

## **North Loop Family Guide**

### ***A guide to family friendly points of interest in or near the North Loop neighborhood***

(This guide was compiled by members of the North Loop Kids Group. Join the group by sending a note to [northloopkids-subscribe@yahoogleroups.com](mailto:northloopkids-subscribe@yahoogleroups.com). Suggestions and updates for the guide can be sent to Tammy Sproule Kaplan, [tammysproule@yahoo.com](mailto:tammysproule@yahoo.com)).

#### **Retail**

##### **Barnes and Noble**

Head to the back corner on the second level at Barnes and Noble for children's books. It may be small compared to most Barnes and Noble stores, but it's got the biggest selection of children's books in the downtown area, with plenty of board books and a little bit of space to let tots roam. There's a Starbucks café on the lower level (801 Nicollet Mall; 612.371.4443; [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com)).

##### **Bibelot**

The quarters can be a little tight for strollers, but Bibelot has some clever kid-inspired gifts for babies on up through the early teen years. You'll find unique clothing items, wooden baby toys, books, keepsakes, novelty games, activities for older children, as well as an eco-friendly selection (300 E. Hennepin Ave.; 612.379.9300; [bibelotshops.com](http://bibelotshops.com)).

##### **Candyland**

Nearly every chocolately, fudgy, sugary confection you could imagine sells by the pound, half-pound, or even single piece at this old-fashioned, mom-and-pop candy store. The only thing that smells better than the treats is the fresh popcorn. Kids will love watching staff pull taffy and spread fudge, and the atmosphere just might take you back to the last time you *were* a kid in a candy store. There are actually two locations in the same walkway near Macy's (811 LaSalle Ct.; 612.332.3220; Dayton Radisson Arcade on 7<sup>th</sup> St., 612.332.7752; [candylandstore.com](http://candylandstore.com)).

##### **Cocoa & Fig**

What child doesn't love to admire and then gobble up a pretty cupcake? Cocoa & Fig offers made-from-scratch cupcakes and more, with seasonally themed iced sugar cookies, French macarons, peanut butter pops, pastries, and custom cakes. You can also find the goods at the Nicollet Mall and Minneapolis Farmers' Markets (Gaviidae Common, Skyway Level, 651 Nicollet Mall; 612.333.1485; [cocoaandfig.com](http://cocoaandfig.com)).

##### **CorAzON**

CorAzON has two locations, one just two blocks from the Guthrie on Washington Avenue. It's a locally owned art, paper, and gift shop with a smallish but great kids section that includes toys, books, and gifts (1026 Washington Ave. S.; 612.333.1662; [corazononline.com](http://corazononline.com)).

### **Local D'Lish**

In a pinch for milk? You'll find small and large containers of organic milk at Local D'Lish. You can also stock your kitchen with local goods like Castle Rock cheese curds, Little Lucy jams, Whole Grain Milling products, and a variety of produce and meats from this retail shop selling exclusively local items. The elaborate play area will occupy the little ones while you shop, and there's a monthly indoor farmers market during the winter months. You'll also find Local D'Lish at the Mill City Farmers' Market (208 1<sup>st</sup> St. N.; 612.886.3047; [localdlis.com](http://localdlis.com)).

### **Macy's**

The old-school department store may be a relic but in downtown Minneapolis it's a treasure. Find good deals in the kids' clothing section during sale time and word has it a jump or two can be had on the beds in the 5<sup>th</sup> floor's sparsely shopped mattress section. In the spring, Macy's hosts the annual Flower Show and in December the Holiday Display, complete with the most gorgeous Santa this side of the North Pole. Nestled in the basement, The Lower Level Marketplace features all kinds of soups, sandwiches, fresh salads, candies, frozen yogurt and smoothies, Chinese food, and even a Starbucks, and it's one of the only places in the skyway system that serves food on a Sunday (700 Nicollet Mall; 612.375.2200; [macys.com](http://macys.com)).

