



THE ST. ANTHONY FALLS HERITAGE ZONE EXPERIENCE

GAINING INSIGHTS FROM EXISTING RESEARCH

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The St. Anthony Falls Heritage Zone Experience Gaining Insights from Existing Research

In recent years, several local agencies have conducted audience-related studies to gain a better understanding of the people who visit places such as the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Zone. Some of these studies focus specifically on Heritage Zone visitors while others have taken a wider view. As a collection, these studies can provide general, but useful knowledge about likely visitors, supplementing the primary audience research conducted by Cincinnatus.

The purpose of this summary is to broaden our understanding of visitor's interests, choices, and expectations related to the current and future St. Anthony Falls Heritage Zone experience. The excerpts and synopsis that follows was guided by questions deemed relevant to the interpretive planning process and judged suitable to the content of the selected studies.

SOURCES USED

Cincinnatus. 2008. *Focus Group Study*. Minneapolis: St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board

This report summarizes the results of a focus group study conducted by Cincinnatus in January 2008 for the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board. The purpose of the study was fourfold:

- To provide information that will support the Heritage Board's updating of its Interpretive Plan
- To understand current users' perceptions of the Minneapolis Riverfront District, including the history and interpretive offerings and what the Heritage Board could do to engage them in the future
- To learn why non-users visit the Minneapolis Riverfront District and what they do there, and to understand how the Heritage Board could engage them in what the Heritage Board and the Riverfront District have to offer
- To examine opportunities for the Minneapolis Riverfront District in technology, routes, education, etc.

To achieve the study objectives, Cincinnatus facilitated four focus group discussions with three primary target audiences: 1) current interpretive users (two groups) of the Riverfront District who have participated in some of its interpretive offerings and may or may not be residents of the area; 2) leisure users who come to the Riverfront District for a variety of reasons (e.g. theater, restaurants, recreation) but have not experienced the interpretive offerings, who may or may not be residents of the area; and 3) history enthusiasts—known history buffs who have not availed themselves of what the Heritage Board has to offer.

Information Specialists Group, Inc. 2009. *Regional Parks and Trails Survey 2008.* St. Paul: Metropolitan Council.

The Metropolitan Council contracted Information Systems Group, Inc. to administer a regional parks and trails site-intercept survey. The surveys were conducted during the summer of 2008 between Memorial Day and Labor Day to visitors at each of the 91 park and trail sites throughout the seven-county Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. The goal was to provide statistically representative and useful data on park uses and preferences of visitors to the Twin Cities regional parks system.

Objectives:

- Obtain baseline data for use in doing annual use estimates.
- Develop seasonal use multipliers (spring, summer, fall and winter) one for regional parks and one for regional trails.
- Determine average persons-per-vehicle factor (PPV) for each park for people arriving by vehicle to be used to estimate the total number of people.
- Obtain data on visitor place of residence for local and non-local use of regional park system for parks funding formulas (percentage of non-local visits for each of the 10 park implementing agencies).
- Obtain data on the ethnic/racial characteristics of park visitors.

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. 2007. *Comprehensive Plan 2007 – 2020.* Minneapolis: Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

Several studies were conducted to provide user information for the Comprehensive Plan. The following two are cited in this report.

Community Outreach and Needs Assessment Draft-Final Report. April 2007. This summary document includes analyzed data from all of the studies that informed the Comprehensive Plan. To ensure the Comprehensive Plan reflects community needs, the Community Outreach and Research (COR) Team designed a community outreach and needs assessment process, which it implemented during the late summer and fall of 2006. This effort was designed to: assess the needs of the community; enlist residents and park visitors in the decision-making process; and build direct and lasting relationships with residents and park visitors.

To optimize participation and minimize potential barriers to involvement, five methods were used to collect information regarding the park and recreation needs of residents and park visitors: questionnaires, town meetings, focus groups, community leader workshops, and a statistically valid phone survey.

CJ Olson Market Research, Inc. 2007 *Quantitative Research Regarding Minneapolis Parks.*

The primary objective of this quantitative research was to determine the community's need for parks and recreation. The results of this study will be used for planning by

the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board. A total of 400 interviews were completed from December 11, 2006 to January 4, 2007, resulting in statistical reliability at the 95% confidence level of $\pm 4.8\%$. The number of completed interviews by Service District Area were: 136 River; 133 Lakes; 131 Minnehaha.

