



MINNEAPOLIS
PARKS
FOUNDATION

November 21, 2017

Daniel P. Wolf
Executive Secretary
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Pl E #350
St. Paul MN 55101

Via electronic filing

Re: In the Matter of Xcel Energy's Renewable Development Fund (RDF) Annual Report, Tracker Account True-up, and Request for 2018 Rider Factor, PUC Docket Number E-002/M-17-712

Dear Mr. Wolf –

The Minneapolis Parks Foundation (Parks Foundation) is an independent nonprofit committed to transforming human lives through parks and public space by aligning philanthropic investment and community vision. I am writing to comment on PUC Docket No. E-002/M-17-712, in the matter regarding Xcel Energy's RDF grant to Crown Hydro. Thank you for the opportunity.

The Minneapolis Parks Foundation supports the Friends of the Lock and Dam's request that the Public Utilities Commission reconsider Xcel Energy's RDF grant to Crown Hydro. Since its inception well over a decade ago, the Crown Hydro project has failed to find footing at St. Anthony Falls because it is wholly out of step with the area's current and future use.

The Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park is one of Minnesota's most recognizable public space success stories. Leveraging strategic investment by public agencies – including the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, National Park Service, and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board – the area has grown into a regional recreation and cultural destination with 2.5 million annual visits. From 2004-2014, \$253M in public funding in the Central Riverfront generated \$1.426B in private investment, a \$5.36 rate of return. Parks and public space are a proven economic engine.

This year, the Parks Foundation, together with our partner the Minneapolis Park Board, began work on a \$30M reinvestment to the Central Riverfront Regional Park. Called Water Works, it is a community-led park project that will bring significant new historic, cultural, and recreational amenities to the most iconic location in Minnesota; its park pavilion, embedded in existing mill remnants, will be a year-round destination, while the five-acre park grounds will be enjoyed by the public 365 days a year. Water Works will open to the public in 2019. The Crown Hydro project would interfere with plans for Water Works.

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Water Works is not the only public amenity in the Central Riverfront widely embraced by the community. There is tremendous support for repurposing the Lock and Dam into a year-round visitors' center that will enhance the experience of St. Anthony Falls and the Stone Arch Bridge. As the future of the Lock and Dam is studied, the National Park Service has already increased visitorship through well-conceived programming.

In its dogged pursuit of an ill-conceived idea, the Crown Hydro project has persistently ignored the Central Riverfront's demonstrated highest and best use. For this reason, Crown Hydro has failed to find a suitable site, obtain needed permits, or start construction; all requirements under the 2017 RDF legislation, Laws 2017, Ch. 94, Article 10, Sec. 29. It's time to acknowledge Crown Hydro's lack of progress and unlikely prospects. We respectfully request the PUC to consider a recommendation for grant termination to allow a reallocation of these RDF monies to a more appropriate use.