### **Pacifier**

Looking to shop local for your baby essentials? Pacifier, which offers a gift registry, is the downtown alternative to big box retailers when you're stocking up on high-end baby gear like strollers, cribs, bassinets, car seats, baby bottles, and bedding. The boutique also sells stylish kids clothing (newborn to size 8), books, toys, and gifts, and the East Hennepin store has a small play area (310 E. Hennepin Ave.; 612.623.8123; Gaviidae Common, First Level, 651 Nicollet Mall; 612.767.6330; [pacifieronline.com](http://pacifieronline.com)).

### **Saks Off Fifth**

The kids section on the skyway level of Saks Off Fifth is worth a look for discounted designer clothing in sizes from newborn to school age. Selection changes frequently. (655 Nicollet Mall; 612.333.7200; [saksfifthavenue.com](http://saksfifthavenue.com)).

### **Dining/Cafes**

#### **Aster Café**

North Loop families are in luck – with the recent change in ownership of the Aster Café comes another prime choice for family friendly dining for any part of the day. Mornings start out with freshly made waffles, egg sandwiches, oatmeal, and granola. Later in the day the menu converts to savory small plates like charcuterie, beet and avocado salad, sandwiches, and flatbread pizzas. The full service café also offers a wine and beer, with a focus on local brews, and excellent espresso drinks (125 Main St. S.E., Mpls; 612.379.3138; [aster-cafe.com](http://aster-cafe.com)).

### **Be'wicked Deli**

Two local chefs with backgrounds at otherwise upscale restaurants have made their mark with a counter-service sandwich shop, and downtown families are the better for it. Nothing is a letdown at Be'wicked, but take note of the pastrami sandwich (the pastrami is house-cured) and the tender pulled pork sandwich. The house potato salad and couscous salad travel well and the giant chocolate brownies will send the little ones into a tailspin, in a good way (800 Washington Ave. N.; 612.767.4330; bewickeddeli.com).

### **Black Sheep Coal-Fired Pizza**

Don't worry about bringing the kids to Black Sheep – it's a veritable baby happy hour during the early dinner rush. Pizzas come out fast, and you can do halvesies if the whole family can't agree on a set of toppings. It also serves some really tasty meatballs and salads, along with wine and beer, and is open for lunch and dinner (600 Washington Ave. N.; 612.342.2625; blacksheeppizza.com).

### **Brasa Rotisserie**

Caribbean and Creole dishes like rotisserie chicken, slow-roasted pork shoulder, cheesy grits, yams, and cornbread are bound to become instant hits with the whole family at Brasa Rotisserie. Better yet, there's not a French fry or chicken finger in sight! Other selling points include kid-sized meals priced at \$7, beer and wine, and an outdoor patio (600 E. Hennepin Ave.; 612.379.3030; brasa.us).

### **Corner Coffee**

A friendly, local coffee shop that loves kids, Corner Coffee has a kids' menu with offerings like 1/2 a turkey sandwich with Goldfish crackers for just \$2.50 (514 3<sup>rd</sup> St. N.; 612.338.2002; yourcornercoffee.com).

### **Hell's Kitchen**

The lemon ricotta hotcakes are a local legend at Hell's Kitchen (even a single one is included on the kids' menu for \$4.25), where the servers wear their pj's to work on weekends. With live music starting at 10 a.m., the weekend brunch really gets hopping, so try it during the early hours (starting at 7:30 a.m.) and don't go without a reservation. Hell's Kitchen also serves weekday breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Other kid-friendly staples abound, like grilled cheese, mac and cheese, and waffles (80 S. 9<sup>th</sup> St.; 612.332.4700; hellskitcheninc.com).

### **Java J's**

Not only is Java J's kid-friendly, it's dog-friendly, too. Despite what the name implies, this is more than just a neighborhood coffeehouse, with a full menu and wine/beer list. Breakfast and lunch items include kid-ready favorites like a bagel breakfast sandwich and hot dogs (700 N. Washington Ave.; 612.236.9444; javajason.com).

### **Joe's Garage**

There are high chairs aplenty at Joe's Garage, and a kids' menu priced at \$5. For adults there's a selection of eclectic burgers like the chevre lamb burger and

appetizers like the ever-popular spicy cream cheese eggrolls. Many enjoy this eatery on Loring Park for the rooftop patio in the summertime, with its three-sided views of Loring Park, the Basilica of St. Mary, and the downtown skyline (1610 Harmon Pl.; 612.904.1163; joes-garage.com).

