

## Mitzi Baker

---

**From:** Teresa Jensen  
**Sent:** Monday, October 5, 2020 2:14 PM  
**To:** Mitzi Baker  
**Subject:** ACC and RMF feedback on REAC

Hi Mitzi,

I wanted to pass along some feedback from the Arts and Culture Commission members, and from the Riverwalk Market Fair Board.

Overall, the ACC and RMF boards were very positive about the plan, and very complimentary. Here is some additional feedback from some of the members:

- They would appreciate definitions or more descriptions of some of the terms. Organic play area? Iconic playgrounds? whimsical play area? Plinth? Art pod in Lyons Park?
- Missing word OF on the first page—right hand side, under Complete, number 3—word of is missing—“one \_\_\_\_ the most”
- Reminder of the PARC process—a way to engage with concerned citizens regarding art; maybe expand this to get park feedback

### Ames Park suggestions

Welcome banners along Highway 3 beside Ames Park

- ADA Parking on 2 maps for Ames Park have 2 different locations—not consistent
- Restrooms at Ames Park, or at Bridge Square
- Skating rink at Ames Park, with warming house
- Where would the rodeo take place?
- Solicit designs from local artists
- Clean out the shoreline of the river—no view of the river along the Riverwalk right now.
- Under “Ames Park Project Focus” Key Recommendations, the sixth arrow down says “Close the Street between...” This can be seen as a negative statement. Maybe something like “Reroute traffic to accommodate expanded Bridge Square gathering spaces:

### Riverwalk

- Murals/mosaics under bridges
- Riverwalk banners branding the Riverwalk. Possible discrete sponsorship of banners for local businesses
- Clean out shoreline so that you can see it.
- What are those big limestone blocks going down to the river for?
- How can they be used?
- Boat launch below the dam makes more sense than above. There is a spot on the west side of river near second that could be used.
- Opportunity for playful art for public art—using backs of building facing the river.
- What is an art pod is, in Lions’ park?
- Along the Riverwalk there is the desire to get stores to orient to the river instead of the front of the building—right now it’s all parking and loading docks beside the river. You can’t move forward with improving the riverscape without eliminating parking between the business and the river. Which means you have to provide parking elsewhere else. What does that look like? A parking ramp?

- Light the undersides of the archways of 2<sup>nd</sup> street bridge and pedestrian bridge.

### Bridge Square

- Consider a Riverwalk Market Fair liaison for specific and not yet considered needs for vendors. Is there a way to close off the streets every week without having to drag out the temporary blockades every week? Gates that open and store unobtrusively, then swing shut for closing for RMF?
- Year-round lighting on trees—just not the ugly blue lights we use now. Along Division and Water too.

### From Sam, one of our Youth members:

1. I loved this entire idea! Overall I think this would bring the community together and make Northfield a more fun place!
2. I really have no suggestions except maybe more winter options like a **sled hill in sechler?**
3. If this is not already the plan I think it would be very cool to put up around the new areas **pictures of the projected ideas** are currently. Like pictures of what we are planning to do now versus what happened.
4. It might help to describe the interactive walkway in ames park.

### From Alyssa Melby:

I'll just start out by saying I was initially surprised! There was more deliberate acknowledgement of arts elements than I was anticipating. Here are the spots where arts elements are specifically called out. I lay these out so we can be clear in acknowledging what's already in the plan and thank them for having this as a consideration.

(page 1), Promote section: "The city has the opportunity to build on its successes and innate charm to become a year-round destination for recreation, nature, **arts and culture.**"

(4) "Ames has the space and character to accommodate gatherings, **performance, and cultural events.**"

(5) "Continue theme of artful elements along walks...", 3-" 'The Point' plinth with special paving material, transparent railing along water and **artful seating nodes** along walkway", 9-"Interpretive walk with **art/story walk** interactive features", 13-"Removable **sculptural performance shade canopy**", 16-"Potential future **river stage**"

(6) Riverside-- "Elements such as the existing memorial, new pickle ball courts and shuffleboard course, potential fitness and **art pods**, all lend character to the park."

(7)-6-"**Arts/Story walk**"

(19) "**Arts--crosswalks, murals, art walk**"and embedded with Programming/Events

Opportunities (I focused specifically on arts stuff here):

- (4) in "closing street between Bridge Square and Downtown Riverwalk" they want to activate the space. Arts elements, while not listed, could certainly help assist with this!
- (5) "Promenade with special paving", 7-"Iconic playgrounds with abstract and colorful play equipment", 19-"Potential picnic/shade shelters"--these could all be a great public art opportunities!
- (7) Riverside--"build on interaction with nature" and "create unique and whimsical places for play"--I think there are many public artists who would have great ideas on how to do this!
- (8) Babcock--if the multi-purpose building is built and they want to add potential profit-generating activities--why not explore a satellite gallery or gift shop of river/nature focused art-work?
- (9) We've often talked in the past about the importance of wayfinding. Could the kiosks or system be designed by an artist(s)?
- (11) Sechler wayside rest an opportunity for artful design and perhaps a public sculpture
- (14) "Focus on wayfinding signs"--see comment above

