

**The tour begins** just outside the Immigration History Research Center’s home in Elmer L Andersen Library, on the pedestrian bridge that crosses the Mississippi River. It then meanders through the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood before returning to the West Bank Campus to finish. This neighborhood has welcomed new immigrants for the last 150+ years. Its proximity to downtown & the University of Minnesota means that these centers of business & education have also played a significant role in shaping the geography & history of the community. On this tour, the past & present mingle together. Some of the sites are newer constructions, but with long histories in the community; some stops are older but are used for new purposes; & others are gone, destroyed by man or nature. As you learn about the neighborhood’s history, take the time to look around & notice what has remained & what has changed. See how the old & the new come together. Moreover, see how the various national, ethnic, & religious groups who live in this neighborhood come together to form a community.

**-1 Washington AVE Bridge, West Bank, UMN.** From here we can get a birds-eye view of the flats along the west bank of the Mississippi River. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this was known as Bohemian Flats, home to a large number of Eastern European immigrants (hence the name) who worked in the lumber industry. The flats were the last squatter territory in Minneapolis, & all residents were evicted in the early 1930s, though some managed to stay on until the 1940s.

**-2 2001 Riverside AVE.** Trinity Lutheran Congregation is the oldest continuous institution in Cedar-Riverside. It was started by Danish & Swedish immigrants in 1869. A large stone church was constructed at 9<sup>th</sup> ST & 20<sup>th</sup> AVE, but was torn down to make way for I-94. The congregation voted to stay in the area rather than relocate to the suburbs (where many residents lived). Augsburg College provided Trinity Congregation with a space for a chapel & offices.

**-3 801 22<sup>nd</sup> AVE S.** Murphy Square, at the center of Augsburg’s campus, is Minneapolis’ oldest city park. Captain Edward Murphy, one of the area’s first European-American settlers, donated this land to the city in 1857. During its first few decades it served as a public pasture where livestock grazed.

**-4 725 & 731 21<sup>st</sup> AVE S.** Old Main, Augsburg College. Norwegian immigrants living in Marshall, WI, founded Augsburg College in 1869 & moved to Cedar-Riverside a few months later. Old Main opened in 1872 & housed all classrooms, dormitories, dining facilities, as well as a gym & chapel. The “New” Old Main opened in 1902 & continues to be used for student classrooms.

**-5 801 Cedar AVE S.** Community Peace Gardens was started by Korean elders who immigrated to the Cedar-Riverside area in the 1980s, brought here by their children who had moved to Twin Cities prior. A Korean mother, mourning the loss of her daughter, started gardening under a nearby freeway as a means to cope with her loss. More Koreans joined her, finding peace of mind & a connection to their homeland through gardening. In the early-1990s, the Korean Services Center helped provide garden space near I-94, but later the gardens moved to their present location to make way for the Hiawatha Light Rail.

**-6 504 Cedar AVE S.** Dar Al-Hijrah Mosque, “Home of Migration,” is located in this unassuming, two-story building, reflects the shift in immigration populations from Scandinavians to East Africans. This building was initially a steam laundry, then in the 1960s Scandinavian immigrants opened up a small knitting factory, & finally, in 1998, it became the new Somali population’s first mosque. In 2006, Somali community members raised \$400K to purchase the building outright.

**-7 427 Cedar AVE S.** Dania Hall. The colorful pillar in the middle of this open lot is all that remains of the once thriving cultural institution for the Scandinavian community of Cedar-Riverside. Built in 1886 for Danish-American activities, it hosted Society Dania, which helped young Danes arriving in America. For over 100 years it was a cultural & entertainment center for the neighborhood. It was destroyed by a fire in 2000.

**-8 Riverside Plaza.** This large concrete structure is a high-density apartment complex with 11 buildings, 1,300 units, & nearly 5,000 residents. Riverside Plaza has a controversial history because of its origins in the urban renewal struggles of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Since the 1980s, it has been home to immigrants from Vietnam, Korea, India,

the Middle East, Africa, & South America. Today, Somali, Ethiopian, & Oromo immigrants & refugees form the largest group of residents.

**-9 420 15<sup>th</sup> AVE S.** Brian Coyle Community Center is one of the busiest buildings in this neighborhood. Opened in 1993, it provides residents with work, job training, ESL classes, tutoring, athletics, a food shelf, & many opportunities to be civically engaged. The center is named after Brian Coyle who was a longtime advocate for affordable housing & tenants’ rights, & who was one of the few openly gay elected officials in the country. In Coyle died in 1991 of AIDS-related complications. This building is just one of the public tributes to his work that carry his name.

