The Minneapolis Riverfront – a showcase for historic architecture, historic preservation and the best of today’s architecture.

1930s

The architectural heritage of the Minneapolis Riverfront is many-layered. The first layer contains historic structures from the city’s birth along the Riverfront in the 1800s and its growth into the flour milling capital of the world from 1880 to 1950. These structures represent architectural styles and engineering accomplishments warranting the listing of the St. Anthony Falls Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. The second layer is the historic preservation over the last three decades that brought back almost all of these historic structures from decay into new, vibrant life. The third layer is the current generation of new architecture that is creating today’s and tomorrow’s landmarks.

2007

Visit Minneapolis’ birthplace on the Mississippi River
Walking tour map inside

Building on the Past: Architecture and the Minneapolis Riverfront

History

- Track the founding and growth of Minneapolis and its glory days as the flour milling capital of the world while visiting the Mill City Museum, Mill Ruins Park, First Bridge Park, Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock & Dam Visitor Center, Federal Reserve Bank Plaza, Whitney Plaza and Water Power Park.
- Explore the beautiful St. Anthony Falls Heritage Trail on a self-guided walking tour.
- Visit the restored Ard Godfrey house, the oldest home in Minneapolis.
- Experience the power of St. Anthony Falls from the magnificent Stone Arch Bridge.

Culture and entertainment

- Take in performances at two Tony Award-winning Minneapolis theaters — The Guthrie and Theatre de la Jeune Lune.
- See cutting-edge art at the Soap Factory.
- Revel in the literary arts at the Open Book.
- Enjoy a movie or live music.

Food and shopping

- Savor the cuisine at an outstanding restaurant.
- Sip a cocktail on an outdoor patio.
- Explore fascinating shops in Northeast and the North Loop.

Parks and recreation

- Walk, bike or blade miles of trails.
- Find out why this special area is a national park and earn your Junior Ranger badge.
- Take in the sights on the Minneapolis Queen excursion boat, a Twin Cities Trolley ride or a romantic horse-drawn carriage ride.
- Relax and admire scenic views of the river, the downtown skyline and the historic district from the Riverfront parks.
- Explore the district on a Segway tour.
- Ice skate at the historic Depot Ice Rink.
- Celebrate with one of the many festivals, events or fireworks displays.

For more information, visit www.minneapolisriverfrontdistrict.com. Information hotline: (612) 673-5123
www.stanthonyfalls.org www.preserveminneapolis.org
**Nicollet Island** first served as a stepping stone between Minneapolis and St. Anthony. Today, it is a charming neighborhood of rehabilitated historic homes and historic industrial buildings that have been preserved for new uses. The island is a treasury of residential architectural styles that were popular in the late 19th century and preserved in the 1980s and 1990s for continued residential use. Some of the homes are original to the island, such as the (1) **Burnett Tenement** (1881) with its modest interpretation of the Italianate style and the ornate Queen Anne-style (2) **Frank Criswold House** (1890). Others were moved to the island to preserve them, including the Greek Revival-style (3) **R. M. S. Pease Residence** (1864). The French Second Empire-style (4) **Grove Street Flats** was built in the late 1870s for the new town’s wealthy residents, but it started to collapse before being rescued in the 1980s. The (5) **Nicollet Island Inn** occupies the former 1893 Island Sash and Door building, one of the few structures remaining from the Riverfront’s lumbering past. The original William Bros Boiler Works building (1893) is now the (6) **Nicollet Island Pavilion**.

The 1965 (7) **Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam** is the deepest lock on the Mississippi River and an engineering achievement that solidified Minneapolis as the head of navigation on the river. The magnificent (8) **Stone Arch Bridge** is recognized as a National Civil Engineering Landmark. It was an engineering achievement when it was completed as a railroad bridge in 1883 and a preservation success when it was rehabilitated for recreational use and reopened in 1994. For more information about the Stone Arch Bridge and the many other fascinating bridges across the Mississippi in Minneapolis, visit www.mrdbridges.com

A commercial area for the early community, the **Northeast** area once again bustles with shops, restaurants and galleries. Chute Square hosts the historic (1) **Ard Godfrey House**, built in the Greek-Revival style (1849), the oldest frame house remaining in the city and an early preservation success after its restoration as a Woman’s Club of Minneapolis Bicentennial project. The former (2) **Pillsbury Library** (1904) across the street was a gift to the community from flour magnate John Pillsbury and illustrates the Beaux-Arts style. (3) **Our Lady of Lourdes Church** is the oldest continuously operating church in Minneapolis. Built in 1857 as the First Universalist Church, its original Greek-Revival design was changed to a more French-Provincial style after the building was acquired in 1877 by French Canadian Catholics. The Minneapolis Riverfront District includes many examples of 19th century architecture, recent historic preservation and today’s architecture and landscape architecture. Included are some of the highlights. Many can be seen from the 1.8-mile St. Anthony Falls Heritage Trail, which guides you through the heart of the city’s birthplace with markers explaining how Minneapolis was born and grew around the waterpower of St. Anthony Falls.

