When my wife and I arrived in the Twin Cities 15 years ago so that I could take a job at Minneapolis-based U.S. Bank, we were greeted with a warm and expected “Minnesota-nice” welcome—the region’s reputation for kindness to strangers is well known and well deserved—along with an unexpected yet overwhelming sense of civic pride.

While the greater Minneapolis-St. Paul region is home to nearly 20 Fortune 500 companies, some of the nation’s largest private businesses and foundations, leading fine arts organizations and teams representing every major league sports club, it still embraces an intimate and personal way of life. This is an area with big companies and big institutions that still feels like a warm and welcoming neighborhood.

The Twin Cities regularly places near the top of most national lists for quality of life and, more importantly, livability. In fact, if we aren’t recognized as among the most connected, intelligent, happy, healthy or engaged citizenry, then we assume that the poll was flawed. You see, the remarkable sense of civic pride in our hometown, coupled with our strong competitive spirit, create an intensely positive environment.

If the Twin Cities had a motto, it might be “the Pay-It-Forward Towns.” Harkening back more than a century, the leaders of our region instilled a philosophy of giving back (time, money and wisdom) with a nod toward the future—the long-term future. This philanthropic way of governing is still a central aspect of our current-day leadership and greatly informs the special qualities of greater Minneapolis-St. Paul.

Civic pride is a special attribute and it’s central to the reasons we all love our hometown. It’s also why we recently hosted the Ryder Cup and the X Games, and are scheduled to host Super Bowl LII in February and the NCAA Final Four in 2019. Our people come together to make big things happen—never needing to know if they will see any public credit.

Come and visit us—we’ll give you a warm welcome, celebrate our cultural riches and invite you to explore one of America’s most progressive regions. And especially consider a trip in the winter. This is the North, the Bold North, and we’d love to show you our home. After your visit, we will be on the top of your list of places to return someday—for another vacation or to commence an education or start a business or, like my wife and me, to build a life.
It’s kind of a well-kept secret:

The Minneapolis-St. Paul region is an economic powerhouse. Minnesotans would have a right to brag, but it’s not their style. Home to 17 Fortune 500 companies, Minneapolis-St. Paul has deep roots in the healthcare, food and water industries. Corporations founded there range from retail giants such as Target and Best Buy to food and agriculture industry conglomerates including General Mills and Cargill, the largest privately held company in the country, to firms such as St. Paul–based Ecolab, which provides hygiene and sanitization services to hotels and restaurants around the world. Together, those corporations and numerous others make for a dynamic business community that keeps the region’s unemployment rate one of the lowest in the nation—just 3.7 percent as of July 2017.

**U.S. Bank** (fig.01)
Founded in 1968, Minneapolis-based U.S. Bancorp (U.S. Bank’s parent company) is not only the fifth-largest bank, based on asset size, but it’s also the largest of that group that’s not headquartered on either coast. That factor works in U.S. Bank’s favor with its client base, which is significantly made up of midwesterners who appreciate the bank’s straightforward approach and lack of Wall Street baggage. And to see tangible evidence of U.S. Bank’s commitment to the greater MSP region, you only have to look at the stunning new U.S. Bank Stadium in downtown Minneapolis, which houses the Minnesota Vikings and will host the 2018 Super Bowl. usbank.com

**Ecolab** (fig.02)
Ecolab has called St. Paul home since Merritt J. Osborn founded the conglomerate in 1923, but it’s since expanded to employ 48,000 people in 171 offices worldwide. It’s a major player in the hospital industry thanks to its hygiene and sanitization services, but its forward-thinking approach to water use is what makes it so appealing to investors—Bill Gates, through his Cascade Investment fund and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, is its largest shareholder. ecolab.com

**Medtronic** (fig.03)
Medtronic was founded in Fridley, a Minneapolis suburb, and is best known for its contributions to the development of battery-operated pacemakers. But it’s also part of a larger contingent of medical technology and service companies based or founded in MSP that make the region a leader in healthcare. Medtronic’s headquarters have since been moved to Dublin, but its operational headquarters remain in Minneapolis. medtronic.com