**-10 320 16<sup>th</sup> AVE S.** Pillsbury House once stood in this parking lot. It began in 1879 as a mission, but soon became part of the Settlement House movement of 1883 in which middle-class volunteer “settlement workers” lived in working class neighborhoods, hosting events in their settlement houses with the goals of sharing (middle-class) knowledge & culture as a means to alleviate poverty. Over the years, Pillsbury House hosted a Sunday school, kindergarten classes, & the first day-nursery school in Minneapolis. There were a variety of social & recreational clubs on offer at Pillsbury House, & it also provided a library, community kitchen, employment office, & a Penny Savings Bank. In 1968 it was slated to be demolished for a highway, when a mysterious fire destroyed it & the remnants were torn down.

**-11 326 Cedar AVE S.** Keefer Court Bakery, opened in 1983, is the first Chinese bakery in Minnesota. For a long time it was the only place in the Twin Cities to get fresh mooncakes, a special pastry made for the Chinese Moon Festival, or autumnal festival. The Kwan family also started the Keefer Court Fortune Cookie Factory, & recently opened a new production facility in Seward.

**-12 329 Cedar AVE S.** New Riverside Café (now Acadia) was the hot-spot in the 1960s & 70s for new arrivals to the neighborhood: students, scholars, hippies, & activist from the Twin Cities & the US. They were attracted to the neighborhood by the cheap rents & emerging counterculture that surrounded the newly constructed UMN West Bank campus. Many of the new residents were anti-war, anti-capitalists, anti-development, & the New Riverside Café became the “living room” of the neighborhood. It closed in 1997. Acadia opened in 2007 & continues to still serve the students & residents.

**-13 1931 5<sup>th</sup> ST S.** Afro Deli & African Development Center. Abdirahman Kahin, a Somali American businessman, founded Afro Deli in 2010 as “a social venture that attempts to weave together business with community & culture.” It was one of the business supported by the African Development Center in their new location. The center’s mission is to help African immigrants & refugees start & build businesses, become homeowners, & get the financial training needed for their new lives in America.

**-14 University of Minnesota West Bank Campus.** The end of WWII, the passing of the GI Bill, & increased enrollments meant that in the 1950s the U (confined to the East Bank) was busting at the seams. In the 1950s, U officials started looking into expanding on to the West Bank. They bought up land & houses & began construction of a new campus. Heller Hall opened in 1961; Blegen Hall & Social Sciences followed in 1962. The U provides the neighborhood with educational, social, political, & health programs for students & residents.



## Introduction...

Cedar-Riverside has been a major entry point for newcomers to Minnesota for over 150+ years. This area was once part of the *Mni Sota Makoce*, the historic homeland of the Dakota peoples who moved through to hunt, fish, & tap the maple trees that grew along the Mississippi River. Since its origins, Cedar-Riverside has been one of the city's most densely populated & diverse neighborhoods.

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, settlers from new England & the mid-Atlantic states arrived in what became Cedar-Riverside. They were joined by Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, Finns, Irish, German, Slovaks, Czechs, Poles, Swiss, Canadians, French, & many others. In the early-20<sup>th</sup> century, newer migrant populations arrived & added to the mix of peoples living in the neighborhood: African Americans, Russians, Romanian Jews, & small groups of Italians, Chinese, & Japanese. In 1910 the population peaked at 20,000—over half were of Scandinavian descent.

On Saturday nights in the early-1900s, thousands of Scandinavians, Eastern Europeans, Germans, Irish, & others from around the city would converge on Seven Corners (the junction of Washington, Cedar, & 19<sup>th</sup> Avenues) to socialize. They danced, drank, & socialized in the bars, halls, & theatres that lined Cedar & Washington. Scandinavians were the largest group of revelers & many enjoyed “snus” (Swedish tobacco), which was often left on the streets after they went home. Thus, Cedar AVE earned the epithet “snus gaten” (Snoose Boulevard).

Over the next half-century Cedar-Riverside declined in population. From its burgeoning population of 20,000 in 1910, by the 1950s there were only 8,000 residents left. The construction of the University of Minnesota's West Bank campus in the early-1960s & cheap rents attracted college students, radical activists, & hippies to Cedar-Riverside. Joining older residents, many of whom were first-generation immigrants, these newer residents built a flourishing counterculture community.

Immigration law reforms and refugee resettlement bills have done helped to change the origins of the immigrants living in Cedar-Riverside. The buildings that once housed Scandinavian, Central & Eastern European, & Irish people & institutions now host immigrants from East & South East Asia, East Africa, & Latin America. It is home to the largest concentration of Somali & Somali Americans in the country. In 2010, Cedar-Riverside has a population of 7,000; over fifty percent were East African.