People, Places and Design Research. 2006. *Community Input for the New Museum at the St. Paul Campus of the University of Minnesota*. Minneapolis: Bell Museum of Natural History.

This research was commissioned by the Bell Museum to explore community interest in the concept of a new museum about nature and natural history topics. The study was therefore designed to inform the planning process by reporting on the public's interests and reactions to themes, content, and potential experiences that are being considered in exhibit and program planning.

This community study represents the views of people in the Twin Cities area (although some are visiting from other states) as they visited museums, zoos, botanic gardens, and public parks. These sites were chosen in part based on earlier focus group research, which indicated these are likely audiences for the new Museum.

Local interviewers and a graduate-student research group from Minnesota State University were trained in intercept interviews and random sampling techniques, and then monitored by Bell Museum staff in conducting the interviews of adults at several locations. The intercept interviews lasted about 15-20 minutes and asked about visitors' museum-going experience and preferences, interest in nature and environmental issues and reactions to several themes, examples of content and experiences planned for the new Bell Museum, as well as demographic and psychographic characteristics. . . . A total of 558 interviews were conducted from October to early December 2005.

People Places and Design Research. 2004. *Summative Evaluation: Visitors' Experiences and Perceptions of Mill City Museum*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society.

This research was commissioned as a summative evaluation of visitor experiences and reactions to the Mill City Museum. It provides substantive information about the expectations, interests and reactions of visitors; it offers insights about factors that affect people's decisions to visit the Museum. Interviews were conducted with a random sample of 291 visitor groups as they entered the Museum and an additional 247 visitor groups completed a short form after paying admission. These visitors were asked about publicity and wayfinding as well as demographic information. Another 279 visitor groups were interviewed at the end of their visit as they exited the permanent exhibition or as they left the ticket counter/gift shop area. These visitors were asked about their interests and connections to the subjects presented at MCM,

their experiences during the visit and their reactions to the features and interpretive themes as well as demographic information. Data collection began during May and concluded in early September of 2004.

Standard Rate & Data Service. 2008. *Lifestyle Market Analyst's Lifestyle Profiles*. Polk Company

This annual survey of 210 metropolitan areas in the United States measures household participation in certain lifestyle activities (73 lifestyle profiles/activities). It provides participation and demographic data for each lifestyle/activity correlated for each of the 210 metropolitan areas, including the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

The 106 Group. 2006. *Evaluation of the 1990 St. Anthony Falls Interpretive Plan: St. Anthony Fall Heritage Zone, Minneapolis Central Riverfront*. Minneapolis: St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board.

The goal of this report is to look back at the 1990 Plan to determine if it needs revision and updating, or if the original vision and recommendations of fifteen years ago are still viable. The central purpose of this evaluation is to determine to what extent the 1990 Plan still serves as a solid building block—as a blueprint for interpretive planning in the Heritage Zone—and where it might need to be expanded and improved to reflect current agendas, planning scopes, audiences, and sensibilities. Ultimately, we are now in the position where we must ask: does the 1990 Plan still provide a compelling vision for the 21st century? . . . The goal of this evaluation of the 1990 St. Anthony Falls Interpretive Plan is fourfold:

- To qualify how successful the 1990 Plan has been in terms of its implementation over the past fifteen years;
- To determine which uncompleted projects and initiatives from the 1990 Plan should be carried forward in the upcoming plan update process for consideration as implementation priorities in Stage II;
- To assess how well the 1990 Plan and its interpretive themes resonate with contemporary expectations and priorities for interpretation in the Heritage Zone; and,
- To provide a clear sense of direction and set of recommendations on what should happen next.

VISITOR INTERESTS AND MOTIVATIONS

Does the Heritage Zone experience satisfy the expectations of history seekers?

There is significant opportunity for the Heritage Board to engage more interpretive users and history enthusiasts—who, once they learned the full extent of history-related opportunities in the area, were enthusiastic about engaging in those activities. The leisure users, on the other hand, indicated a low interest in history-related programs and will remain harder to please.