**UnitedHealth Group** (fig.04)
Through its two arms, UnitedHealthcare and Optum, UnitedHealth Group is one of the largest providers of healthcare coverage and information services in the world. With annual revenues of $180 billion, it’s also the largest publicly held company headquartered in Minnesota and ranks No. 6 on the Fortune 500. unitedhealthgroup.com
When a state's nickname is the "Land of 10,000 Lakes," it's no surprise that its residents like to spend time outdoors. Read any clicking article about the "Fittest Cities in the United States," and it's likely you'll find MSP on the list. You can't blame its citizens for spending time outside in the warm spring, summer and fall months, because the sheer number of lakes, parks and bike trails is staggering (the 16-county region that makes up Greater MSP has 1,700 lakes alone). But it's a testament to Minnesotans' hardy constitutions that outdoor activities and festivals in the winter are just as popular as the summer ones. No one in MSP is afraid of a little cold.

Minneapolis Parks Foundation

Created in 2003, the Minneapolis Parks Foundation is a private nonprofit that works with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to increase usable park space in the city. As young professionals and empty nesters flock to renovated lofts in former mills lining the banks of the Mississippi River, the Parks Foundation has increasingly turned to its RiverFirst initiative, a public-private partnership that helps fund the transformation of the riverfront. New bike trails, running paths and boat launches are already doing their part to make the riverfront more accessible to all.

Chain of Lakes

West Minneapolis is home to the most popular destination in the Minneapolis park system, Chain of Lakes Regional Park. The massive, 1,550-acre system includes five public lakes and a trail connecting them. When the weather's nice, the shores are packed with beachgoers and picnickers, and the water is full of canoes, kayaks and paddleboards.

Saint Paul Winter Carnival

As the story goes, an East Coast journalist visited St. Paul in the dead of winter in 1885, calling it "another Siberia, unfit for human habitation." Locals didn't appreciate the bad PR, so they created the Saint Paul Winter Carnival to "showcase all the beauty of the Minnesota winters." The first iteration took place in 1886, and now it's a 10-day festival each January. The 2018 carnival will span 17 days, running from Jan. 25 to Feb. 10 to take advantage of crowds coming to town for the Minnesota Super Bowl. The 2018 carnival will span 17 days, running from Jan. 25 to Feb. 10 to take advantage of crowds coming to town for the Minnesota Super Bowl. Also returning is one of the event's signature ice palaces, 100-plus-foot structures made of ice blocks. Although the city hasn't built an ice palace since the 2004 carnival, it'll bring back the tradition in 2018 to celebrate the big game.

Crashed Ice

Described by one St. Paul resident as "kind of like luge...but on skates...and with obstacles," Crashed Ice isn't an event for the fainthearted. Still, this annual competition of ice cross downhill that starts on the steps of the Cathedral of St. Paul doesn't have a problem attracting participants—mayor Chris Coleman has even tested out the course each year of his tenure. More than 120,000 people show up to see skaters take on the St. Paul track, which is 1,600 feet long and drops 12 stories from start to finish.

In all four seasons of the year, you can find Minnesotans taking advantage of the parks, rivers and lakes that define the Minneapolis-St. Paul landscape—and culture.
The Minneapolis-St. Paul region isn’t hard to get to—it’s an easy two- to three-hour flight from either coast. But because it used to be a place that was less traveled to, Minnesotans found that if they wanted regular access to the arts and music, they had to develop it themselves. They were helped in this project by immigrant populations that carried their own cultural traditions and by a civic community in which philanthropy and a commitment to the arts is seen as part of the responsibility of leadership. MSP’s cultural offerings may surprise those who haven’t visited the area, but they are unquestionably among the country’s finest.

