

Currently

Great River Passage Conservancy



Flowing Forward
Into Fall

Project Updates

Dear Great River Passage Conservancy Supporter,

As the conservancy marks another seasonal transition with this fall newsletter, we also mark a big change in this opening letter. For the first time, it arrives co-authored by new Executive Director Katie Nyberg.

While fall and the coming winter see a relative stillness come to our great river, Katie steps into her role at a time of great momentum. As you'll read in the next section, the conservancy's projects are flowing forward at a pivotal time for Saint Paul, the River Capital.

Along with completion of schematic design for both the River Learning Center and River Balcony, we advocated with partners to secure \$8 million in state bonding support for the River Learning Center. Along the way, we convened all of the partners and agencies doing work on the Mississippi—no small task given the complex convergence of so many river-focused projects.

In collaboration with those partners, we are already midstream on several initiatives we'll be focusing on over the next year, including:

- Creating a strategic plan for the next 12-24 months that identifies the work of the conservancy for all three projects with measurable outcomes that, critically, are consistent with our Dakota Engagement Initiative and recently completed Equity Plan
- Leading convening and project management to advance implementation phases for the River Learning Center and River Balcony, along with community engagement for the East Side River District
- Bringing all three projects to life through community-driven programming

Thank you for joining us on this journey to transform our relationship to the river. We also invite you to give to the river. As ever, your donation turns plans into action and builds welcoming spaces where we can come together to learn, play, and connect.

With the river,



Katie Nyberg | Executive Director
Great River Passage Conservancy



Peter Myers | Board Chair
Great River Passage Conservancy
Owner, Myers Communication Group



Photo credit: Mississippi Park Connection

Mississippi River Learning Center

After completing schematic design at the end of 2022, the project was awarded \$8 million in funds from the state legislature to fully complete design, engineering, and construction documents. Meanwhile, the River Learning Center site has been full of activity. This summer our Great River Passage partners piloted several innovative programs, including Park After Dark, History Cruises, and Wonder and Wander Walks. More than 700 people attended these events at the River Learning Center site.

What's next at Mississippi River Learning Center?

- Continue community engagement through programming and special events
- Work with site partners to advance final design and engineering for the River Learning Center
- Advocate for additional funding for the center as the city has labeled the project its #1 bonding priority

River Balcony

Like the River Learning Center, the River Balcony finalized schematic design in 2022. In our first River Balcony survey, more than 80% of respondents said they felt a stronger connection to the river after seeing the project designs. We also partnered with HR&A to establish governance structure recommendations for this complex project.

What's next at River Balcony?

- Focus on helping the city transform Lambert's Landing into a gateway to downtown Saint Paul

- Engage the community through new programming and special events
- Work with partners like Ramsey County and the Science Museum to align capital projects along the balcony

East Side River District

Long disconnected from the surrounding community, this area of the river has many shared uses, including Dakota homeland and sacred sites, industry, parks and recreation, and natural areas that serve as a bird migration route.

Thanks to grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and Age-Friendly Minnesota, we will continue to work with the community, including Tribal Nations, on how to heal this compromised landscape for plants, animals, and people.

In May 2022, the Senate passed a bill establishing a task force to accelerate the clean-up at Pig's Eye landfill—an effort the conservancy was instrumental in advancing. The task force is charged with coordinating efforts to assess the Pig's Eye Superfund site and address contamination of Battle Creek, Pig's Eye Lake, and nearby groundwater. The Task Force held its first meeting in September.

What's next at East Side River District?


- Re-launch of community engagement efforts such as walking tours that allow stakeholders and community members to learn about the ESRD from locally and nationally acclaimed experts
- Participate in meetings with members of the Pig's Eye Cleanup Task Force



Photo credit: Chris Juhn



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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. All on Dakota homeland, these three projects—the River Learning Center and National Park Service Headquarters, River Balcony, and East Side River District —respond to the enduring qualities of the Mississippi River that link it to Saint Paul and the wider region's historical, cultural, environmental, and economic well-being.

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.

By advancing major projects along the Mississippi River that allow all people to experience the river in new and equitable ways, the Great River Passage Conservancy fosters environmental stewardship, community health, and economic development.

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