- (14) "Provide incentives for specific land or building owners to improve the river side of their properties"--maybe not arts related so much, but could be (for instance, to the point Teresa made at the ACC meeting, moving the dumpsters--if that can't be done, could we draw the eye upward with murals or sculptural elements on the backs of buildings? Provide artistic screens for the dumpsters?)
- (16) In the past there had been some talks about sculptures along the bike trail. If they go after the "wild and scenic" river designation, is that no longer an option?
- (16) "coordinated sign system along the trails is also a key to their success"--regional cooperation opportunity? Continued on (17)-"design iconic wayfinding kiosks and signage"

Other considerations:

- The way that they're pitching the riverfront parks is each of them having "very distinct identities." I'm not sure it would behoove us to advocate for arts at all of the parks (at least at this time). They're clear that Ames is first priority. If we can get Ames really chock full of arts elements, people may be excited by what they see--and open to incorporating more of it in other parks, even those that are more athletics/recreation focused.
- The amount of emphasis placed on grant writing also helps to support what we stated in our fourth priority for the Cultural Plan. If the City were committed to moving both of these plans forward (and others) we can then see that the investment in a dedicated grants staff person makes logical sense, particularly if they're successful and can come close to paying for their own salary!
- The plan is clear on articulating that river itself holds its own "scenic beauty." I think it might be worthwhile to be explicit that in advocating for arts elements, we're looking to find elements that *complement* this scenic beauty as opposed to competing with it. I might remind them how much the Artists on Main Street project last year helped to activate Ames Park in ways similar to what the plan proposes. Some projects were more or less complementary, but it certainly helped to bring people there!

Hope this helps. Good luck!

Thanks,,  
Alyssa

## Mitzi Baker

---

**From:** noreply@ci.northfield.mn.us  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 1:36 PM  
**To:** Mitzi Baker  
**Subject:** Online Form Submittal: Email Mitzi Baker

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization.**

### Email Mitzi Baker

Email Mitzi Baker

First Name	Sandy
Last Name	Vesledahl
Reply Email	
Attachment 1	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Attachment 2	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Subject	Copy of the Defeat of Jesse James Days committee concerns and response to the Riverfront Enhancement Advisory Board
Comments	October 8, 2020

Dear Tracy Heisler, Norman Oberto and Riverfront Enhancement Advisory Committee members:

We are writing the Riverfront Enhancement Advisory Committee on behalf of the Defeat of Jesse James Days Committee with many concerns regarding your proposed Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan. Although we have not been contacted by your committee, even though your proposed plans will greatly affect our ability to produce the annual Defeat of Jesse James Days, an annual celebration which brings over 200,000 people to Northfield over the span of 5 days and accounts for a large economic boost to numerous businesses and is a major fundraiser for many non-profit organizations within Northfield, we are very open to working with your committee in hopes that we can have an outcome that will work for you as well as our organization and numerous other non-profit organizations who use the City parks and will also be affected by your decisions.

We would like to point out that during the DJJD Celebration the

open space in Ames Park is where the DJJD Carnival is located, Riverside Lions Park is where the Sundowner Car Club DJJD Car Show is located and North Babcock Park is the permanent location of our bleachers and arena for our Rodeo and the DJJD Tractor Pull event location. These events draw thousands of participants and spectators to Northfield and brings revenue to the many businesses in Northfield as well as the Defeat of Jesse James Days committee which allows us to continue to provide this annual celebration for the City of Northfield. The DJJD use of these parks is covered in an annual Lease agreement with the City of Northfield.

North Babcock Park was first used for the rodeo grounds in the late 1980's so as you can see, there is a long history of use of this site with the Defeat of Jesse James Days celebration. Because of the large financial commitment the DJJD committee has in regards to the bleachers and upgrades made by the DJJD committee to this location, the DJJD committee set up a lease agreement with the City of Northfield for the use of North Babcock park which was approved at a City Council meeting on May 19, 2003. This lease agreement allows the DJJD committee the right to the use of the property for the site of the bleachers. The DJJD committee has over the years made various improvements to North Babcock park, including planting trees, installing electric service and permanent event lighting as well as constructing and maintaining the bleachers, all with the approval of the City Council.

In 2015 the DJJD committee made a large financial commitment of \$150,000 to purchase and erect new bleachers on the Babcock site location. At that time, as per our lease agreement for the site, approval was required from the City Council in order to remove the old bleachers and erect the current bleachers on the site. The Northfield City Council approved this request with support from the Northfield Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. During these discussions and the ultimate approval from the City, there was never any indication from the City of Northfield that the DJJD committee, after making this large financial commitment, would loose the use of the site within a few years, which the DJJD committee had already a large financial interest in even prior to installing new bleachers. Had we known this information, we would have reconsidered the large financial investment of new bleachers at the site.