## For further reading...

- Armitage, Dan & West bank History Collective, *Curling Waters*, 1975.  
Atwater, Isaac, *History of Minneapolis*, 1895.  
Brown, Christopher, *Riverside Plaza*, 2015.  
Collins, Cyn, *West Bank Boogie*, 2006.  
Chrislock, Carl, *From Fjord to Freeway*, 1969.  
Duffield Niell, Edward, *History of Hennepin County*, 1881.  
Hamre, James, *From Immigrant Parish to Inner City Ministry*, 1998.  
Hansen, Carl, *My Minneapolis*, 1956.  
Haynes, Theresa Gervais, “Augsburg Park,” *Minnesota History*, Winter 1967.  
Martin, Judith, *Recycling Central City: The Development of a New Town-In Town*, 1978.  
Price, Susan Davis, *Growing Home: Stories of Ethnic Gardening*, 2000.  
Preservation Alliance of Minnesota, “Riverside Plaza Oral History Project,” 2014.  
Roberts, Norene, “Historical Survey of Cedar-Riverside,” 1979.  
Stoecker, Randy, *Defending Community: The Struggle for Alternative Redevelopment in Cedar-Riverside*, 1994.  
Westerman, Gwen & Bruce White, *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota*, 2012.  
WPA Guide, *Bohemian Flats*, 1941, reprint 1986.

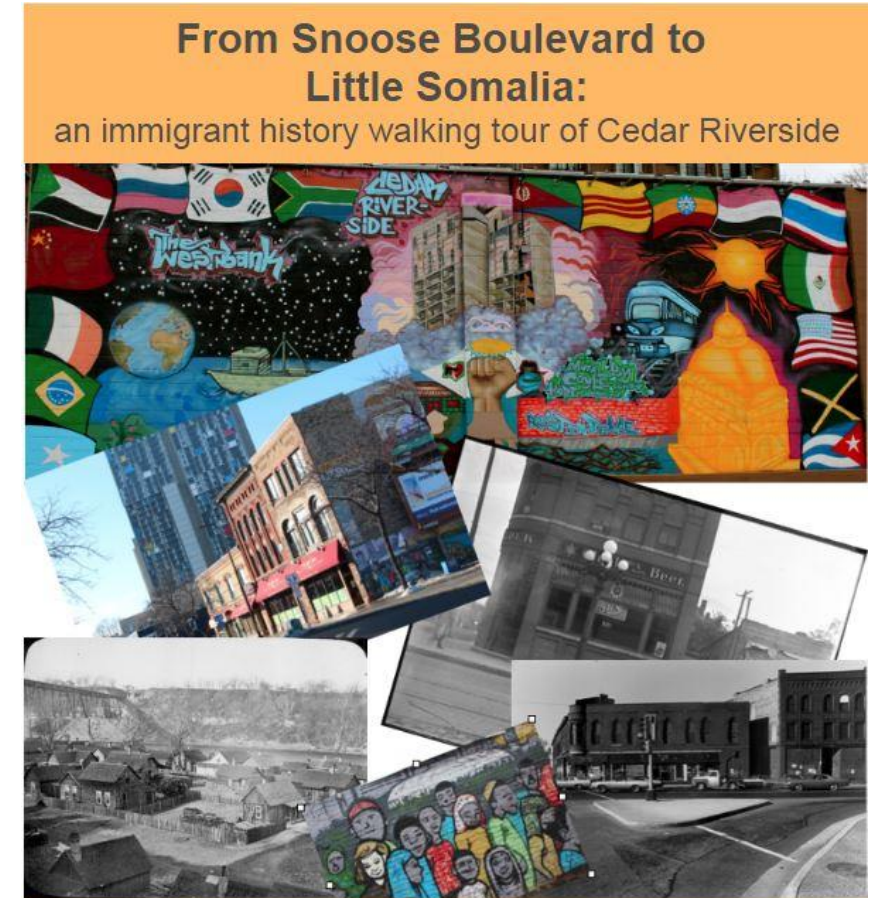
## Neighborhood Associations...

Cedar-Riverside NRP  
Cedar-Riverside Youth Council  
Westbank Community Coalition  
West Bank Business Association  
West Bank CDC

## About the tour developer...

Anduine Wilhide is a PhD candidate in the Department of History at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Her research focuses on the histories of migration & refugee resettlement in Minnesota, with particular focus on the Somali community & the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood. She is a public historian dedicated to public engagement & the use of digital technologies to empower new immigrant & refugee communities to tell their own stories & to document their own histories. As part of her research, she has created documentaries, presentations, archives, & exhibits in addition to developing a walking tour of the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood. She is currently developing an exciting interactive web & mobile app version of this tour for public use.

It can be found at <http://walk.herodotus.augsburg.edu>.



**Anduine Wilhide.** Tour researcher, developer, & author.  
**Bryan D Pekel.** Guide design.