The east bank area along historic **Main Street** originally was part of the town of St. Anthony before it merged with Minneapolis. The restaurants of (1) **Riverplace** and (2) **St. Anthony Main** occupy historic rehabilitated commercial and industrial buildings. The 1890 Queen Anne Commercial-style (3) **Pracna building** was rehabilitated by an early Riverfront preservation pioneer in 1969. The handsome adjacent (4) **Martin-Morrison Blocks** (1858) have also been rehabilitated as part of St. Anthony Main, as has the 1855 (5) **Upton Block** on the corner, the oldest surviving brick structure in Minneapolis. Both St. Anthony Main and Father Hennepin Bluffs Park are venues for outdoor concerts. The limestone (6) **Pillsbury A Mill** is one of two National Historic Landmarks on the Minneapolis Riverfront, recognized for its significance as the birthplace of the Pillsbury Company and the largest flour mill in the world when it was built in 1881. This complex is slated for rehabilitation into condominiums and commercial space. The (7) **Soap Factory**, a gallery specializing in cutting-edge visual arts, is housed in the historic National Purity Soap Factory building. The (8) **Southeast Steam Plant** provided power for the streetcar system in the Twin Cities when it was built in 1903. Today, the Renaissance-Revival structure has been rehabilitated and retrofitted to provide steam heating for the University of Minnesota.

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Explore the **North Loop**’s wide variety of shops, restaurants and galleries where rehabilitated warehouse and commercial buildings mix with new construction in a booming new neighborhood. The historic [Itasca](#) complex (1886 – 1906) includes some of the many former warehouses along North First Street that helped make Minneapolis the wholesale supply center for the upper Midwest. This complex has been preserved for condominiums, offices, a comedy club and a restaurant. A grouping of three 1892 Richardsonian Romanesque former warehouses now serves as the [Stone Arch Lofts](#), showing an interesting way to preserve a fire-damaged structure. The [Lindsay Brothers Building](#) (now Riverview condominiums) was designed for a farm implement distributor by local architect Harry Wild Jones and was considered one of the handsomest implement warehouses in the country when it was completed in 1895. The Tony Award-winning [Theatre de la Jeune Lune](#) offers a year-round season of plays known for their visual uniqueness. This theater was created in 1992 out of a complex of seven warehouses built in 1889 with a 1906 Gothic-inspired façade designed by noted architect Cass Gilbert.

The [Mill District](#) is a growing neighborhood with delights for visitors. The now-vacant former [Fuji Ya](#) restaurant was built in the late 1980s on the foundations of two flour mills and was one of the pioneers that showed that the Riverfront could be reclaimed for new uses. The historic [Milwaukee Depot](#) complex has two hotels, a water park, historical displays and a winter indoor skating rink. During its heyday in the 1920s, the 1899 Renaissance-Revival depot and its unique train shed bustled with train traffic, but the complex was vacated for decades until it was preserved for new uses in 2001. The Whitney Mill Quarter illustrates solutions to some unusual preservation challenges. The 1908 [Ceresota Elevator](#) that supplied wheat to the adjacent Crown and Standard flour mills had 57 grain bins that had to be removed and new floors added to allow office use. The handsome [Crown Roller Mill (1880)](#) had been largely destroyed by a 1983 fire before being saved and rebuilt for use as an office building. The [Standard Mill (1879)](#) had fallen into disuse before being rehabilitated for use as a luxury hotel and, more recently, condominiums. The [MacPhail Center for Music](#) will combine industrial materials with new forms for a distinctly contemporary addition to the architectural landscape of the Riverfront. Archeological ruins also often merit preservation. At [Mill Ruins Park](#), you can see – and learn more about – some of the foundations remaining from the row of mills that once stood between the plank-covered west side waterpower canal and the river. In a particularly challenging preservation, the [Mill City Museum](#) was built within the fire-damaged walls of the 1880 Washburn Crosby “A” Mill, which is the birthplace of General Mills and one of two National Historic Landmarks on the Riverfront. The museum offers year-round adventures, including the Mill City Live music series and performances by costumed History Players. On both sides of the museum, several historic flour and textile milling structures built between 1878 and 1914 have been rehabilitated for residential use (the [North Star, Washburn and Humboldt lofts](#)). Two other new structures on this block illustrate excellent solutions to the challenge of building compatible new buildings in a historic district. The [Stone Arch Lofts](#) blends in almost imperceptibly with the older structures, while the [Humboldt Annex](#) takes a more contemporary approach. The newest landmark in the district is the architecturally stunning three-theater complex for the renowned [Guthrie Theater](#), with its massing, forms and materials inspired by the Riverfront’s industrial past. Visit its “endless bridge” and see spectacular views of the Riverfront. The [Open Book](#) is a fascinating building renovation and offers the best in literary arts, including classes and special events at the Loft Literary Center and Minnesota Center for Book Arts.