According to the Enhancement Action Plan it states for North Babcock Park improvements that it will "Relocate DJJD rodeo and dog park out of Babcock Park once new locations are

identified and constructed". Your committee may not be aware that during the annual celebration our organization also rents four sets of temporary bleachers for this site to seat an additional 800 spectators besides our permanent bleachers already located at the site. The DJJD committee has installed permanent electrical and large event lighting at the site as well as we bring in dirt/sand fill for the arena each year. The large empty space of ground is used for parking not only for the rodeo spectators and large stock trailers, but for the entire DJJD celebration with shuttle bus service provided by the DJJD committee to other areas of town and is within walking distance of other events. Another location within walking distance of downtown and other events that would be large enough to accommodate the rodeo event needs, bleachers, parking and tractor pull does not exist. Even if there were a location that would provide the space that is needed, the DJJD committee could not financially withstand the cost of moving the current bleachers, installing new electrical and lighting. Estimated relocation cost could reach \$100,000.00 or more to disassemble, move, reset cement footings, reassemble bleachers, inspections, install electrical and event lighting at a new location.

When the DJJD committee installed the new bleachers at the current site we required a bank loan in order to do so. We are a non-profit organization who depends solely on private donations and income from our annual event. We hope each year to have enough carry over funds to begin the planning for the following year. We do not have large amounts of cash reserves available to us. The DJJD committee is currently still paying on that original bank loan for these bleachers. The cost to relocate the bleachers and install new electrical and lighting, if there even were a sufficient location for the rodeo, as well as the effect on events held at the other park locations and possible loss of income due to limited use of park space, could financially destroy the DJJD organization and ultimately the annual celebration. Our organization is already struggling due to the COVID-19 restrictions of events this year and the loss of sponsors due to COVID-19 financial hardships. This would be an immeasurable loss for the City of Northfield, the business community and for the numerous non-profit organizations who depend on the annual DJJD celebration to raise funds which are returned to the Northfield community in many ways.

The Defeat of Jesse James Days committee is currently in the process of re-negotiating a 3 year contract (which is the normal length) with our rodeo contractor. Without knowing what our future holds at the North Babcock Park site it is very difficult for

us to negotiate a contract for the future of the rodeo.

As you can see, the City of Northfield, the Riverfront Advisory Committee and the Defeat of Jesse James Days committee must work together on the plans for these parks. We hope that you will take into consideration the financial hardship that your current plans would cause not only the Defeat of Jesse James Days committee and the future of the DJJD celebration but other non-profit organizations who depend on the annual celebration and also use these locations for their events throughout the year.

Sincerely,  
Board of Directors of the Defeat of Jesse James Days  
Committee  
Galen Malecha – General Chairman  
612-220-6041

cc: Northfield City Council Members  
Ben Martig, City Administrator  
Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism

---

Email not displaying correctly? [View it in your browser.](#)

**Print**

**Community Feedback Form - Submission #7181**

---

**Date Submitted: 9/24/2020**

**Community Feedback Form - Please provide your feedback regarding the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan. Feedback will be accepted until October 15, 2020.**

**First Name**

**Last Name**





**October 16, 2020**

**Comments and Motion from the Heritage Preservation Commission on the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan:**

The Heritage Preservation Committee would like to share a statement regarding our feedback for the draft Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan.

The Heritage Preservation Committee made a motion at their September 2, 2020 meeting, unanimously approved, which stated:

*To add an additional statement to the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan which states the plan will be “Consistent with the preservation guidelines for the area within and adjacent to the Downtown Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places, projects will maintain the historical integrity of the area and buildings.”*

In addition, the HPC would like to commend the Riverfront Enhancement Advisory Committee on all of their time and effort spent on this project. They are excited to see a positive outcome and look forward to assisting on parts of the plan as they come to fruition (as they apply to the areas of their review within the historic district).

Respectfully submitted,  
Mikayla Schmidt  
City Planner

**Print**

**Community Feedback Form - Submission #7335**

---

**Date Submitted: 10/15/2020**

**Community Feedback Form - Please provide your feedback regarding the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan. Feedback will be accepted until October 15, 2020.**

St. Olaf College appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan. While we acknowledge that St. Olaf's Natural Lands are a community resource, these resources also support the College's educational, athletic and conservation activities. We would also like to be included as a community partner as the planning for this project moves forward. We feel the following areas need additional discussion:

1. What provisions are being made for pedestrians or trail users to safely cross Hwy. 19 near St. Olaf? This is a heavily trafficked highway that is challenging at times for vehicles to enter or exit campus.
2. What provisions are being made for pedestrians or trail users to safely cross Cedar Ave. and North Ave. which have significant vehicle traffic?
3. What considerations have been given to the liability and maintenance implications of trails on private land owned by St. Olaf College that connect to a broader trail system?
4. We respectfully request that an acknowledgement that the plans for existing or proposed trails in the current Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan include St. Olaf College property.

Respectfully,  
Janet Hanson  
Vice President/CFO  
St. Olaf College

**First Name**

Janet

**Last Name**

Hanson



**Print**

**Community Feedback Form - Submission #7335**

---

**Date Submitted: 10/15/2020**

**Community Feedback Form - Please provide your feedback regarding the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan. Feedback will be accepted until October 15, 2020.**

St. Olaf College appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan. While we acknowledge that St. Olaf's Natural Lands are a community resource, these resources also support the College's educational, athletic and conservation activities. We would also like to be included as a community partner as the planning for this project moves forward. We feel the following areas need additional discussion:

1. What provisions are being made for pedestrians or trail users to safely cross Hwy. 19 near St. Olaf? This is a heavily trafficked highway that is challenging at times for vehicles to enter or exit campus.
2. What provisions are being made for pedestrians or trail users to safely cross Cedar Ave. and North Ave. which have significant vehicle traffic?
3. What considerations have been given to the liability and maintenance implications of trails on private land owned by St. Olaf College that connect to a broader trail system?
4. We respectfully request that an acknowledgement that the plans for existing or proposed trails in the current Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan include St. Olaf College property.

