



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

## 2023 Request for Proposal

### General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2023-037

**Proposal Title:** East Side River District

### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Mary deLaittre

**Organization:** Great River Passage Conservancy

**Office Telephone:** (612) 398-5989

**Email:** Mary@GreatRiverPassage.org

### Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** The East Side River District project will reconnect Saint Paul to the river, restoring compromised ecosystems and biodiversity while protecting water quality and linking underserved communities to a long-neglected area.

**Funds Requested:** \$2,300,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** June 30, 2025

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Methods to Protect, Restore, and Enhance Land, Water, and Habitat (F)

### Project Location

**What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?**

Region(s): Metro

**What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?**

Region(s): Metro

**When will the work impact occur?**

In the Future

## Narrative

### **Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.**

One of the Conservancy's three key projects, the 1,000-acre East Side River District is on the Mississippi flyway bird migration route (classified by Audubon as an Important Bird Area), and includes the Pig's Eye Island Heron Rookery Scientific and Natural Area. As such, this area is a sensitive center of ecological restoration activity that converges with an industrial landscape that includes a stretch of Mississippi River trafficked by shipping barges, multiple rail yards, water treatment and wood-chipping facilities, and two hazardous Superfund sites where capped wells are eroding and leaking into the river and lake.

This convergence limits the area's potential in several ways:

- Few trails or access points for the community to appreciate the land and riverfront
- Lack of acknowledgement and caretaking of Sacred Dakota sites
- Compromised ability to protect and preserve wildlife, the river's health, and more

Among other urgent ecological issues, the area is home to a number of endangered species and a dynamic array of wildlife that includes roughly 50 types of fish and 165 species of birds. With our ESRD schematic design and implementation, we have the opportunity to advance solutions that respect, protect, and enhance this sensitive and disturbed riparian landscape.

### **What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.**

The Conservancy seeks funding to complete the design process for our East Side River District project and begin its implementation phase. Equitable and inclusive design for the ESRD is essential because the area is home to sacred and significant Dakota sites, and the 1,000-acre site has been long neglected as a place of recreation and preservation—both cultural and natural. With LCCMR support, the Conservancy will heal the ESRD's damaged landscape and connect under-represented groups to the river by establishing accessible trail systems, protecting and celebrating sacred sites, and creating welcoming community spaces where people of all backgrounds can connect.

Partnership with LCCMR will also build on preservation and conservation momentum at the state level. In May 2022 the Senate passed a bill establishing a task force to accelerate the clean-up at Pig's Eye landfill, a key milestone in the restoration of the two hazardous Superfund sites in the ESRD. This reflects renewed political will to secure the considerable funding needed to clean up this long-polluted area, and the Conservancy has been instrumental in advancing this bill through testimony before the House Committee.

### **What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?**

The Conservancy's East Side River District will complete a forward-thinking, light-on-the-land design and implementation that:

- Heals an environmentally disturbed landscape by advancing a sustainable restoration, conservation, and resilience plan that protects flora and fauna, restores the flood plain, and more—all coinciding with the City's clean-up initiative
- Connects under-represented groups to the ESRD through trail systems, community spaces, and features that create new access
- Protects sacred and significant Dakota sites
- Engages the community in the complex stories and histories of Saint Paul and the Dakota that have gone untold

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Schematic Design

**Activity Budget:** \$717,000

**Activity Description:**

Schematic design process includes the public release of the RFP to designers across the country, including outreach to Native-led teams. The schematic designer will be selected by a 12-person design team selection committee representing Saint Paul government, nonprofits, tribal communities, neighborhood organizations, and design professionals. The final schematic design deliverables will include design vision, cost estimate, phasing, partner roles and responsibilities.