(Cincinnati, 2008 p. 2)

The history enthusiasts, selected for their experience in visiting historical sites but lack of recent interpretive experience in the Riverfront District, had only a mild familiarity with the district and its interpretive offerings. They viewed the area as highly fragmented, containing many separate elements and destinations. Barriers to their participation included location (far for some, confusing for others), parking difficulties, perceived costs, and lack of knowledge about area resources and activities.

(Cincinnati, 2008 p.4)

Does the appeal of the historic setting (ambiance and feeling) lead visitors to deeper exploration into the area's history?

People are drawn to the Minneapolis Riverfront District for many reasons. In addition to specific reasons (e.g., restaurants, shopping, jogging), respondents in this study said they are attracted to the unique, “old world” ambience of the place. They value the authenticity and uniqueness of the riverfront area. This sense of place is a powerful draw for people seeking an eclectic, noncommercial, European-style atmosphere within the city, and history plays a part in that. Even the leisure users in this study, who expressed low interest in history-related activities, responded with the terms history and historical early on during a brainstorming session on words and phrases that describe the area. Although the majority of respondents knew about the district's special historical designation, however, they showed very little understanding of the entire area and its many facets. The opportunity exists, therefore, to engage more people in the broad range of experiences available in the district.

(Cincinnati, 2008, page 2)

Highlights

- *I have an interest in history, but in this context I just enjoy feeling it rather than reading about it. I like the Mill City Museum building and enjoy seeing it when I walk by but am not interested in the history of flour.*
- *I know how you feel. History in the context of St. Anthony Main doesn't give me a thrill.*
- *Digging up ruins would interest me, but not visiting the Federal Reserve Plaza. It's too new.*

- *What attracts me to going to Ft. Snelling is that they have period actors. That would be of interest to me in this area.*
- *I guess I didn't go to Mill City Museum because it's not as cool as Fort Snelling. The impression I get is it's a lot of black and white pictures and is focused on flour milling. Outside is just windows.*
- *At the Art Institute they have period rooms. I'd like to see the social history of the area.* (Cincinnati 2008, p. 29)

The 1990 Plan advocates that the Heritage Zone “keep a raw edge.” That “raw edge” is what preserves a sense of authenticity in a place like the Heritage Zone. Too much gloss in a historic district can lose the character-rich feel of bygone days. Future interpretation should always maintain a light presence. Because historic districts are often concentrated, they are vulnerable to becoming urban theme parks: the so-called “Disneyland” phenomenon.
(The106 Group 2006, p. 33)

How big is the audience for milling history and is it satisfied by current offerings?

When prompted, about half [of visitors surveyed at MCM] expressed an interest in Minnesota history and about 20% an interest in the flour milling industry, which includes the 13% who have a personal or family experience working in flourmills.
(People Places and Design Research 2004, p. 10)

These divisions identify useful segments of the Mill City Museum audiences:

- Flour industry—Visitors with a pre-existing interest in milling and/or farming
- General public families—Visitor groups who visit MCM with children
- MHC-crossover visitors—Adults who also visit the Minnesota History Center
- Casual-interest Minnesotans—Minnesota adults who have not been to MHC
- Out-of-staters—Adult visitors from other states (without a flour industry interest)
(People Places and Design Research 2004, p. 8)

Some visitors that were arriving and others that were finishing their visit were asked about their interests in the Mill City Museum. Upon arrival, most were able to articulate only a general interest in history or just something to do. When leaving, most visitors were able to articulate a specific connection with the history presented at Mill City. . . . More than a third of all visitors articulated a personal interest or connection that motivated their visit to MCM. Most of these personal interests revolve specifically around a personal/family connection to milling and farming or just having lived in the area.
(People Places and Design Research 2004, p.13)

Many visitors [to MCM] (63%) gave high ratings to the overall Museum visit and their assessments of the specific features ranged from very high for the Flour Tower (78% high ratings) to very low for “Recipe for a City” (17% high ratings).
(People Places and Design Research 2004, p. 20)