### **Keys Café**

Downtown restaurants that serve weekend breakfast in the early hours can be hard to come by, and as any parent knows, most kids need their first meal by 8 a.m., if not earlier. Keys Café opens at 7 on Saturday and 8 on Sunday (6:30 on weekdays), serving your basic breakfast fare like pancakes, omelets, eggs any way, fruit, oatmeal and granola, and it's served all day. An additional menu starts up at lunch and dinner, with sandwiches like grilled cheese, burgers, soups and salads, and old-fashioned desserts like apple pie (Foshay Tower, 114 S. 9<sup>th</sup> St.; 612.339.6399; keyscafe.com).

### **Kramarczuk's**

Kids may not be able to pronounce "pierogi" but their little eyes will feast on the cafeteria-style presentation at this Slavic deli and restaurant. It serves traditional Eastern European foods as well as sandwiches, soups, desserts, and gourmet ice cream. Check out the neighboring market for staples like sliced meats and sausages, cheeses, farm-raised chicken, all-natural pork, dairy products, imported sweets, and rye bread that would shame a New York deli. The sausages are so famous they're even being sold at the new Target Field during Twins games (215 E. Hennepin Ave.; 612.379.3018; kramarczuk.com).

### **Level Five Express at Guthrie**

Out for a stroll near the Guthrie Theater and Gold Medal Park? The Level Five Express is tucked up on the south side of Level Five (the casual restaurant open on performance days) and serves pre-made sandwiches, pastries, espresso drinks and beverages. It's open Tuesday through Saturday at 8:30 a.m., even if there's no performance that day (818 S. Second St.; guthrietheater.org).

### **Moose & Sadie's**

You can feel good about what the little ones are eating at Moose & Sadie's, where there's a focus on using seasonal, organic, and local ingredients. The pastries are made from scratch, the orange juice and lemonade are fresh squeezed, and the morning egg dishes, with a frequently changing menu of sandwiches, soups, salads, and entrees served at lunch and dinner, will leave both you and the kids fueled up for whatever the day holds at this counter-service café (212 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave.; 612.371.0464; mooseandsadies.com).

### **Pizza Luce**

Known for being vegetarian-friendly, with pizza by the slice, pastas, salads, and yummy desserts on the cafeteria-side, Pizza Luce is a sure hit for families with hungry kids. When you're in less of a hurry, there's also a full-service side with a bar. It gets crowded during Twins games and late night hours. Log the number into your

phone as well – it delivers in the downtown zone (119 N. Fourth St.; 612.333.7359; pizzaluce.com).

### **Pizza Nea**

When you're in the mood to be waited on, this full-service Neapolitan style pizzeria is a step above the counter service options, but still accommodating to families with children. The kid-sized version of the classic Margharita, the Pizzetta, is just \$4.25, and for grown-up tastes there are many combinations using high-quality ingredients, like the Salsicce with spicy Italian sausage and roasted red pepper or the con Uovo, a white pizza with two cracked eggs baked on top (306 E. Hennepin Ave.; 612.331.9298; pizzanea.com).

### **Punch Neapolitan Pizza**

Healthy fast food isn't a contradiction in terms at Punch Neapolitan Pizza, where delicious toppings cook on a thin crust pizza at 800 degrees for 90 seconds. That means your little ones can sink their teeth into dinner inside of five minutes. With nice highchairs, big wooden booths, terrific outdoor seating, delicious salads, and beer and wine, maybe the North Loop doesn't need a drive-thru after all (210 E. Hennepin Ave.; 612.623.8114; punchpizza.com).

### **Salsa a la Salsa**

Even though it is full service, the welcoming staff, reasonable prices and roomy dining area with large booths and plenty of highchairs make Salsa a la Salsa a family-friendly lunch and dinner spot. It's easy to order up sides like avocado, rice and beans, jicama and oranges for babies and there's a kids' menu as well. There are margaritas for the grown-ups and the whole family should venture out and try the chicken with cactus leaves - a mild dish that won't disappoint you. It also has a sister restaurant, A La Salsa, at Midtown Global Market (1420 Nicollet Ave.; 612.813.1970; salsaalasalsa.com).