Throughout the process, we will ensure that all design decisions respond to the urgent need to protect and restore the lands, waters, and natural resources of the East Side River District. To that end, the phasing piece of the schematic design process will identify restoration activities that can happen in conjunction with the efforts outlined in Activity 2 below.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Completion Date
50% of schematic design complete	November 30, 2023
75% of schematic design complete	January 31, 2024
Cost estimate, phasing and finance strategy complete. [End of schematic design]	July 31, 2024

### Activity 2: Design Development and Construction Documents

**Activity Budget:** \$1,195,000

**Activity Description:**

Building upon schematic design, the design development and construction documents activity continues to gather community and stakeholder input while beginning to build detailed plans, budgets, and blueprints needed for more complex pieces of the projects. As referenced in Activity 4, design in and around the ESRD is a complex endeavor due to the many partners and projects active in the area. The Conservancy will partner closely with those organizations, agencies, and businesses to ensure that our design and construction prioritizes landscape restoration, water protection needs, wetland preservation, and other environmental concerns that are critical to address as we aim to repair a long-damaged landscape and riverfront.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Completion Date
Designer hired/engaged	August 31, 2024
50% of design complete	January 31, 2025
Philanthropic fundraising goals established	January 31, 2025
Construction documents complete	April 30, 2025

### Activity 3: Community engagement

**Activity Budget:** \$88,000

**Activity Description:**

Community engagement is a vital activity throughout all key activities. Our robust community engagement process in partnership with the selected design team will feature stakeholder meetings (e.g. business owners, tenants and

community members in the project area, etc.), community meetings, surveys and focus groups for communities that have been historically excluded from design processes.

Community engagement also includes working with a Dakota consultant to lead Dakota-specific engagement. This effort is essential given that the East Side River District is Dakota homeland, and we are committed to designing the ESRD in ways that support cultural and historic preservation.

This community engagement process builds on the model we have used for our other two key capital projects, the River Balcony and Mississippi River Learning Center, and leverages learnings we gained through our participation in the High Line Network’s Equitable Impacts Framework (EIF).

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Completion Date
1st of 3 stakeholder, advisory and technical committee meetings held during schematic design	July 31, 2023
Dakota consultant hired to lead Dakota-specific engagement	July 31, 2023
1st of 3 stakeholder, advisory and technical committee meetings held during schematic design	January 31, 2024
Dakota Tribal convening held	January 31, 2024

**Activity 4: Restoration, conservation and resilience plan implementation**

**Activity Budget:** \$300,000

**Activity Description:**

Ensuring successful protection and restoration of the habitat requires deep coordination and collaboration. Building on the East Side River District convenings the Conservancy has already hosted, we will lead a growing coalition of partners to ensure that conservation activities are done in a way that draws on the expertise of a range of partners. Given the number of projects happening concurrently in the area, the Conservancy must coordinate thoughtful and thorough communication and shared visioning so that our approach is comprehensive, integrated, and collaborative.

For example, guided by that approach to collaboration, we will implement plans such as flood plain restoration (e.g., seed planting) and clean-up of water ways that feed into Pig’s Eye Lake by coordinating closely with the Pig’s Eye Lake landfill clean-up task force.

This approach to convening and collaborating has served us well in the River Learning Center and River Balcony projects. Given that those projects are slightly further along on their timelines, we can use their success as a roadmap for integrating partners and projects for the ESRD.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Completion Date
Restoration, conservation, resilience as identified in planning begins	March 31, 2025
Initial landscape restoration work completed	June 30, 2025

## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Alice Messer	City of St. Paul Parks and Recreation	Landowner and oversight of capital projects related to design and implementation in East Side River District	Yes
Sam Olbekson	Full Circle Indigenous Design	Community engagement of Dakota Peoples throughout design process of East Side River District	Yes
Maggie Lorenz	Lower Phalen Creek Project	Community engagement and project partner to align East Side River District project with Lower Phalen Creek projects, particularly Wakan Tipi	Yes
John Slade (interim executive director)	District 1 Planning Council (Southeast Community Organization)	City of St. Paul's District Planning Council responsible for community engagement and design input.	No
Matthew Tucker Blythe	National Park Service	Superintendent of Mississippi National Park Recreation Area, programming in and around East Side River District and community engagement in design process and implementation.	No
Katie Nyberg	Mississippi Park Connection	Fundraising, programming and community engagement for East Side River District design and implementation.	No
Jonny Johnson	Prairie Island Indian Community	Stakeholder, community engagement and partner in ensuring Dakota voice in design process	Yes
Mary deLaittre	Great River Passage Conservancy	Oversight and management of philanthropic and government fundraising and project management oversight for Great River Passage projects	Yes

## Long-Term Implementation and Funding

**Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this work be funded?**

In terms of long-term implementation, the East Side River District will benefit from the Conservancy's other two capital projects being further along on their timeline, allowing us to use their implementation approaches as a model for the ESRD. Funding-wise, sustainability will be strengthened by being part of our combined capital campaign effort, whose fundraising strategies were informed by our partnership with the City and based on the Como Friends model. Once the ESRD is implemented, we will leverage philanthropic and city support as needed. This ongoing blend of public and private fundraising partnerships will be key to long-term sustainability.