Respectfully,  
Janet Hanson  
Vice President/CFO  
St. Olaf College

**First Name**

Janet

**Last Name**

Hanson



**Print****Community Feedback Form - Submission #7324**

---

**Date Submitted: 10/14/2020**

**Community Feedback Form - Please provide your feedback regarding the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan. Feedback will be accepted until October 15, 2020.**

On behalf of Carleton College, we appreciate the opportunity to submit feedback on this important and ambitious project and to thank the Advisory Committee for its work.

Carleton is supportive of Northfield's efforts to enhance the City's Riverfront. There are a number of items in the plan, and shown on the maps, that would impact Carleton's property, including Cowling Arboretum. We look forward to collaborating with the City as the plan develops.

There are two primary items in the plan we wish to address at this time. Carleton is open to the idea of a new proposed pedestrian bridge crossing the Cannon River, located at the southern parking lot to Laird Stadium. We would need to better understand how the flow of pedestrian and possibly bike traffic in this area would change relative to that area of College property. In addition to the enhancements a pedestrian bridge would bring to the Riverfront, Carleton would be interested in exploring the possibility of using the bridge to allow service vehicles to move equipment across the bridge to take care of the College property on the other side of the River.

As the plan relates to Carleton's Arboretum, we wish to draw attention to Page 19 of the Action Plan noting that the map there is from the Northfield Parks, Open Space and Trail System Plan, updated in 2008. This map includes many outdated features including outdated alignments for the Mill Towns Trail. Our understanding is that Option A is no longer being considered. Option C, the current preferred route, has not been agreed upon by the College since engineering planning just began this summer. Carleton has expressed previously that it is open to considering a trail that would follow the proposed alignment along the edge of the Upper and Lower Arboretum, as long as it would not infringe on the Arboretum interior and habitat for native plants and animals, nor interfere with College uses, such as intercollegiate cross country races and other more casual uses, including walking and running along Arboretum trails.

Trails through the Upper Arboretum are listed on Page 19 as "Destination Trails - Core" with no indication that they are on private land. A "destination trail - core" is shown as along Hwy 19 running past Carleton and Laird Stadium, ending at the tunnel under Hwy 19. No such official trail exists and there are no sidewalks that lead to the tunnel under Hwy 19.

Carleton's Cowling Arboretum is one of the College's - and Northfield's -- greatest assets. Visitors to the Arboretum are welcome year round, both from the Carleton community and beyond. The many runners, walkers, skiers and other visitors who use our Arboretum can attest to its beauty. The College strives to strike the right balance of providing public use of our Arboretum while preserving its conservation and research mission. The Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan emphasizes making connections to our campus and the Arboretum from existing or future trails. Adding easy connections to our Arb could possibly lead to overuse and jeopardize this careful balance. We believe that in any planning the City does, it is imperative that Carleton be consulted about how to represent use of the Arboretum by the public.

Thank you for the chance to participate in this planning process to enhance our Riverfront. Carleton is committed to collaborating with the City as the plan moves forward.

Sincerely,

Joe Hargis, Associate Vice President for External Relations

Eric Runestad, Vice President and Treasurer

**First Name**

Joe

**Last Name**

Hargis



**Print**

**Community Feedback Form - Submission #7314**

---

**Date Submitted: 10/13/2020**

**Community Feedback Form - Please provide your feedback regarding the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan. Feedback will be accepted until October 15, 2020.**

I read with deep interest the proposals for parks development with in Northfield. In particular, the sections pertaining the the availability of cycling, and mountain biking infrastructure. I represent Cannon River Off Road Cycling and Trails(CROCT), a member driven, volunteer organization dedicated to the creation and maintenance of natural surface trails with in the Cannon River corridor in Rice County. One could say that I(we) are intimately familiar with the current status of trails in the study area. We are certainly not opposed to the development of new trail opportunities in town! The planning group should be aware though of trails that already exist, and have for over 5 years now. Our partnership with the City of Northfield started with the construction of the Sechler Park single track that goes from the end of Laurel Ct, and winds down to the baseball diamonds, behind them and continue to the south end of Sechler Park. The Heath Creek network starts across Armstrong Road on St. Olaf natural lands. This network has been constructed with permission from St. Olaf with the assistance of a few graduating seniors through the years.

Starting with Babcock Park on the east side of the Cannon River, the construction of a paved pump track is a welcome addition. Its location is ideal for families looking to expand their bike handling skill set. The idea of providing an actual MTB trail there is endearing, but wholly unnecessary considering the trail in existence on the west of the river. Utilizing that space to create a pumptrack that is longer, or better yet, one that incorporates rising skill levels from beginner to advanced would be appropriate.