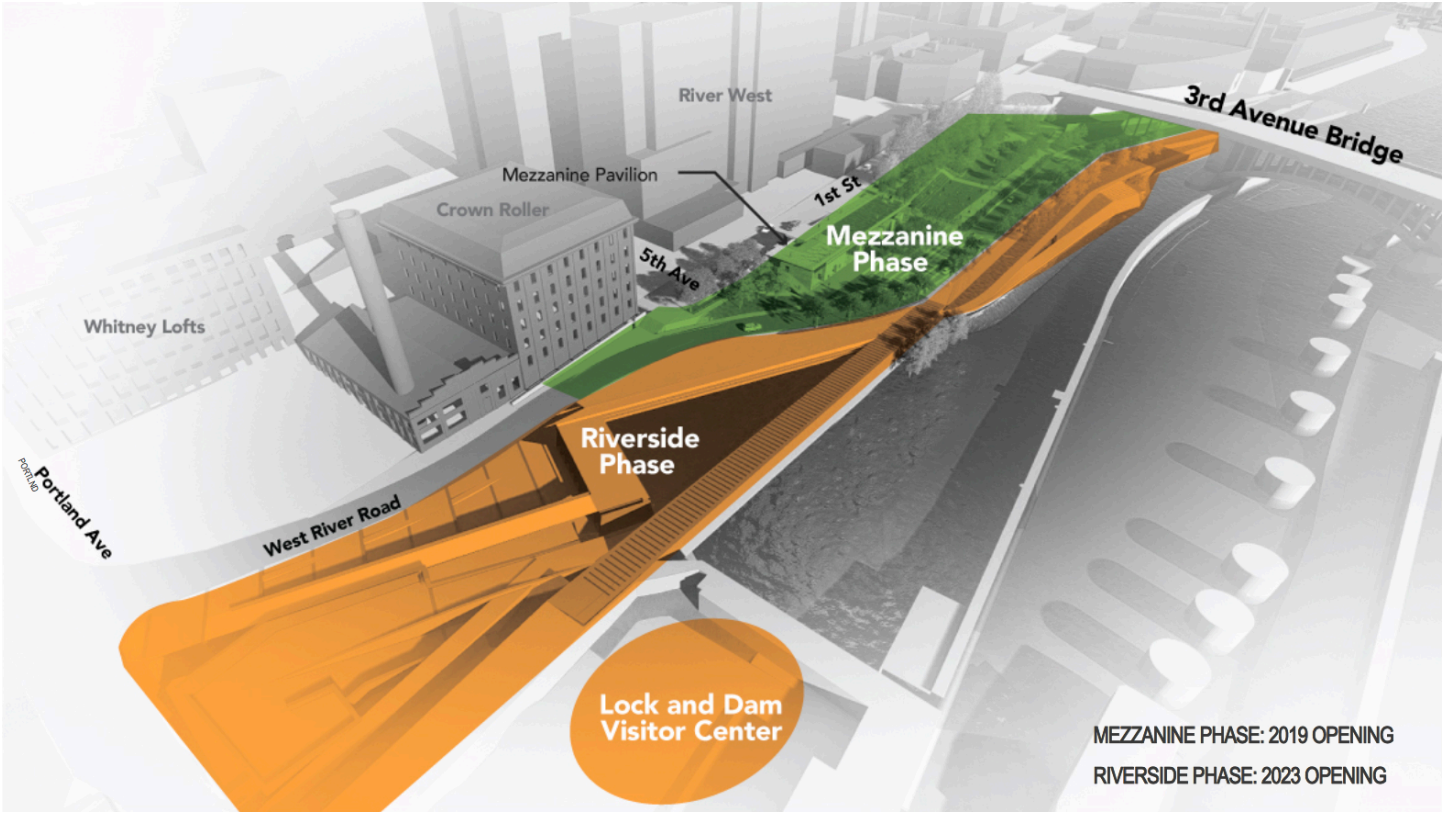
Sincerely,



Tom Evers
Executive Director

Enc: Water Works renderings



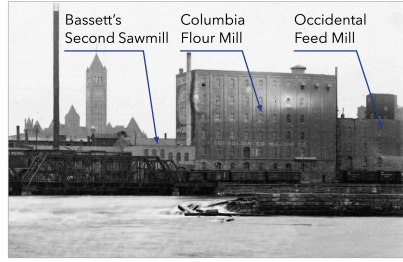




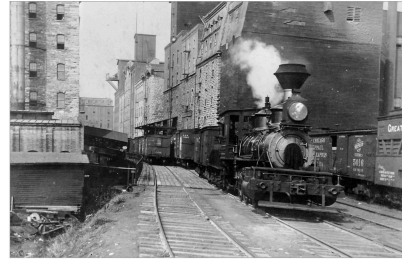
Dakota camp at the site of Bridge Square just northeast of Water Works, 1852.



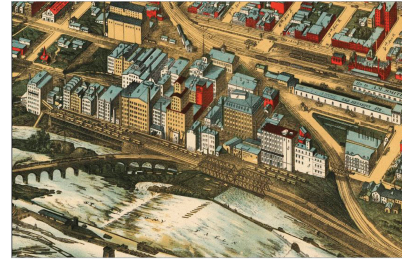
Painting of Saint Anthony Falls by Henry Lewis, circa 1847.



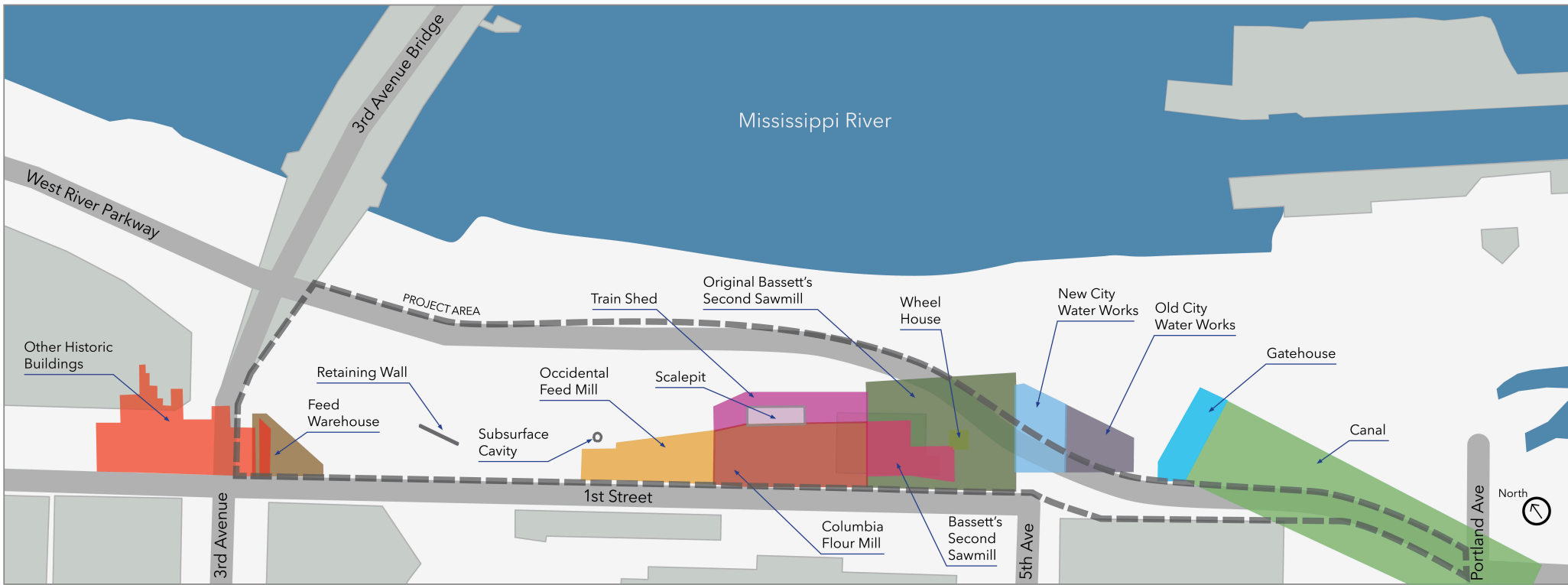
Bassett's Second Sawmill, the Columbia Flour Mill, and the Occidental Feed Mill in 1899.



View of the flour mills on the West Bank of the Mississippi, and the train that transported the flour, in 1890.



Bird's eye view of the Water Works site in 1891.



WATER WORKS HISTORIC RESOURCES MAP