to equity-driven recommendations. From there, we will partner with the Urban Institute to finalize an equitable development strategy.

Our ongoing, close communication with Dakota leaders will inform much of this journey as we continue to build a more comprehensive, integrated approach to working with tribal nation partners and native community members whose homeland the river flows through.

As we integrate a range of perspectives and voices, this equitable development focus will prioritize strategies that maximize our projects' economic, social, environmental, and cultural benefits to the River Capital community.

By joining the High Line Network, the Conservancy is raising its national profile, connecting with like-minded partners across the country to strengthen our work in making Saint Paul the River Capital—for all.

To learn more about the High Line Network, visit network.thehighline.org.

TRANSFORMING UNDERUSED INFRASTRUCTURE INTO NEW URBAN LANDSCAPES





RIVER BALCONY: A New Perspective

VJAA Architects

Spanning the full 1.5 miles of downtown Saint Paul's river bluff, our River Balcony project will reimagine our city's unique perspective on the river.

Currently heading into the schematic design phase, this new promenade will create a vibrant riverfront and stimulate economic development in downtown Saint Paul. The River Balcony will connect a series of cohesive public spaces, landmarks, and development sites, bringing the area from "edge to center" and benefiting the entire community.

- The River Balcony will enhance existing infrastructure and create new connections to and along the bluff and down to the river along Kellogg Boulevard between Eagle and Sibley streets.

- The proposed promenade includes a series of spaces for community gatherings, private development sites, civic landmarks, and public amenities that will attract new visitors and spur real estate development.
- With a mix of public and private funding committed, we are launching the River Balcony project in March with a stakeholder convening. By June we will have selected our design team, and will embark on a nine-month design process that engages deeply with stakeholders and community members to ensure we shape the project in equitable ways.

DONOR PROFILE

John Shepard is a storyteller at heart, and fortunately for the rest of us, the Mississippi River is at the heart of his stories.

A Great River Passage Conservancy donor and lifelong river advocate, John grew up in Saint Paul and first connected with the region's rivers via canoe. "As a kid, my family did canoe trips on Minnesota and Wisconsin rivers," he recalls. "Through these formative experiences, wild places and the dynamics of moving water became fascinating to me."

This intellectual and emotional passion for rivers "opened a door" to John's professional life as a storyteller and educator. "I got really excited to educate people about the wonders of our waterways and their ecological importance," he says, "so that we can understand the connections and see how what we do as humans living on a landscape flows downstream and impacts other communities."

Today, as an associate professor at Hamline University's Center for Global Environmental Education (CGEE), John uses storytelling to instill environmental literacy and stewardship among people of all ages. In that spirit, when we spoke with John for this profile, he shared the fascinating (and cautionary) tale of Saint Paul's Fountain Cave.

Once the site of a "pristine, crystal clear" stream that flowed into the Mississippi, the cave was a popular spot for Saint Paul picnics and even tours. But as time went on, John shares, "the story of the cave reflects changes in of our relationship to the river." Soon the railroads came, which led to the cave becoming a dump site for rail workers. After that came Shepard Road (named after an unrelated engineer), which sealed up the cave for good. Today, all that's left is a plaque and a storm-water outfall.

John Shepard



Stories like this, John says, illustrate how, "as technology and transportation evolved, we turned our backs on the river. But now we have the Great River Passage,

and this wonderfully important movement that is rediscovering and reembracing the river."

John is excited about tying his own work to the Conservancy's vision. In addition to hosting its River Institute and other education experiences for educators, John says CGEE has a key role to play in "making the invisible become visible." Much like the story of Fountain Cave, other historical and cultural layers often go unnoticed on our 17-mile stretch of the Mississippi. Through storytelling, John says, we can "deepen our ability to see beyond what's right in front of us."

To that end, CGEE is partnering with Dakota leaders at Lower Phalen Creek (also a GRPC partner) to create a series of interactive, multimedia stories that will be displayed on large format kiosks all around the city. By connecting river-goers to the Mississippi's cultural history, these stories will link us to "new layers of understanding and thinking that deepen and enrich our own society and the health of these natural communities we're dependent upon."