Almost all visitors perceived the theme of the connection between the growth of Minneapolis and the growth of flourmills. This theme was described primarily in two ways: some saw the flour mills creating growth in Minneapolis while others articulated the importance and growth of the mills.
 (People Places and Design Research 2004, p 28)

The positive evaluation of their MCM visit and the personal connections visitors discover there will probably lead to very positive recommendations by visitors to friends and family. Almost all (95%) could identify someone they would recommend visit the Museum. For some, the recommendation concerns linking interests of an individual to the topics of the Museum (they are interested in history, he works in the food industry). The reasons for the recommendations are related to the connections visitors established during their own visit (interest in flour industry, growing up in the area, family farm, etc.). For others, the recommendation is based on the quality of the Museum (it's unique, it's a good place to see), or specific features (Flour Tower, Water Lab, ruins).
 (People Places and Design Research 2004, p. 43)

How much do Twin Cities residents participate in history activities relative to other interests and activities?

Participation in the lifestyle activities of “Our Nation’s Heritage” in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region is very low compared to the rest of the nation. Participation in “Attend Cultural /Arts Events” in the region is about average.

Lifestyle Activities	Percent of households	Lifestyle rank out of 210 metro areas	Lifestyle index (100= average nation-wide)
Our Nation’s Heritage	5.7%	193rd	85
Attend Cultural /Arts Events	15.5%	74th	94

The top-ten lifestyle activities (non-high-tech) for the Minneapolis-St. Paul region:

Lifestyle Activities	Percent of households	Lifestyle rank out of 210 metro areas	Lifestyle index (100= average nation-wide)
1 Donate to Charitable Causes	52.4%	5th	110
2. Shop by Catalog/Mail	43.1%	160th	97
3. Physical Fitness/Exercise	39.9%	21st	107
4. Fishing Frequently	39.7%	57th	139
5. Watch Sports on TV	37.9%	72nd	102
6. Travel in USA	37.3%	4th	111
7. Walking for Health	36.7%	66th	104
8. Avid Book Reader	36.4%	58th	105
9. Flower Gardening	36.4%	105th	107
10. Own a Dog	35.6%	183rd	95

Compared to the rest of the nation, households in Minneapolis-St. Paul region are more active participants in the following lifestyles:

Lifestyle Activities	Percent of households	Lifestyle rank out of 210 metro areas	Lifestyle index (100= average nation-wide)
Hunting/Shooting	25.3%	70th	154
Golf	23.7%	3rd	140
Fishing Frequently	39.7%	57th	139
Snow Ski Frequently	9.6%	39th	137
Bicycle Frequently	27.4%	14th	131

(Standard Rate & Data Service 2008, pp 854-857)

Highlights

Nationally, people who participate in “Our Nation’s Heritage” are:

- Older (median adult age 54.8 years)
- Wealthier (median household income \$57,563)
- Empty nesters (76.3% of households)

They also participate avidly in the following lifestyle activities:

	Percent of households participating
Donate to Charitable Causes	77.7%
Travel in the USA	68.7%
Shop by Catalog/Mail	67.5%
Avid Book Reader	63.3%
Walk for Health	59.4%
Physical Fitness/Exercise	57.9%
Watch Sports on TV	56.6%
Flower Gardening	55.1%
Buy Videos	51.6%
Home Workshop	51.3%

	Ranked by index compared to nation-wide average of 100
Science/New technology	307
Fine Art/Antiques	292
Wildlife/Environmental	283
Collectibles/Collections	270
Science Fiction	269
Coin/Stamp Collecting	266
Own a Smart Cellular	253
Attend Cultural/Arts Events	247
Real Estate Investments	228
Recreational Vehicles	223

(Standard Rate & Data Service 2008, pp 384-385, 714-715)

Are potential Heritage Zone visitors interested in subjects related to the environment such as natural systems, wildlife viewing, and human/nature interactions?

Nature is a widely shared interest among visitors to the places where people were interviewed [for this Bell Museum study]. Given the choice of a focus on nature, science or art, more visitors chose nature. . . . this pattern emerged at each of the locations.

Of the three themes that will be included [in the proposed museum]—Nature, Art and Science—which would you like to see emphasized the most?