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Mary deLaittre

**Job Title:** Executive Director, Great River Passage Conservancy

**Provide description of the project manager's qualifications to manage the proposed project.**

Mary deLaittre is the Founding Executive Director of the Great River Passage Conservancy and former Manager of the Great River Passage Initiative. Drawing on 25 years of community design experience, she conceives major city-building projects and develops sustainable organizational structures to ensure the long-term success of projects.

As founder and principal of Groundwork: The Foundation for City Building, she has focused on enhancing waterfront development. She led Wayzata's Lake Effect Park Project, the transformation of the city's Lake Minnetonka shoreline and the creation of the private fundraising entity for the park – the Lake Effect Conservancy. On behalf of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, she developed and managed RiverFirst, a revitalization effort along 5.5 miles of the Mississippi River. Finally, she co-founded and consulted for 2020 Partners, a public-private partnership that facilitated the transformation of a downtown Minneapolis industrial district into a new urban center.

Previously, deLaittre was the executive director of the Minneapolis Parks Foundation, where she galvanized the organization around a new mission of creating the Next Generation of Parks™. She received a bachelor of arts in art history from Brown University and a masters of architecture with a focus on urban design from the University of Minnesota.

**Organization:** Great River Passage Conservancy

**Organization Description:**

The Great River Passage Conservancy rallies philanthropic support for the City of St. Paul's Great River Passage Initiative. Our mission—to raise resources that support the community's vision for connecting Saint Paul's two greatest assets, its people and the Mississippi River—responds to environmental challenges as we partner with the city to advance forward-thinking initiatives that preserve and protect our 17 miles of river. To that end, the Conservancy is focused on three key capital projects:

- The Mississippi River Learning Center is a city-led project combining a mixed-use, river-focused space that will serve as a national gateway to the Mississippi and provide year-round experiences of the land, water, and culture of the river.
- The River Balcony is a proposed 1.5-mile promenade along the downtown river bluff that will connect public spaces, civic landmarks, and development sites, providing new connections to the river.
- The East Side River District (ESRD) encompasses a dynamic 1000-acre urban landscape that reveals the complex systems and stories of the East Side, heals a compromised landscape, connects the area to the broader city, and protects culturally sacred sites and sensitive ecological systems. The ESRD is the focus of this proposal.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
Mary delaittre	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Strategic direction and oversight of project management; partner and collaboration management				0.5		\$72,000
Laura Bray	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Communications support for community engagement				0.63		\$35,000
City of St. Paul	Sub award	Project Management				0.5		\$205,000
Full Circle Indigenous Design	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Community engagement for Dakota Tribes				0.38		\$48,000
City of St. Paul	Sub award	Will engage design firm through public rfp process to complete schematic design				2.25		\$600,000
AmplifyDMC	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Communications, copy-writing and graphic design				0.06		\$20,000
City of St. Paul	Sub award	Will engage design firm through public RFP process to complete design and construction documents				2.25		\$1,000,000
Lower Phalen Creek Project	Sub award	Community engagement				0.18		\$10,000
Dakota Tribe TBD	Sub award	Community engagement				0.18		\$10,000
City of St. Paul	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Preliminary restoration, conservation and resilience activities				0.13		\$300,000

							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$2,300,000</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$2,300,000</b>



Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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## Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
<b>State</b>				
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Non-State</b>				
Cash	National Endowment for the Arts	Support for schematic design	Pending	\$100,000
Cash	REI Action Fund	General operating expenses related to East Side River District	Secured	\$100,000
Cash	Irwin Andrew Porter Foundation	Schematic Design	Pending	\$50,000
Cash	Canadian Pacific	Schematic design and community engagement for East Side River District	Pending	\$50,000
Cash	Saint Paul Regional Water Services	Schematic Design Support	Pending	\$100,000
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>

## Acquisition and Restoration

### Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
East Side River District	Ramsey	Mississippi flyway bird migration route that converges with an industrial landscape that includes shipping barges, multiple railyards, water treatment and wood-chipping facilities, and two Hazardous Superfund sites	Restoration	1,000	-	\$33,000,000	Public	City of St. Paul	Has Not Begun
<b>Totals</b>				<b>1,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>\$33,000,000</b>			

## Restoration

**1. Provide a statement confirming that all restoration activities completed with these funds will occur on land permanently protected by a conservation easement or public ownership.**

The East Side River district area is owned by the City of St. Paul and managed by various city entities.