### **Sapor Café**

The dining room may seem upscale, but parents with kids can relax a bit in the bar or on the sidewalk café at Sapor, where they won't feel like they're bothering the more serious diners. Management and staff are welcoming to kids, booster seats are available, and small plates in the bar like sliders and fries are a good value for feeding the young ones (428 Washington Ave. N.; 612.375.1971; saporcafe.com).

### **Sebastian Joe's**

Ice cream parlors are a bit hard to come by in downtown Minneapolis, but Sebastian Joe's at Hennepin and Franklin is worth the extra few blocks. The signature raspberry chocolate chip flavor is the most famous, but it also scoops up the best version of Oreo ice cream in the Twin Cities. Not surprisingly, it attracts large crowds on hot days, but there are two indoor seating areas, sidewalk tables and a small courtyard, and highchairs. It also serves excellent espresso drinks and pastries (1007 Franklin Ave.; 612.870.0065; sebastianjoesicecream.com).

### **Sky Room at Macy's**

After a couple of hours spent shopping downtown or attending Macy's holiday or spring flower show, make a pit stop at the Sky Room on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor. Even the pickiest eater should be satisfied with something from the giant salad bar or food court, and the view of downtown's landmark buildings will inspire both children and adults (700 Nicollet Mall; 612.375.2200; macys.com).

### **Taraccino Coffee**

A locally owned coffee shop with a friendly crowd of regulars, Tarracino Coffee is ideal for a light breakfast of pastries and a breakfast bagel from the neighboring Bruegger's Bagels or some midday refreshment. In addition to coffee drinks, it serves smoothies, gelato, and Panini sandwiches, with highchairs available (224 E. Hennepin Ave.; 612.617.0292; taraccinocoffee.com).

### **Wilde Roast**

One of the top reasons to visit Wilde Roast is the yummy crème brulee French toast, with a caramel top and a peach and cherry bottom, which the kids aren't likely to forget anytime soon. Others include a filling breakfast sandwich, poofy omelets, and the sandwiches, salads, and pizzas served for lunch and dinner. All is served in a casual, counter-service environment that resembles a Victorian parlor, with cozy cushioned chairs and benches, a fireplace, and high-top tables (518 E. Hennepin Ave.; 612.331.4544; wilderoast.com).

### **Year-Round Activities**

#### **Children's Theater**

Theater doesn't just have to be for grown-ups. Located a short drive from downtown, Children's Theater offers inspiring theatrical experiences for kids from toddler age on up. It also offers classes and camps for children as young as age 2 up through the teenage level (2400 Third Ave. S.; 612.874.0400; childrenstheater.org).

#### **Family Concerts at Minnesota Orchestra**

Target Free Family Concerts, featuring the Minnesota Orchestra and other great artists, are a prime opportunity to introduce your children to the orchestra. Free tickets are distributed through a random drawing that occurs several months prior to the start of the concert season, so get on the email list and plan ahead for next season (1111 Nicollet Mall; 612.371.5656; minnesotaorchestra.org).

#### **Guthrie Theater**

Don't be thrown off by the adults-only performance calendar offered at the Guthrie Theater – this landmark building is open to the public at 8:30 a.m. daily and offers plenty to explore for young children. When there's not a performance going on, the place is nearly deserted, and the panoramic views of the riverfront, ramps between floors, giant 4-story escalator, and numerous nooks and crannies will entertain your crawler or early walker, as well as older children. The Level Five Express offers snacks and beverages (see Dining section) (818 S. Second St.; 612.377.2224; guthrietheater.org).

### **Light Rail**

Got a child who loves trains on your hands? Any child will get a charge out of taking a ride on the light rail. Potential destinations from one of the downtown stations could include the Mall of America or the Minnehaha Park station, which is within walking distance of Minnehaha Falls and Sea Salt Eatery, or just take a joy ride and end up right back where you started. Adults pay \$2.25 during rush, \$1.75 at other times, and kids ride free ([metrotransit.org/light-rail.aspx](http://metrotransit.org/light-rail.aspx)).