Interviewed at:						
Interested in:		Zoos (n=254)	Science Museum (n=197)	Apple Orchard (n=48)	Nature Center (n=30)	Arboretum (n=27)
	Nature	67%	48%	73%	68%	58%
	Science	23%	35%	23%	21%	27%
	Art	10%	17%	3%	11%	15%

People who expressed a preference for nature over science and art explained their preference as a love of nature and the outdoors. For most, the experience of nature is more important than learning about nature.

Why is nature most important to you? (n=309)

- 14% I enjoy nature centers, museums
- 13% I love nature
- 13% I like being outdoors
- 12% It's interesting/ it's never boring
- 11% Environment and conservation are important
- 10% It's important to learn from nature
- 8% It's everywhere/ we are connected to nature
- 6% Nature is inspiring, spiritual, restorative
- 6% For the kids' interest
- 4% My background, work, hobby
- 2% I love plants, gardening
- 10% Other
- 1% No answer/ don't know

Highlights

- *No matter what time of year, it's always pretty to be outside in the natural environment.*
- *Nature teaches life lessons.*
- *The beauty of it all is worthwhile and calming.*
- *It's interesting to learn about ecology.*
- *We're losing connection with it.*
- *It's the most fun, there is a lot of experiential learning.*
- *Nature is most closely related to us.*
- *I'm really concerned about our natural resources and conservation.*
- *Nature's the root of everything.*
- *Teach kids to appreciate nature.*
- *It interests me the most because I like animals and their habitats.*

(People, Places and Design Research 2006, pp 10-11)

What likely networks of visitors, or affinity groups, are currently participating in Heritage Zone offerings (e.g. runners, birdwatchers, history buffs)?

For many people, visiting the Minnesota History Center is part of a pattern of interest in history; a majority of Mill City visitors have been to MHC. Repeat visitors are even more likely (74%) than first-time visitors (58%) to have been to the Minnesota History Center. (People Places and Design Research 2004, p. 5)

[Focus group participants] were interested in learning more about the area through an email newsletter. Six of the seven respondents were recruited through the Minnesota Historical Society list, suggesting a potential targeted marketing opportunity for the Heritage Board through the Minnesota Historical Society. (Cincinnati, 2008 p.4)

USE PATTERNS AMONG VISITORS

What barriers keep people from greater participation in Heritage Zone experiences?

Focus group participants noted a number of barriers to participation that need to be addressed in future planning. These include lack of awareness of activities, the cost of parking, and access problems. People unfamiliar with the area are reluctant to navigate beyond known destinations such as the Guthrie Theater and Mill City Museum. These barriers were even noted by the history enthusiasts, who explore history-related activities in other cities but are not familiar with the offerings of Minneapolis' Riverfront District (and were recruited as such). (Cincinnati, 2008 p. 3)

For the leisure users, lack of interest in history-related subjects was a barrier. Other barriers for all included cost, particularly for the Segway tour; not having other people to do the activities with; and parking challenges. One woman whose husband is disabled noted, "You either park far away, or it costs a lot of money." Another barrier mentioned was hesitancy on the part of suburban residents to venture into unknown urban territory. One participant thought increased activity in the area would help attract newcomers. "If you have more stuff going on here, people might feel more comfortable about coming," he noted. "You've parked there. Maybe you've shown it to other people. You might go a block farther next time." (Cincinnati, 2008 p. 10)

Highlights

- *Not cohesive—to me, this area is a mess. I like the park, the Stone Arch Bridge. But it seems like lots of different plans—some successful, some not. The recreation—biking—strictly brings me down here. I'd like more cohesive planning. Coming here, I had to look at the map.* (Cincinnati 2008, p. 19)

Lack of time was the most frequently mentioned limitation to using [Minneapolis] parks, trails, and programs. Safety tended to be more of a concern to: river-area residents and foreign-born residents. About 16% of the survey participants said nothing limited their use of the park system.