The Guthrie Theater (fig. 02)
In 1959 Tyrone Guthrie took out an ad in the New York Times requesting that communities wishing to start a theater should get in touch. Minneapolis-St. Paul did, and Guthrie picked MSP from seven cities in contention. Construction was completed in 1963, and the new building instantly became an icon. Perched above the banks of the Mississippi River, its “Endless Bridge” stretching out toward the water, the Guthrie contains an 1,100-seat main stage, a 700-seat proscenium stage and a 200-seat “black box” theater for experimental work. Over the decades, the Guthrie earned a reputation as one of the country’s finest theaters, readily mentioned in the same breath as theaters in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Boston. guthrietheater.org

The Walker Art Center (fig. 02)
The Walker began life in 1879 as the private art collection, open to the public, of Thomas Barlow Walker, a timber magnate who also founded Minneapolis’ public library. The collection became a gallery in 1927 and then a museum in 1939. Focusing on modern and contemporary art, it now features 10 art galleries, a cinema, theater, shop, restaurant and café. In conjunction with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the Walker also runs the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. walkerart.org

Minnesota Orchestra (fig. 03)
Founded in 1903 as the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, this 115-year-old institution was largely the creation of German immigrants who banded together to play the music they’d known in their native land. It didn’t take long for the musicians to jell: Four years later, the orchestra played its first regional tour and then arrived at Carnegie Hall in 1912. Over a century later, the Minnesota Orchestra is renowned worldwide and is the winner of multiple Grammy Awards. In 2015 the orchestra performed two historic concerns in Havana, making it the first major American orchestra to play the music they’d known in their native land. It didn’t take long for the musicians to jell: Four years later, the orchestra played its first regional tour and then arrived at Carnegie Hall in 1912. The list goes on. First Avenue also manages St. Paul’s historic Palace Theatre. minnesotaorchestra.org

First Avenue (fig. 04)
It’s impossible to talk about the arts in MSP without mentioning First Avenue, the almost 50-year-old music club, and Prince, the local genius who made the club into something like a personal rehearsal space. The roster of other artists who’ve played here is like a history of popular music since 1970: the Replacements, Bo Didley, Drive-By Truckers, the Cure, R.E.M., Public Enemy, John Lee Hooker, Depeche Mode...The Guthrie also manages St. Paul’s historic Palace Theatre. first-avenue.com

The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra (fig. 05)
The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra (fig. 05)
The Guthrie Theater (fig. 02)
The Walker Art Center (fig. 02)
First Avenue (fig. 04)
Vibrant art institutions, varied musical offerings and a robust theater scene make MSP a cultural destination.

Experience
Facility and headquarters for the team in Eagan, about 20 minutes south of downtown Minneapolis. Slated to open in March 2018, the new performance center will replace the team’s aging practice facility in Eden Prairie and move its headquarters out of downtown Minneapolis. The center will contain a 93,000-square-foot indoor practice facility, six indoor and outdoor fields and a 6,500-seat venue for hosting events.

Super Bowl LII

MSP hasn’t hosted a Super Bowl since 1992, but the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee beat out Indianapolis and New Orleans to win the bid for Super Bowl LII, which will be played Feb. 4, 2018, at U.S. Bank Stadium. The stadium’s proximity to the light rail system that can take fans to neighboring St. Paul and the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn., means the event will naturally be a regional collaboration, as MSP prepares for an influx of up to 1 million visitors.

U.S. Bank Stadium

It took years of negotiations between the Wilf family, principal owners of the Vikings, and the City of Minneapolis to get plans for U.S. Bank Stadium approved, but the end result, which finally opened in 2016, is one of the most exciting new buildings the NFL has seen in years. The fixed roof design ensures the team will be able to play through the season without worrying about snow and frigid temperatures, but on nice days, an entire wall of 95-foot-high glass doors can be opened to let in light, breezes and fresh air, giving fans (and players) the feeling of being outside. Part of the Wilfs’ agreement with the city was that the 66,200-capacity stadium be used to host events throughout the year, and the Twin Cities haven’t wasted time landing them. In the next two years U.S. Bank Stadium will host the 2018 Super Bowl, the X Games (for the second year in a row) in summer 2018 and the 2019 NCAA Final Four championship, not to mention concerts; it’s already hosted headliners like Guns N’ Roses and Coldplay. This is a stadium sure to draw visitors from all over the country.

Twin Cities Orthopedics Performance Center

Although U.S. Bank Stadium opened relatively recently, the Vikings have already turned their attention to a new project: the Twin Cities Orthopedics Performance Center, new practice facility and headquarters for the team in Eagan, about 20 minutes south of downtown Minneapolis. Slated to open in March 2018, the new performance center will replace the team’s aging practice facility in Eden Prairie and move its headquarters out of downtown Minneapolis. The center will contain a 93,000-square-foot indoor practice facility, six indoor and outdoor fields and a 6,500-seat venue for hosting events.