### **MacPhail Center for Music**

The Early Childhood Music Program at MacPhail offers programming for children ages 6 months to 8 years, including a family music class for parents of multiple children, parent-child classes, and a Musical Trolley program, which children attend on their own. Curriculum runs year-round and prepares children to enter the Suzuki training method or instrument-specific development (501 S. Second St.; 612.321.0100; [macphail.org](http://macphail.org)).

### **Matinee Movie Magic for Moms and Dads at Block E Stadium 15 Cinema**

Many parents of infants complain about how rarely they get to see a movie in the theater these days. With Matinee Magic, they have a shot of seeing first-run films before they come out on DVD. Select movies are played in a baby-friendly environment on Tuesdays at the Block E Stadium 15 cinema (600 Hennepin Ave.; 612.338.1466; [fandango.com/kerasotesblockestadium15\\_aaups/theaterpage](http://fandango.com/kerasotesblockestadium15_aaups/theaterpage)).

### **Midtown Global Market**

Take the children on a global adventure through the shops and restaurants of Midtown Global Market. Stop by the play area to expend some energy, then sample foods inspired by the flavors of Middle Eastern, Pacific Asian, and Latin American cuisine, or treat the little ones to a pastry from one of the bakeries. All businesses are locally owned, and you can even get some of your grocery shopping out of the way. The Produce Exchange offers excellent prices on seasonal produce, and sells dairy products and dry goods. Plus, you can find a meat stand and a seafood counter at the market. It's a short drive from downtown, and it's guaranteed to get everyone stretching their legs a bit – the perfect antidote for the cabin fever we all feel in the winter months (Lake St. and 10<sup>th</sup> Ave.; 612.872.4041; [midtownglobalmarket.org](http://midtownglobalmarket.org)).

### **Mill City Museum**

Built into the ruins of what was once the world's largest flour mill, the Mill City Museum delivers hands-on entertainment for kids of all ages, including a water lab, a baking lab offering demonstrations and samples, an elevator ride up the eight-story Flour Tower, a train car loaded with flour, and a play table where children can transport their own goods to market. The D'Amico and Sons Café in the main lobby serves sandwiches, salads, pizzas, and desserts and has a large, open seating area. The museum can be crowded with school groups in the morning hours during the school year, so try visiting after 1 p.m. or in the summer. Children under age 6 are free (704 S. Second St.; 612.341.7555; [millcitymuseum.org](http://millcitymuseum.org)).

### **Milwaukee Road Depot**

You don't have to be a guest at one of the hotels by Marriott to enjoy the activities at the Milwaukee Road Depot complex. Non-hotel guests can buy \$20 day passes for the small water park (open on weekends only) and kids under 2 are free with a paying adult. The water park includes a tots play area with fountains, a three-story water slide, four pools, and an oversized whirlpool. During cold weather months, the ice skating rink offers public skate times with skate rental, and though admission prices are steep compared to the free skating ponds available at city parks, it does offer the advantages of being indoors with a longer season (November – March), and tasty refreshments. Both the skating rink and water park can be rented out for birthday parties (225 Third Ave. S.; 612.375.1700; thedepotminneapolis.com).

### **Minneapolis Central Library**

Check the schedule for child-friendly events at Minneapolis Central Library, including separate story hours for babies under 2 and children age 2 and up, and Childish Films, a monthly children's cinema program for ages 3 and up put on by the Library Foundation. If there's nothing happening during your visit, there's still plenty to do in the children's section, including a tots play area with plenty of board books and a child activity center. Step through the Central Library Bookstore for a selection of picture and board books, where all books are priced at \$1 or less (300 Nicollet Mall; 952.847.4000; hclib.org and supporthclib.org).

### **Pierre Bottineau Library**

The Pierre Bottineau Library is a small library with free parking located just across the Broadway bridge from the North Loop. Housed on the historic Grain Belt campus, it offers a nice courtyard with a fountain outside. Check the calendar on the website to learn more about the weekly story time in Spanish, family story time, and a play time with songs and activities for kids up through preschool age (55 Broadway St. N.E.; 952.847.2850; hclib.org).

### **Walker Art Center**

Preschoolers can enjoy some of their first experiences with art during the Walker's Arty Pants, a program offered every other Tuesday, with hands-on activities in the art lab, short animated films, and story time. Children are encouraged to walk through the exhibits if supervised closely by their caregiver(s). Kids of any age can enjoy a stroll through the Walker's Sculpture Garden and Conservatory, in a mostly-enclosed area with plenty of room to roam (1750 Hennepin Ave.; 612.375.7600; walkerart.org).