GREAT RIVER PASSAGE 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL MILESTONES

- As you read more about elsewhere in this newsletter, the Great River Passage was selected to **join the High Line Network** along with 14 other initiatives across North and Central America. A key part of this engagement is our inclusion in the Network's year-long **Equitable Impacts Framework** cohort.
- We welcomed three new board members: **Tanya Bell, Peter B. Myers, and Cameron Boyd.**
- Our three-part "Perspectives: Designing with the River" **Virtual Speaker Series** gave the community an opportunity to hear from world-renowned designers who are helping us bring the river from the edge to the center of public life in Saint Paul.
- In December we brought together leaders from Minneapolis and Saint Paul for a **virtual convening**. The event provided the space for all to present their river capital projects, meet one another, and identify opportunities for collaboration.
- Across the 17 river-spanning Twin Cities capital projects shared at the convening, more than **\$2.65 billion of investment is going into projects in Saint Paul**, a clear and inspiring sign that we are reorienting Saint Paul around the river as we aim to become the River Capital.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- Our organizational milestones shared above lay the foundation for success across our three central projects: **the River Learning Center, River Balcony, and East Side River District.** These projects will create three centers of river-oriented activity that provide diverse, authentic landscapes and equitable experiences along the Mississippi.
- The Conservancy took major steps forward in all three projects in securing funding, establishing partnerships, and moving toward schematic design kickoff.

📷 Top to bottom: Chris Tolbert; Amy Sinykin; Chris Juhn; Peter Myers



2020 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Statement of Activity	2020	2019
Total Revenue		
Without Donor Restriction	\$182,522	\$378,037
With Donor Restriction	\$215,316	\$22,500
Total Expenses	\$262,337	\$102,558
Net	\$397,838	\$297,979
Beginning Net Assets	\$297,979	\$0
Changes in Net Assets Without Donor Restriction	(\$79,815)	\$275,479
Changes in Net Assets With Donor Restriction	\$215,316	\$22,500
Net Assets	\$433,480	\$297,979

Statement of Financial Position

Total Assets	\$452,922	\$316,044
Current Liabilities	\$19,442	\$18,065
Total Net Assets	\$433,480	\$297,979
With Donor Restriction	\$237,816	\$22,500
Without Donor Restriction	\$195,664	\$275,479
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$452,922	\$316,044

Great River Passage Conservancy is grateful to the following 2019 and 2020 donors:

Contributions \$50,000+

F.R. Bigelow Foundation
Ecolab
Hardenbergh Foundation
Knight Foundation Fund
Katherine B. Andersen Foundation
Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation
Securian Financial Foundation

Contributions \$5,000 - \$49,999

Flint Hills Resources
Gordon and Jeanne Shepard Family
Fund of the Saint Paul & Minnesota
Foundation
Mardag Foundation
REI
Xcel Energy

Contributions up to \$5,000

Anonymous
John Anfinson
Margaret Arnosti
Cameron Boyd
Dana and Douglas Bruce
Shelley Buck
Nicole Buck
Jon Commers
Stephen Devereux
Emily Eschweiler
Peggy and John Ganey
Mike Hahm and Amy Brendmoen
Orville Hognander
Dr. Eric and Elizabeth Jolly
Catherine Klimek
Mark Krause
Jeff Lin
Shelby L. Macaulay
John Marshall
Richard Miller
Elizabeth B. Myers
Peter and Karla Myers
Joe and Christina Nayquonabe
Katie Nyberg
Jake Reint and Stephanie Moncada
Jim Rustad
Russell Stark
Anna Waugh
William Weber
Brenda Williams
Charlie and Julie Zelle



GREAT RIVER PASSAGE CONSERVANCY

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

 @greatriverpassage

 @grpassage

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
Flint Hills Resources

Mike Hahm (Ex Officio)
City of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation

Russ Stark (Ex Officio)
City of Saint Paul