Crossing the Cannon on the existing ped/cycle bridge, there is a proposal to move the existing skills park from just north of the baseball diamond complex to the sliver of land on the east side of Laurel Ct. This would be a natural location for a skills park, just adjacent to the trail head for the existing single track trail. Keeping the jumps, skinny obstacles and drops would be important. We have a few ideas on how we'd like to improve what exists now. Moving the skills park would allow us to easily make those changes. It is already at a pretty visible location, but this move would increase our visibility greatly. A new location would potentially bring many new riders to the trails simply through being in a much more visible location. It would be very hard for us to be upset about that!

<https://www.trailforks.com/map/?activitytype=1&z=14.8&lat=44.45262&lon=-93.18065&m=arc>

This is a link to the Trailforks.com site that CROCT uses to provide maps for our existing system. Through that link you can see Sechler Park(green trail) and Heath Creek (blue trail). Not all of Sechler is shown, but nearly all of it is. In the planning document, there are efforts noted that the City should;

"explore trail alignments"

"find a private sector partner"

"explore funding sources to allow for improvements"

"the MTB trail to follow natural trail alignment".

As the primary designer of the trails here in Northfield, I(Marty Larson) can confidently say that the trails do already follow the most ideal 'alignments' or rather, corridors. Efforts are made to keep the trail corridor up and out of wet areas, as well as visiting interesting spots. Even with these efforts, Sechler park is still rather low compared to the Cannon River. As we are all aware, when the Cannon River floods, much of Sechler Park is inundated with flood waters, sometimes up to several times a year(2019 was particularly bad. We were flooded out of the trail much of the year!). There are some sections that we have made that only find use during particularly dry periods such as we have recently had. During wet periods, those sections are essentially inaccessible. A large portion of the wooded area 'under' the lacrosse and ball diamonds stay consistently wet much of the year, taking them out of building potential.

Finding the private sector partner should be pretty easy. We've been working with the City since 2014(insert smiley face here).

Deeper into the document, the grand plan shows a natural areas 'ring' around the City. A plan like this should be applauded and encouraged. Going back to the link above, you can see the Heath Creek section of trail that exists now. This is a spectacular section of trail that is getting more popular with each passing weekend. On any given day, we've observed mountain bikers, trail runners and families hiking through the woods. The trail is based on St. Olaf Natural lands, and is constructed with permission from the college. We are currently in the design phase of expanding the network to the south and west side of Heath Creek. I think its safe to say that part of the Natural lands ring is well established at this point.

If you haven't already, please follow our social media. We can be found on Facebook at Cannon River Off Road Cycling and Trails - CROCT, and on Instagram at croctmtb - though Facebook is our most frequently used media.

Best Regards.  
CROCT Board;  
Marty Larson  
Ben Witt  
Galen Murray  
Todd Trembly  
Jason Decoux  
Jeremy Bokman  
Christopher Tassava  
Carl Arnold  
Kevin Herman

**First Name**

Marty

**Last Name**

Larson





## Draft Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan

### Planning Commission comments

October 15, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan (“Draft”). We are excited to see these recommendations for Northfield’s riverfront. The parks, riverfront, and the Cannon River itself are under-utilized and every plan Northfield has developed includes some reference to improving, leveraging, and enhancing the Cannon River. Completing the Mill Towns State Trail, linking our parks, and intentionally developing our riverfront are together a wonderful goal and one which we hope to happen, and wish to help happen.

The Planning Commission is charged with developing and amending Northfield’s Comprehensive Plan, determining whether projects comply with the Comprehensive Plan, and, more generally, considering how Northfield’s development pattern is consistent with City goals.

We thus read the Draft in the context of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan as well as more recently adopted policies such as the Strategic Plan, Climate Action Plan, Complete Streets policy, and Pedestrian, Bike, and Trail Plan update.

#### **The intent of the Planning Commission’s feedback is to:**

- **Ensure the Draft is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and other policies** with particular attention to recent emphasis on climate, equity, and connectivity which are so tied to how we plan, regulate, and build our city.
- **Consider Plan implementation** including learning from past plans which have languished and not been included in city capital planning and budgeting.

We find that this draft Plan could advance numerous City goals if implemented. It is also an ambitious (which we mean as a compliment) and expensive plan; careful consideration of how this plan can be incorporated into the work of the City as a whole is needed to move it forward and help it succeed. With those goals in mind, the Planning Commission provides this review and feedback.

### **I. COMPLIANCE WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND OTHER POLICIES**

#### **A. The Draft could advance long established plans and goals for the Cannon Riverfront parks and the river itself.**

The Cannon River and the riverfront have figured strongly in all Northfield’s high-level planning as a defining feature of the City with multiple opportunities to build on this asset. *Considered in isolation*, the Draft picks up on many of these earlier themes of economic development, gateways into the City, recreation, conservation, and improving park spaces.

The Draft is presented as a series of short, graphics-heavy, flyers which are exciting and enticing, but do not yet constitute a coherent plan. What is presented as the “Action Plan” is more accurately described as promotional information to for a more complete plan as suggested by each portion containing the (as yet incomplete) guidance “For a complete list of recommendations, please refer to the Links and Related Documents provided below.” Absent at least some of this additional information, we are cautious in our enthusiasm. More important, we are concerned that the Action Plan may not yet be complete enough to achieve its, and the City’s, goals.