(CJ Olson Market Research 2007, p. 19)

During workshops, several individuals noted that the Heritage Zone does not provide a “cohesive interpretive experience.” People stated that the area is too fragmented, and that interpretation is only experienced in “bits and pieces.” While this is not the case in places such as Mill Ruins Park and the Heritage Trail where the interpretive experience is quite rich, it is an important point when considering the Heritage Zone as a whole. . . .The Heritage Zone’s lack of cohesion leads to consideration of the need for a more distinguished sense of identity for the area. Like Downtown, Uptown, or the Chain of Lakes, the Heritage Zone is a place with unique character and special recreational opportunities. Unlike these place, the Heritage Zone, or “Minneapolis Riverfront District,” is not yet a household name, and there are many people in the Twin Cities who simply do not know it is there.

(The 106 Group 2006, p. 30)

What do Minneapolis and regional park users value and expect from a park that may or may not be available in the Heritage Zone (e.g. recreation center, sport programs, community education)?

Opportunities to connect with the natural environment, to engage children and youth in positive activities, and to engage people of all ages in health and physical fitness activities top the list of community needs identified by the outreach process. In general, city residents place a high level of importance on the physical system and outdoor amenities, with parks, natural areas, boulevard trees, trails, and environmental programming rating high. Less importance was placed on programming, recreation centers, and athletic facilities. This is consistent with national trends, likely reflects the shifting demographics of the city, and may be reflective of the primary barrier to participation—lack of time.

(Community Outreach and Needs Assessment, p.5)

Survey participants indicated that it was most important for the Park Board to provide opportunities for:

- Involving children and youth in positive activities,
- Protecting or spending time in the natural environment,
- Pursuing health and physical needs.

Higher importance ratings for opportunities tended to be generated from:

- River area residents,
- Renters,
- Foreign-born residents,
- Households with incomes under \$15,000.

(CJ Olson Market Research 2007, p 6)

Highlights

Importance of sharing time with family and friends:

- Renters placed more importance on this opportunity than did homeowners (4.35 vs. 3.98).
- Foreign-born residents were more likely to think this was important than U.S. born residents (4.51 vs. 4.03).
- Households with incomes under \$15,000 thought this was more important than did those in households with incomes of \$35,000-\$74,999 (4.49 vs. 3.95).

Experiencing arts and culture through programs and/or events:

- Renters placed more importance on this opportunity than did homeowners (4.23 vs. 3.80).

Experiencing different cultures:

- Renters placed more importance on this opportunity than did homeowners (4.16 vs. 3.68).
- Foreign-born residents were more likely to think this was important than U.S. born residents (4.28 vs. 3.76).

Environmental programs:

- Renters were more satisfied with this service than were homeowners (3.93 vs. 3.57).
- Households with incomes under \$15,000 were more satisfied than were households with incomes of \$75,000 or more (4.11 vs. 3.53).

Community events and celebrations:

- Renters placed more importance on this service than did homeowners (4.09 vs. 3.37).

Arts and cultural programs:

- Renters placed more importance on this service than did homeowners (3.88 vs. 3.31).
- Foreign-born residents were more likely to be satisfied than U.S. born residents (4.08 vs. 3.66).

Recreation centers:

- River area residents thought this was more important than did residents of the Lakes area (3.63 vs. 3.18).
- Renters placed more importance on this service than did homeowners (3.70 vs. 3.27).
- Foreign-born residents were more likely to think this was important than U.S. born residents (3.80 vs. 3.34).

Athletic fields:

- Foreign-born residents were more likely to think this was important than U.S. born residents (3.86 vs. 3.33).
- Foreign-born residents were more likely to be satisfied than U.S. born residents (4.32 vs. 3.76).

(CJ Olson Market Research 2007, pp 6-13)

Primary activities of 45 people surveyed in the Central Mississippi Riverfront included:

Walking	69%
Running	11%
Relaxing	7%
Dog Walking	4%
Biking	2%
Fishing	2%
Other	9%

Primary activities of 34 people surveyed in the Minneapolis Mississippi Gorge included:

Running	47%
Biking	24%
Walking	18%
Dog Walking	9%
In-line Skating	3%
Other	9%

Race/Ethnicity of 45 people surveyed in the Central Mississippi Riverfront

White or caucasian	82%
Black or African American	7%
Asian	2%
Hispanic	7%
Two or more	2%

(Information Specialists Group 2009, pp 100-104)