Super Bowl LII (fig.03)

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Other Sports

Although the Vikings have dominated the news lately, Minneapolis-St. Paul is passionate about all its teams. Here’s what else you can find here:

MLB’s Minnesota Twins playing at Minneapolis’ Target Field mlb.com/twins (fig.04)
The NBA’s Minnesota Timberwolves playing at Minneapolis’ Target Center nba.com/timberwolves (fig.05)
The NHL’s Minnesota Wild and the WNBA’s Minnesota Lynx playing at St. Paul’s Xcel Energy Center nhl.com/wild; lynx.wnba.com (fig.06)
MLS’ Minnesota United FC playing—by 2019—on St. Paul’s new Allianz Field mnufc.com
The St. Paul Saints, a 25-year-old independent league baseball team, playing at CHS Field in St. Paul saintsbaseball.com
The University of Minnesota’s Golden Gophers football playing at TCF Bank Stadium on its campus in downtown Minneapolis.gophersports.com
When a Canadian development firm called Triple Five first proposed the concept of Mall of America in the mid-'80s, it struck some people as a radical idea: the largest shopping mall in the United States, located in then little-known Bloomington, Minn. But Bloomington needed to think big: The city was looking to fill the 78-acre site of the former Metropolitan Stadium, where the Minnesota Twins and Vikings played until 1982. Still, when the founders of Triple Five submitted plans for a massive mixed-use retail/entertainment center, locals wondered if people would actually come to Minnesota to shop. But in 1992 Mall of America opened its doors and became an instant success. One reason has been Triple Five's willingness to embrace retail evolution; nothing about Mall of America feels static or dated. Today Mall of America has two hotels, dozens of restaurants, a theme park, an aquarium and about 520 stores on property. It's a full-on shopping and entertainment destination that generates nearly $2 billion in economic activity from 40 million visitors per year. mallofamerica.com

Luxury Accommodations (fig. 01)
Marriott's first JW Marriott in the greater MSP market opened in November 2015, and almost two years later, the hotel has settled in perfectly, with travelers coming to shop, attend conferences or use the Marriott as a home base for exploring the area. The 15-story, 342-room hotel is part of a newly expanded wing of the mall, and its modern design and soaring atrium give it a sleek but welcoming feel. Its restaurant, Cedar + Stone, is outstanding, with an emphasis on food sourced from within a 100-mile radius. marriott.com

Attractions (fig. 02)
Yes, there's an actual theme park inside Mall of America. And it's not just rides for kids—the 7-acre Nickelodeon Universe (fig. 02) has 27 rides, including roller coasters, a log ride and a zip line that cuts across the park. nickelodeonuniverse.com

The Sea Life aquarium (fig. 03) on the lower level of Mall of America is another diversion you wouldn’t expect to find in a mall. Sea Life’s new Shark Discovery exhibit educates visitors about the world’s declining shark populations, while the 15,000-gallon Ray Lagoon gives them a chance to see dozens of these amazing animals up close. visitsealife.com/Minnesota

Shops (fig. 03)
No matter who you are or what you’re looking for, you can probably find it at Mall of America. It’s home to hundreds of national retailers, but you’ll also find independent stores and shopping-and-entertainment hybrids like Lego, which has play areas and towering Lego displays in addition to products for sale. One major shopping incentive: There’s no sales tax on clothing and shoes, and the mall’s interactive floor maps and text message concierge services make finding what you’re looking for remarkably easy. mallofamerica.com/shopping

Convenience
Getting to the mall from Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport couldn’t be easier—it’s a quick 10-minute drive. But Mall of America’s parking options make getting in and out of the mall a breeze as well. Many hotels nearby offer free shuttle service to and from the mall, there are designated pick-up points for ride-hailing apps like Uber and paperless valet service means you can drop off your car in the morning and text valet services to have it delivered to one of six locations at the end of the day. mallofamerica.com/visit

More than just shopping, Bloomington’s Mall of America has morphed into a vacation destination.
**Taste**

Even in an age when cities across the country are enjoying a surge in outstanding restaurants, Minneapolis-St. Paul stands out among the best.