**B. The Draft does not connect make key connections to Northfield’s other planning and development efforts.**

We also looked at the Draft in the context of the built environment and other planning priorities. There are three areas where we question whether the Draft is in agreement with the City’s planning and strategic priorities: physical access to the riverfront, climate action, and equity.

**1. Physical Access to the Riverfront**

**a. Access and the Comp Plan**

Parks only work—and this Action Plan will only succeed—when people can get to the parks. Given the harsh reality of Highways 3 and 19, the Draft must include better ideas to improve physical access to the parks and river by people walking, rolling, and biking. The Draft includes information about parking at each site, but does not adequately consider how people walking, rolling and biking will reach the river and the parks safely and comfortably. By describing how people with cars can access the parks (they will drive and use the described parking spaces) but describing how other can access the parks, the Draft fails to implement a variety of City goals and policies.

The Comprehensive Plan called for the city to “Work with the State transportation department to implement traffic calming techniques and pedestrian friendly crossings on Hwy 3 and Hwy 19.”<sup>1</sup> In addition, the City has adopted policies calling for safe, convenient access to these parks for people of all ages and abilities, whether they bike, walk, or roll to get there. Minimal improvements have been made at intersections.<sup>2</sup>

We urge the REAC and the City to describe in the next iteration of the Draft how people will reach the proposed parks, including describing

- traffic calming

---

<sup>1</sup> 2008 Comprehensive Plan, Community Identity, CI 5.4

<sup>2</sup> Pedestrian signals including the RRFB at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and “beg buttons” at all signalized intersections help people walking, but not people biking. The bike sensor at 2<sup>nd</sup> Street is another minimal improvement for confident cyclists.

- bike and walk crossings to make the highway location less dangerous and daunting.

**b. Intersection with the Pedestrian, Bike and Trail Plan and Complete Streets Policy**

Building out the bike and walk network is beyond the scope of this Draft, but the Draft must describe how the riverfront will be connected to other improvements for people biking and walking. Bike lanes on the bridge are needed, but are almost useless without planning and building safe, [low-stress connections](#) to them. The parks simply do not function unless people can get to them. The final Plan should commit the City (with dates) to completing the bike and trail plan, and note how it will link people to these parks.

**c. Transit access**

One opportunity and Strategic Plan priority<sup>3</sup> neglected by this Draft is accessibility by transit. Highway 3 is an obstacle for people walking, rolling and biking, but it has the advantage of being the vehicle spine of the City and ripe for transit improvements. The restoration of the historic Depot and plans for making it a transit hub make integrating transit into this Draft even more appropriate.

**d. Access and Ames Park**

The initial focus on Ames Park should make physical access to this park by people walking, biking, and rolling the top priority.

The tag line “Village Green on the Water” suggests a future park which is approachable from all sides with connections through the green space much as Bridge Square, Way Park and Central Park function now. Yet the location at the Highway 3 and Highway 19/5<sup>th</sup> Street intersection cannot function this way and almost guarantees the current park is underutilized because of the multiple lanes of fast traffic; turn lanes; emergency vehicle access; Post Consumer Brands truck, train, and worker traffic; train tracks; and vehicle-oriented drive-through business traffic.

Consider an event in Ames Park. There will not be sufficient parking on site to allow many people to drive to the park (which is great!). As a result, park goers will need to reach the park by transit, on foot or bike, or by car with remote parking. The Draft must include additional planning for how people will walk, roll, and bike from downtown, from across the highway, and from other locations along the river. Other policies have highlighted that integrating the river into downtown is important.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Diversity, Equity, Inclusion “Increased transit options for all”

<sup>4</sup>Comprehensive Plan, Economic Development Objective 3: Expanding and revitalizing the Cannon River corridor will be a pivotal part of the strategy to maintain the historic character that is Northfield” and Strategy 3.3:

### e. Mill Towns State Trail and East Cannon River Trail

The Draft could be the spark to move this already decades-long project further to completion and include the MTST (and the ECRT connection) as a focus of the entire project area. The Draft at this time, however, only notes the importance of the regional trail system<sup>5</sup> and merely includes the MTST/ECRT as “existing multi-use trail” on park maps without addressing current obstacles.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Climate, flooding, and the dam

The Riverwalk (and downtown), Ames Park, Riverside Park, Sechler Park, and the ECRT are all subject to flooding on an increasingly frequent basis. We are concerned about the lack of consideration of frequent flooding in these parks as a core aspect of planning and question whether the Draft has got ahead of itself regarding the dam.

We applaud the emphasis of developing a rational, fact-based proposal for reconstructing the privately-owned dam or leaving it in place and thus acting on the Climate Action Plan recommendation.<sup>7</sup> The wording of this requirement, however, highlights the preliminary nature of the Draft document as an invitation to plan: the dam “MUST be addressed in the plan and at a minimum must include an option of removal/reconstruction.”