### **Seasonal Events**

#### **Aquatennial**

A Minneapolis tradition for 70+ years, Aquatennial is an annual summer festival produced by the Minneapolis Downtown Council. Events take place across the city each year during two weeks in July. Downtown events include a Block Party on

Nicolette Mall, a Torchlight 5k and parade on Hennepin Ave., and a River Blast and fireworks along the Mississippi ([aquatennial.com](http://aquatennial.com)).

### **Holidazzle**

What holiday season would be complete without a viewing of the much-loved Holidazzle parade along Nicollet Mall? It runs every Thursday through Sunday between Thanksgiving and Christmas, starting at 6:30 p.m. Holidazzle hot seats can be purchased in advance if you'd rather guarantee a warm spot with free hot chocolate and cider. Skyway lookouts are also popular viewing areas, so head down early to secure a spot ([holidazzle.com](http://holidazzle.com)).

### **Mill City Farmer's Market**

Strollers are a bit easier to navigate at the Mill City Farmer's Market than the other downtown farmers' markets, and all the vendors are local. Ready-to-eat foods include momo (Tibetan dumplings), spiced donuts, Thousand Hills all beef hot dogs, hot cider, fresh squeezed lemonade, coffee and espresso, and pastries galore, making it a prime Saturday morning breakfast spot (704 2<sup>nd</sup> St. S.; 8 a.m. – 1 p.m., May through October; 612.341.7580; [millcityfarmersmarket.org](http://millcityfarmersmarket.org)).

### **Minneapolis Farmers Market**

The Minneapolis Farmers Market on Lyndale has been going strong since 1937, with up to 170 vendors on weekend market days. If you're looking to avoid crowds with the little ones, the market recommends a Friday visit, with nearly as many vendors as weekend days, but without the deluge of market-goers. Locally produced and organic products are usually identified with signs, but many vendors follow organic methods without getting official certification. Check the website regularly for weekend events, what's in season, recipes, and more (312 E. Lyndale Ave. N.; 6 a.m. – 1 p.m. weekdays, 6 a.m. – 2 p.m. Sat/Sun., April through October; 612.333.1718; [mplsfarmersmarket.com](http://mplsfarmersmarket.com)).

### **Minneapolis Mosaic**

Minneapolis Mosaic is a summer-long festival of arts that begins in June and celebrates cultural diversity through more than 100 culturally diverse events each summer ([minneapolismosaic.com](http://minneapolismosaic.com)).

### **Nicollet Mall Farmer's Market**

With a wide variety of vendors selling myriad fresh fruits and vegetables and other food stuffs and wares, the Nicollet Mall Farmers' Market turns the downtown into a seven-block-long farmstand every Thursday. Try visiting in the early or late hours, as the market is extremely busy at mid-day, making it nearly impossible to navigate with a stroller or little walkers (Nicollet Mall between 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets; 6 a.m. until 6 p.m., May through November; [mplsfarmersmarket.com/nicollet.php](http://mplsfarmersmarket.com/nicollet.php)).

### **Sommerfest**

For three weeks each July, the Minnesota Orchestra lines up a variety of free live musical acts on Peavey Plaza, with genres that vary between symphonic, jazz,

chamber, and rock. Since the events take place outside, no need to worry about the children's restlessness – just take a walk! Food stands line the plaza selling sausages and other summery foods ([minnesotaorchestra.org/sommerfest](http://minnesotaorchestra.org/sommerfest)).

### **Twin Cities River Rats**

The River Rats are a 100% volunteer water ski team who put on shows that have been described as Aquatic Broadway musicals complete with music and human pyramids. The River Rats perform nearly every Thursday evening at 7pm all summer long at their home site on the Mississippi River and Broadway Ave. (1628 W. River Road; 612.730.4286; [tcriverrats.com](http://tcriverrats.com)).