**2. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for the parcels to be restored by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation.**

The East Side River District planning was prompted by the 2013 long term master plan created by the City of St. Paul for the Great River Passage. Once finalized, the restoration and management plan will be a part of public record via the City of St. Paul website as well as part of Great River Passage Conservancy organizational records.

Restoration of the flood plain will seek to protect the flora and fauna, restore the flood plain to native species, and decontaminate any waterways currently impacted by the superfund site.

**3. Describe how restoration efforts will utilize and follow the Board of Soil and Water Resources “Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines” in order to ensure ecological integrity and pollinator enhancement.**

Great River Passage Conservancy will partner with the City of St. Paul and Mississippi Park Connection (MPC) for any identified restoration efforts. MPC has conducted previous restoration efforts along the Mississippi River Recreation Area. Restoration efforts will utilize and follow the Board of Soil and Water Resources “Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines”

**4. Describe how the long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel being restored with these funds will be met and financed into the future.**

The restoration and re-wilding effort will be managed in the long term by landowner, the City of St. Paul. Long term maintenance will be managed by the City of St. Paul. Great River Passage Conservancy will continue to be the City’s partner organization that seeks out additional private, philanthropic support that may be needed in the future.

**5. Describe how consideration will be given to contracting with Conservation Corps of Minnesota for any restoration activities.**

Consideration will be given to contracting with Conservation Corps of Minnesota for any appropriate and identified restoration activities. Our partner, Mississippi Park Connection, has collaborated with the CC previously.

**6. Provide a statement indicating that evaluations will be completed on parcels where activities were implemented both 1) initially after activity completion and 2) three years later as a follow-up. Evaluations should analyze improvements to the parcel and whether goals have been met, identify any problems with the implementation, and identify any findings that can be used to improve implementation of future restoration efforts at the site or elsewhere.**

Restoration sites will be evaluated on the success of invasive species control and changes in biodiversity of flora and fauna surveys conducted by our partner and collaborating organizations.

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Map*

File: [9e99a57a-139.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Map*

Maps: showing location of East Side River district in City of St. Paul, a more detailed map of East Side River District's boundaries and location details, a layer map showing cultural and historical locations, parks, industry and ecology layers of the area....

#### *Financial Capacity*

File: [f541a8c6-dcc.pdf](#)

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
Board Authorization Letter GRPC East Side River District	<a href="#">00f3e6c2-b76.pdf</a>

### Optional Attachments

#### *Support Letter or Other*

Title	File
Photos of East Side River District Site	<a href="#">e7801345-cb8.pdf</a>