## 3. Equity and representation

The City has adopted a Racial Equity Action Plan which commits the City to using an Equity Lens in its budgeting and decision-making. Generally, the City will involve a cross-section of its residents in decision-making to design and implement City policies and infrastructure in a way that make them “accessible and accessed by all community members.”<sup>8</sup> We are concerned that the Draft does not yet contain such intentional planning for equity and fair representation.

In addition to racial equity, we also flag other stakeholders who should be included in planning. For example, the Draft shows connections to various private lands, such as the Carleton Arboretum and should state how those stakeholders have been involved

- 
- “Link existing pedestrian improvements, including walks and trails, with similar improvements”
  - Encouraging “A development pattern that emphasizes pedestrian scale, minimizes building setbacks, ensures the public’s health and safety by protecting the floodplain”

<sup>5</sup> “Trails provide accessibility and continuity, in addition to being exciting elements themselves. There is broad agreement about the importance of completing and improving the trail system.”

<sup>6</sup> Connections must be planned between to link the MTST segment behind River Park Mall and dead ending at 5<sup>th</sup> Street to brige bike lanes; improving the large, blind cul de sac at Peggy Prowe bridge/Sechler Park entrance; and unpleasant, narrow road and trackside trail in Sechler Park.

<sup>7</sup> Resilience Strategy 2

<sup>8</sup> Racial Equity Action Plan – Adopted July 21, 2020

in the Plan, and how. We also note youth and lower income residents do not appear in these plans.

## **II. IMPLEMENTATION**

We have already identified that the Draft is more of an intention to plan, rather than an action plan. Questions about implementation seem premature as a result, but we see these issues as potential obstacles to success.

### **A. How is this project regional?**

The Draft's five "Key Actions" starts with applying to be a Regional Park in less than a year. For a project which is entirely within the Northfield city limits with unnamed partners, this action appears premature.

### **B. Chronology**

We have noted above that studying and deciding about the dam; intentionally building equity into planning, and physical access issues need attention before other planning can realistically take place.

In addition, the distinctions between "Immediate Actions" and more long-term steps are questionable. For example, bike lanes on bridges and wayfinding are indeed immediate actions which are relatively low cost and can be completed in a single budget and construction season. "Complete the Mill Towns State Trail" is also identified as an immediate action which is unlikely under real world budgeting and right of way acquisition. However, the Draft could and should sketch some immediate first steps for this multi-year, multi-jurisdiction project.

### **C. How will success be measured?**

The Draft is both an economic development tool and a parks plan. What goals have been set and what metrics will be used to determine if the return on the substantial public investment is "worth it"? Do we have data for the status quo?

### **D. Funding, risk, and follow-through**

The 2008 Parks, Open Space and Trail System Plan included plans for each park, substantial policy recommendations, and an itemized breakdown of the millions of dollars the park system would require. Few of the recommendations of that plan have been carried out and the capital planning/budgeting was never attempted. The 2019 update to the Bike, Pedestrian and Trail plan includes recommendations to complete that plan which have not been pursued. How will the Draft build the important budgeting and capital planning into the final plan?

*Northfield is still struggling to develop sustainable funding for its park system. Sales taxes have been considered for funding capital projects, but beyond that initiative, how will capital costs (initial development and later phases) and increased operations be funded? Grant funding is usually one-time for capital projects, not operations – how can these parks be maintained over time without adversely affecting other parks in the system?*

Becoming a regional park amplifies this question. Other regional parks levy substantial fees for park activities such as dog park passes, park programming, and facility rental. How has REAC considered these revenue streams and how do they affect our strategic priority for racial equity? Will the regional partners identified contribute to the capital and operations costs or will Northfield bear all the risk?

### **III. CONCLUSIONS**

The Planning Commission applauds the work of the Riverfront Enhancement Advisory Committee. In order to help ensure that the work of the Committee leads to the riverfront enhancement that the City wants and needs, we hope the Committee will edit and/or supplement the current draft to address the issues above.

We especially recommend that in the course of revising the current draft, the REAC implement an inclusive and equitable planning approach.



November 2, 2020

Dear Northfield City Council Members:

The Defeat of Jesse James Days celebration committee was recently made aware of proposed city park plans, brought forward by the Riverfront Enhancement Plan advisory committee, which if approved as is, will call into question the future of the DJJD celebration. At no point in the last 20 months that these plans were being developed, was the DJJD committee informed or consulted with on these proposed plans.

North Babcock Park, Ames Park and Riverside Park are all sites with proposed changes that would prevent the DJJD committee from hosting several events, including: the carnival, car show, tractor/truck pull, and rodeo – all of which are currently held at these sites. These events draw thousands of participants and spectators during the 5-day celebration, who also spend money at the food booths, Entertainment Center, and other events as well as purchase DJJD buttons and spend money in downtown businesses. Income from these events helps to pay the cost of the other events during the celebration. (Kiddie tractor pull, Children's Bouncy Horse Race, Grand Parade, Bank Raid re-enactments, Heywood Graveside Memorial Service, Soapbox Car Derby, etc)

Since the celebration began in 1948, it has seen many changes, but one thing the DJJD committee has learned over those years - after trying new and different ideas, faced modifications due to construction and flooding issues - is that the celebration is most successful when all events are held in downtown Northfield, or within walking distance of downtown. The events impacted by these proposed park changes do not have alternate location options that fit that criteria.

