



March 26, 2025

The Honorable Fue Lee and the Honorable Mary Franson
Co-Chairs, Minnesota House Capital Investment Committee
Centennial Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Co-Chair Lee, Co-Chair Franson, and Members of the House Capital Investment Committee,

My name is Andy Rodriguez, Director of the City of Saint Paul's Parks and Recreation Department, which is nationally recognized as one of the top park systems in the country, boasting 185 parks and 26 community recreation centers.

On behalf of my department, we express our strong support for the design and construction of a Latino Museum within Saint Paul. This project will have a state-wide impact and will be a first for Harriet Island and the entire regional park system. Uplifting our community's art, culture, and history through this work is essential and we are eager to see this project move forward.

Saint Paul Parks and Recreation (SPPR) has regularly partnered with (Neo)Muralismos de México (NMM) to provide space and support for cultural events. In 2023, SPPR worked with NMM to provide space in our El Rio Vista Recreation Center for *Imaginando Futuros*, a pop-up art exhibit and market celebrating Latino culture and inviting the community to share their vision of a Latino Museum in Minnesota. This event highlighted the contributions of multiple Latino artists, provided residents with a unique opportunity to engage with Latino art & artists, and brought museum directors from around the country to Saint Paul in support of NMM's mission.

This summer, in collaboration with NMM, we are thrilled to present an Alebrijes art exhibit at Raspberry Island. The exhibit will feature ongoing community arts workshops and provide a wealth of cultural experiences in an area rich in Latino heritage. The project will also include the creation of large paper-mâché Alebrije creatures for everyone in our communities to enjoy and appreciate.

The museum is a grassroots initiative aimed at creating our state's first institution dedicated to the arts and cultural traditions of 400,000 Minnesotans of Mexican and Latin American heritage. It will be located in the historic West Side Flats, the Saint Paul neighborhood where Mexican immigrants first established a Latino community in our state more than a century ago. SPPR celebrates NMM's efforts



to bring art and cultural connections to Minnesota residents and supports their commitment to housing the Minnesota Latino Museum in this historically significant location.

Nationally, Latinos are falling drastically behind in terms of museum representation. While the Institute for Museum and Library Services estimates a total of 35,000 museums nationally, only about 25 (less than 0.1%) focus on Latinos. In 2017, the National Endowment for the Arts reported that Latinos ranked at the bottom in most indicators of arts access.

Since 2000, Minnesota's Latino community has grown by almost 3 times (288%), compared to the 16% growth rate of the state overall. Today, Latinos represent 10% of Minnesota's children. Mexicans are the largest immigrant community in the state by nationality.

For over 30 years there has been a request by Mexican and Latino community members in Minnesota to have a permanent cultural space where our artists and cultural workers can share their creativity and talents, and where families can pass on our traditions through the generations. The museum will be located on the banks of the Mississippi River at Harriet Island Regional Park. By reclaiming space for the Mexican and Latino communities on the historic West Side Flats, the Museum will provide a space to heal from the displacement of Mexican residents in the 1960s.

Sincerely,

Andy Rodriguez
Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Director