**MSP has a remarkable number of top-notch restaurants defined by their creative cooking, ethnic diversity, integration of local fish, meats and produce, and lack of attitude. Why? It’s a sophisticated, prosperous region that appreciates great cooking. And the Twin Cities attract young, food-oriented people, who open restaurants.**

**The Bachelor Farmer**

Founded by brothers Eric and Andrew Dayton—sons of Minnesota governor Mark Dayton—in 2011, Bachelor Farmer remains one of MSP’s finest restaurants. Offering fresh food inspired by Minnesota, the menu changes daily, but standouts have included Chinese-style “old-water” chicken, fried pork leg and caramelized green beans with crispy shallots. The wine list is expertly curated, the beer selection seductive and the desserts far more than an afterthought. thebachelorfarmer.com

**Spoon and Stable**

This may be the hardest reservation in town: Expect to wait about two months for a table at Spoon and Stable. But it’s worth the wait. spoonandstable.com

**Red’s Savoy Pizza**

If you’re passionate about pizza, Red’s Savoy—there are multiple locations—is a must-have slice. The restaurant isn’t fancy, but the thin-crust pizza is smothered in cheese and toppings. redsavoypizza.com

Owner and chef Gavin Kaysen is a student of Daniel Boulud who won the 2008 James Beard Award for “Rising Star Chef of the Year.” He’s now a full-fledged superstar. Try the snap pea salad with a crispy pheasant egg, steelhead trout with roasted artichoke and the tamarind-glazed pork chop, which tastes like no pork chop you’ve ever had. And the cocktails are inventive but never precious. spoonandstable.com

**For both corporations and individuals, giving back to the community is an essential part of the Minneapolis-St. Paul DNA.**

**Borough**

Just 4 years old, Borough is one of the most exciting entrants in the MSP food scene. Its menu of American cooking features a beef tartare with black truffle and Parmesan; sweet potato with molasses, plantains and cilantro; and halibut with artichokes. All taste delicious and supremely healthy. The chocolate taco shell with peanuts and banana-rum ice cream for dessert is just decadent. boroughmpls.com

**The Minneapolis Foundation**

Headed by the city’s former two-term mayor, R.T. Rybak, the Minneapolis Foundation offers donors a way to pool giving to minimize expenses and maximize impact. The Foundation has about $750 million in assets, has generated an average of 8.4 percent annual returns over the last five years, and gives away about $60 million in annual grants—about 8 percent of assets under management. The Foundation also approaches grant making by helping fund organizations committed to promoting systemic change. Recent grants have included money to Resource, a charter school Northeast College Prep; the Native American Community Development Institute; and Twin Cities R!SE, which conducts job training and placement for unemployed people of color.

The ultimate goal is something the foundation calls OneMpls—helping to build a city that’s “vibrant, inclusive and positioned to thrive locally and compete globally.” minneapolisfoundation.org

**Greater MSP**

This regional economic development organization, founded in 2011 by local leaders, has three goals: to tell the story of the IE region, to retain and attract key talent and to build “sectors of strength” including safe and abundant food, clean and abundant water and health solutions.

The regional economy is built on the strengths of a highly educated workforce and a collaborative, entrepreneurial culture. There are 17 Fortune 500 companies based in Minnesota, the most per capita of any state in the country. They include powerhouses like UnitedHealth Group, Target, CHS, 3M, Best Buy, U.S. Bancorp, General Mills and Ecolab. MSP is working to maintain its competitive edge with a high-quality workforce. Efforts focus on attracting local and national workers, while retaining native talent and strengthening its diverse workforce are priorities for future economic growth. greatermsp.org

**Engage**

Minneapolis-St. Paul regularly leads the nation in voter turnout, and it’s a testament to the level of civic engagement in the community. From private foundations like the McKnight Foundation, the St. Paul Foundation and the Minnesota Community Foundation to countless corporate philanthropies, there’s no shortage of ways to get involved.

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Welcoming over 40 million guests annually, Mall of America® is the largest retail and entertainment destination in North America. With over 520 retailers, 50 dining options, 10 attractions and 2 connected full-service hotels, MOA® has a little bit of everything.