

Surprise, Surprise

If someone from Portland, Oregon, or Portland, Maine, had asked me a few years ago to list the leading features and qualities of Twin Cities urbanism—the architecture and the landscapes that distinguish Minneapolis and St. Paul—I would have given him or her the standard answer. I would have started by describing Minneapolis' peerless and seemingly endless parks system, planned by landscape architect H.W.S. Cleveland in the late 19th century and vastly expanded under Theodore Wirth in the early 20th century: the miles upon miles of parkway, bikeways, and walkways along the Mississippi River and Minnehaha Creek and around the Chain of Lakes. I would have touted the still relatively new Hiawatha LRT line and the beautifully engineered Midtown Greenway pedestrian bridge that winds over it.

I would have painted two pictures of Rice Park in downtown St. Paul: one of a weekday lunch hour in summer, the other of holiday lights illuminating a snowfall. I would have mentally walked this Portlander through the parade of Victorian homes along St. Paul's Summit Avenue, across one or two of the city's numerous college campuses, and to a bench in the wide-open Harriet Island Park, where we could take in the downtown skyline across the river, perhaps with fireworks booming overhead. And then I would have contrasted that scene with a view of Minneapolis' reinhabited industrial riverfront from the Stone Arch Bridge.

I would have talked about the hard lessons we've learned from knocking down landmarks in decades past, and how our architects are now unrivaled at envisioning new uses for languishing historic buildings. I would have cited as Minneapolis examples MS&R's Mill City Museum and Mill Ruin Courtyard, RSP Architects' Grain Belt Brewery two miles up the

river, and architect John Cuninghame's pioneering Itasca Lofts (page 40) in the Warehouse District (page 32).

I would have said that we're better at preserving and interpreting our architectural history and taking a contextual approach to urban infill than we are at taking risks with large-scale additions to our cityscapes. I would have said that two years ago, but I've changed my tune, because Target Field (page 24) turned out to be a daring mega-project in many ways. Though it cloaks itself in Minnesota limestone, a material used on the Minneapolis Central Library and elsewhere in downtown, Target Field aims to stand out more than blend in. And the fretted-over site, wrapped tightly by streets, a freeway ramp, a garbage burner, and rail transit (hooray!) on the edge of downtown, has yielded a ballpark and plaza with an electric atmosphere, thanks in large part to Populous, HGA, and

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Tom Oslund. "That's the true source of Target Field's energy—the city itself," writes Linda Mack. "From any seat, you can watch the game and also feel the city's vibrancy."

This new urban ambition extends to Target Field's neighbor to the east. Target Center's new vegetated roof (page 38) sets a new green standard for sports and entertainment venues around the globe. If only the seats at Target Field were high enough to look down on Target Center and its beautiful leaf-pattern mat. Alas, photography will have to suffice.

Twin Cities urban design is starting to hit for power.

EDITOR'S
NOTE



DON F. WONG

And I think you'll find that our Target Field and Target Center photography more than suffices. Paul Crosby documented the construction of the ballpark for the Twins, and his images from opening day are so alive they'll have you

smelling hot dogs. Steve Bergerson's dramatic aerial photographs (pages 22, 38) capture the big picture, while George Heinrich zeroes in on one of the most visually alluring elements in the Target Field experience (page 64). The images all confirm one thing: We're starting to swing for the fences here in the Twin Cities, and these two projects are tape-measure blasts.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Hudson".

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