### **Parks/Playgrounds**

#### **Boom Island Park**

Perched along the Mississippi, Boom Island Park offers a boat launch and marina and sheltered picnic areas, in addition to its playground. The climbing equipment is unique, with a wooden bridge and balance equipment, in addition to numerous swings and slides, but watch out for splinters if you've got a crawler or early walker. It's easily accessible by bike path (724 Sibley St. N.E; 612.230.6400; [minneapolisparcs.org](http://minneapolisparcs.org)).

#### **Cancer Survivor's Park**

When building management thanks you personally for visiting their park, you know you've found an urban gem that doesn't get used nearly enough. Lush grass, a waterfall, friendly sculptures, and a building that blocks the wind make Cancer Survivor's Park the perfect spot for enjoying the cityscape. The hills are too steep for sledding in the winter, but every other season these tiered greens might as well be stadium seating for transit-obsessed little ones, who can watch the buses pass by on their way down Nicollet Mall (Nicollet Mall between Washington Ave. and 3<sup>rd</sup> St. S; stroller access available at the corner of Nicollet and Washington).

#### **Cedar Point Beach**

A short drive along 394 to the Penn exit brings you to Cedar Point Beach on Cedar Lake. It's one of the closest swimming beach options for downtown-dwellers, and of the three beaches on Cedar Lake, it offers the most tranquil, family-friendly environment. The beach is set in along a path that is roughly a two-minute walk from the parking area, so bring the stroller. Ducks and other wildlife can be spotted (Cedar Lake Parkway; 612.230.6400; [minneapolisparcs.org](http://minneapolisparcs.org)).

#### **Dickman Park**

Located just across the river from the North Loop, Dickman Park is a small park with a playground and wading pool. It has picnic tables and a pergola seating area for snacking or picnicking (636 Second St. N.E.; 612.370.4851; [minneapolisparcs.org](http://minneapolisparcs.org)).

#### **Elwell Park**

You won't even find Elwell Park (also known as Turtle Park for the mosaic turtle sculpture greeting visitors at its entrance) on the Minneapolis Park and Recreation

Board listing, that's how under-the-radar it is. This thin sliver of a park was the result of an agreement between the city of Minneapolis and Qwest, who wished to build a three-story building in the middle of a residential neighborhood. In return, it agreed to lease a small fraction of the property to the city for Elwell Park. The park is closed in on three sides, which makes it nice for parents since kids aren't able to stray very easily. It has equipment for tots and preschoolers. The sculpture in the park, including the fencing, is the work of local artists (6<sup>th</sup> St. S.E. & 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.E.).

### **Gold Medal Park**

Though it doesn't offer a playground, Gold Medal Park is a welcome respite of green space along the riverfront next to the Guthrie Theater. The spiraling path leads to the top of a 32-foot observation mound, which offers panoramic views of the river and area landmarks like the Stone Arch Bridge (Second St. S. and 11<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.).

### **Holmes Park**

Adjacent to Marcy Open School in the historic Marcy Holmes neighborhood across the river from downtown, Holmes Park is used as a school playground during the year, so it's best to visit when school is not in session. It includes a tots play area and wading pool (301 4<sup>th</sup> St. S.E.; 612.370.4850; [minneapolisparks.org](http://minneapolisparks.org)).

### **Kenwood Park**

It's worth a short drive over to this expansive park off West Franklin. A mass of trees and gently sloping hilltops make it great for picnicking in the summer and sledding in the winter. It offers playground equipment that you won't find at any park, including a zip line, rope climbing structure, and a train. The playground is set back from the street so kids can run more freely than in smaller city parks and it's also completely shaded, making it a great option for hot, sunny days (2101 Franklin Ave. W.; 612.370.4941; [minneapolisparks.org](http://minneapolisparks.org)).

### **Loring Park**

The tall buildings surrounding Loring Park give it an urban feel. The playground on the southeast side of the park includes play areas suited for tots and preschoolers, with a wading pool. The park also offers an off-leash dog park, bike trails, a large pond with ducks and other wildlife and the Berger Fountain, which is worth checking out with the kids (1382 Willow St.; 612.370.4929; [minneapolisparks.org](http://minneapolisparks.org)).