## Administrative Use

**Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?**

Yes: Restoration,

**Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, or sale of products and assets?**

No

**Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?**

N/A

**Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?**

N/A

**Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?**

No

**Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?**

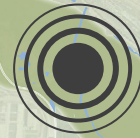
No





**DOWNTOWN  
SAINT PAUL**

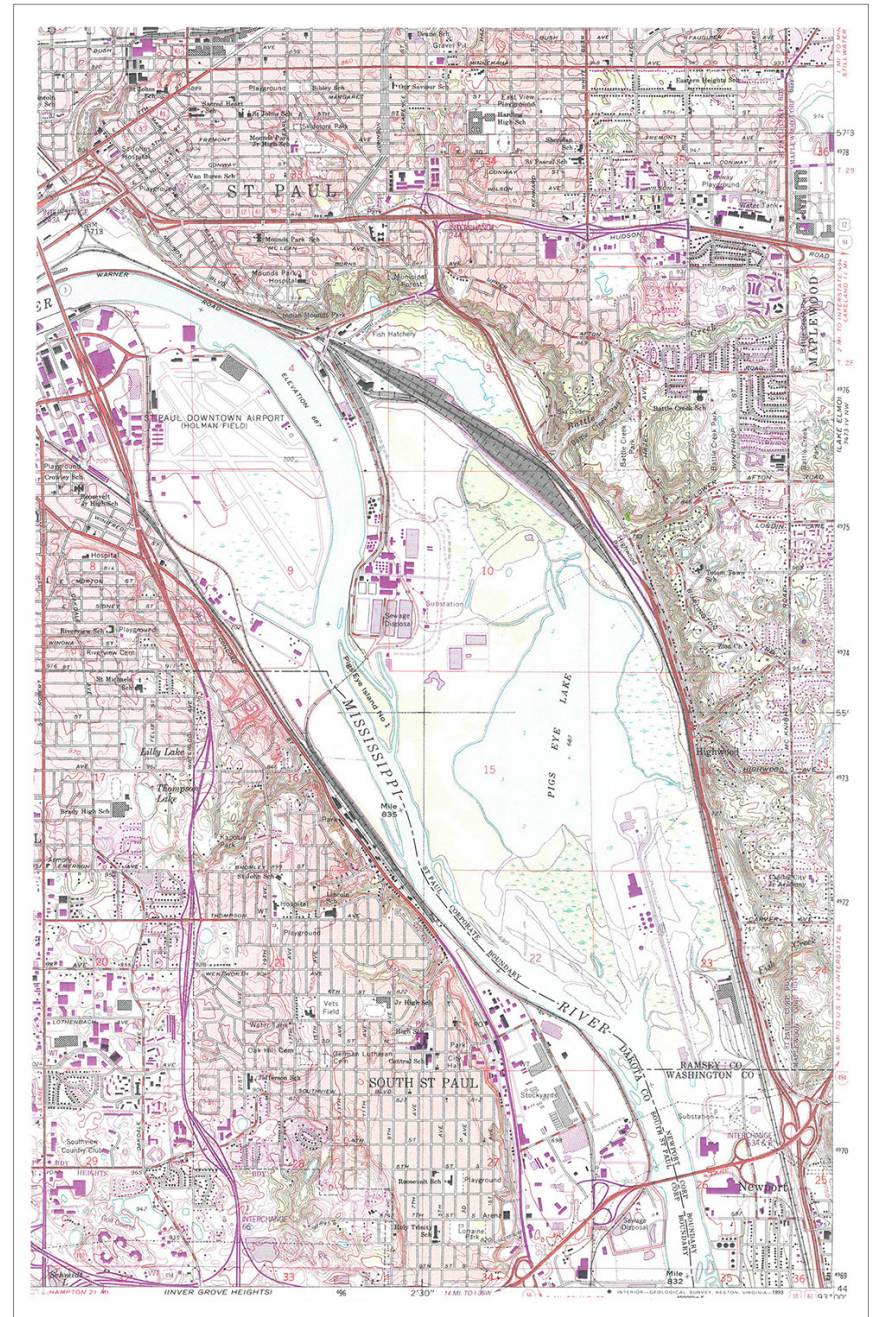
**EAST SIDE  
RIVER DISTRICT**







**EAST SIDE RIVER DISTRICT AREA**





# EAST SIDE RIVER DISTRICT PHYSICAL LAYERS

## THE PROJECT

The 1,000-acre East Side River District is a convergence of an historically, culturally, economically, environmentally and recreationally strategic area long disconnected from the surrounding community and larger City and Region.

The area has great culture, historical, and environmental importance:

- First Nations cultural landscape of sacred sites and larger historic settlement location
- Industrial landscape that includes the working Mississippi River, Metropolitan Water Treatment facility, multiple rail yards and municipal wood chipping facility, as well as reclaimed brownfields and Superfund sites
- Ecological restoration and critical function as part of the Mississippi flyway bird migration route (classified by Audubon as an Important Bird Area) and the Pig's Eye Island Heron Rookery Scientific and Natural Area
- Proximity to Mississippi National River and Recreation Area and Department of Natural Resources regional headquarters, Battle Creek Regional Park, Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary and proposed Wakan Tipi Interpretive Center
- Dramatic position within the larger Mississippi River system and surrounding bluffs