### **North Mississippi Regional Park & Carl Kroening Interpretive Center**

A few miles West of downtown just off 94, The North Mississippi Regional Park was refurbished in 2009 and has a large playground, a wading pool/splash pad, picnic areas, and bike trails, all with great views of the Mississippi. Right next to the park is the Carl Kroening Interpretive Center. Part of the Three Rivers Park District, this nature center is free, open year-round, and home to great events for kids such as spring egg hunts, Free Family Fundays, and summer camps (North Mississippi Regional Park 5114 Mississippi Dr.; 612.230.6400; [minneapolisparks.org](http://minneapolisparks.org); Carl Kroening Interpretive Center 4900 Mississippi Ct.; 763.694.7693;

threeiversparks.org/parks/north-mississippi-park/kroening-interpretive-center.aspx).

### **St. Anthony Park**

St. Anthony Park sits adjacent to the now defunct Webster Open School in Northeast Minneapolis. Unique features include its large acreage, which make it ideal for flying kites, and May Mountain, an artificial hill with skyline views which is prime for sledding in winter. It also has a sizable playground with a pirate ship (Jefferson St. N.E. and Spring St. N.E.; 612.230.6400; minneapolisparcs.org).

### **Theodore Wirth Park**

Theodore Wirth is just a few minutes outside of downtown and at 759 acres is the largest park in the Minneapolis Park System. In the winter the park features cross-country skiing, tubing, snow boarding, and sledding. In the summer months, the park offers bike trails, a children's garden, playground, and swimming beach, as well as golf courses (1339 Theodore Wirth Parkway; 612.230.6400; minneapolisparcs.org).

### **Water Power Park**

Water Power Park, a 1.4 acres park on the edge of Hennepin Island along Main Street, was developed by Xcel Energy as part of the re-licensing of its St. Anthony Falls hydroelectric plant. Within a short walk or stroller ride from the Main Street entrance lays a platform for the most close-up view of St. Anthony Falls available to the public, with panels along the way that tell the history of local milling industry and of one of the country's first hydroelectric plants (206 Main St. S.E.; minneapolisparcs.org).

### **Daycare**

#### **Child Garden**

Child Garden is a Montessori school and day care center with programs for infants through preschool (900 Mount Curve Rd.; 612.377.1698; childgardenmontessori.com).

#### **Cradle Club**

The Cradle Club is located in Butler Square and offers daycare for infants through preschool (100 N. 6<sup>th</sup> St. Suite 152C; 612-338-4434; thecradleclub.com).

#### **Kinderberry Hill**

Kinderberry Hill has been awarded NAEYC accreditation and delivers programs for infants through private kindergarten. Enrichment programs include music, Spanish, fitness, sign language, and health education, and they have an on-site nurse (50 S. 6<sup>th</sup> St., Suite 250; 612.436.1003; kinderberryhill.com).

**New Horizon Academy**

New Horizon is an NAEYC-accredited school and day care, offering programs for infants through school-aged after care programs (111 Marquette Ave.; 612.332.7866; 1310 Hennepin Ave.; 612.455.0294; [newhorizonacademy.com](http://newhorizonacademy.com)).

**Noah's Ark**

(1021 Hennepin Ave.; 612.332.5741; [noahsark.qwestoffice.net](http://noahsark.qwestoffice.net)).

**Rayito Del Sol**

Rayito Del Sol offers Spanish-immersion learning programs for infants through kindergarten (1601 Laurel Ave. in the Basilica of St. Mary; 612.332.2770; [rayitodelsol.net](http://rayitodelsol.net)).

**YWCA**

The YWCA early education program has some of the best classroom child-to-staff ratios around (1:3 for infants, 1:4-5 for toddlers, 1:6 for preschool). 100% of the YWCA's preschoolers test ready for kindergarten. The program is NAEYC Accredited, and has Parent Aware's highest rating – 4 stars. The YWCA takes full advantage of its downtown location with regular trips to the Nicollet Mall Farmer's Market, Loring Park, and the Walker Sculpture Garden. The YWCA also has partnerships with Hennepin County Master Gardeners, Minnesota Literacy Council, MacPhail Center for Music and Minneapolis Public Schools (1130 Nicollet Mall; 612-215-4189; [ywca-minneapolis.org/childcare/index.asp](http://ywca-minneapolis.org/childcare/index.asp)).