Any alternate site for the Rodeo and Tractor/Truck Pull events would need to be large enough for the current set of bleachers and an additional 4 sections of bleachers which are rented each year by the DJJD committee for the "other" side of the arena. It would also need to have space large enough for the required arena as per PRCA regulations and a separate space large enough for the Tractor/Truck Pull track according to their specifications. It would need to have space that will accommodate vendors and the beer tent for those events as well as parking for up to 2000 spectators per rodeo performance as well as large stock trailers and RV's for Rodeo participants and flatbed trailers and flatbed trucks for Tractor/Truck pull participants. During the DJJD weekend the entire space of North Babcock park is used from Culvers to as far north to the river as can be used including the dog park area.

It has been suggested that the Rodeo and Tractor/Truck Pull could be moved to the Rice County Gas and Steam property. Moving these events out of the downtown area would be very detrimental to the celebration as a whole. Approximately 6000 spectators attend the Rodeo and Tractor/Truck Pull during the DJJD celebration. Those spectators park their cars at the rodeo grounds, spending their day in the downtown area because it is within walking distance. They spend money at downtown stores, restaurants, and bars as well as the other DJJD events. Moving the Rodeo and Tractor/Truck Pull out of downtown will not promote this activity. They will simply attend the Rodeo or Tractor/Truck pull and then leave. A shuttle service will not change this as people do not want to be limited by the schedule of a shuttle bus. The DJJD committee currently offers a shuttle bus each year from the current Rodeo grounds to the downtown area and we find most folks like to walk the bike path and attend the car show, carnival and the downtown area at their leisure and not be constricted by a shuttle bus schedule.

The DJJD committee does not have the funds to "move" the bleachers to another location. The estimated cost to move the current bleachers, electrical and lighting is \$100,000 or more as it will involve disassembling and reassembling the bleachers, moving or installing new cement anchoring, installing event lighting and poles and installing electrical power to cover the specific electrical needs of these events. The DJJD committee is still paying on the current loan for these new bleachers installed in 2017. The DJJD committee has paid the cost of all these items, plus the cost of planting the trees at the current site. Because of our large financial commitment to this site the DJJD committee entered into a lease agreement for use of this site with the City of Northfield dated May 19, 2003. If the DJJD committee is expected to pay the cost to relocate it will result in the end of the Rodeo and Tractor/Truck pull events as well as the attractions that go along with those events (vendors and rodeo beer tent).

The carnival has had to move locations in the past due to road construction and flooding issues. During each move we experienced a major downsizing of the Carnival due to a smaller location and we experienced much lower attendance due to the location being removed from the downtown area, which resulted in a large loss of income during those years even though the DJJD committee provided shuttle bus service from downtown to the carnival. The carnival needs to be within walking distance of the downtown to be successful.

The car show draws over 400 classic vehicles. Spectators and participants park their cars at the show or downtown for the day and then walk to other events as well as frequent downtown businesses. The current plans for Riverside Park would require moving this event from the downtown area as well. Again, this will remove the spectators and participants from walking distance of other events and downtown businesses.

Defeat of Jesse James Days brings over 250,000 people over the span of 5 days (Wednesday-Sunday) to Northfield spending an estimated \$2 million or more in the Northfield community, including downtown businesses, especially hotels, restaurants and bars all while attending the various DJJD events.

40 local Non-profit organizations regularly receive funds from the Defeat of Jesse James Days celebration either by directly hosting an event, selling products during the 5 day celebration, or are recruited by the DJJD committee to provide a service during the 5 day celebration (garbage pickup, parade banner carriers, car parking, event set up/tear down, beer pourers, ticket sellers, button selling, etc.) In 2019 the DJJD committee donated nearly \$40,000 directly to area non-profits for providing services during the celebration weekend. These funds come from income raised from events during the celebration. This amount does not include the estimated \$150,000-\$200,000 that these non-profits raised on their own using DJJD as a fundraiser in various ways.

For many of these non-profits it is their major or only fundraiser of the year. The funds raised by these groups is put directly back into the community in many ways. Not having the ability to fundraise at DJJD events would greatly hurt these non-profits and ultimately the Northfield community which benefits from them.

In addition to the funds that the DJJD committee has paid to various non-profits for services, over the past 5 years the DJJD committee has also donated over \$40,000 to the Northfield Hospital Cancer Center and the Northfield Breast Care Center. Over the past 5 years the DJJD committee has paid out over \$30,000 in scholarship funds to area youth. Most of these funds are raised at events during the DJJD celebration. These donations and scholarships would not be possible without the celebration or even with a scaled down version of the celebration due to the loss of the use of these parks resulting in the loss of income from events.

Defeat of Jesse James Days is known Nationally as well as Internationally. It is the largest tourist attraction for Northfield. It is the 3rd largest community festival in the State of Minnesota. It is the largest *all volunteer* run community festival in the State of Minnesota.

The DJJD committee recognizes the need of the Riverfront Enhancement Committee and the City of Northfield to look at the park use, and we want to support the efforts in making our parks more accessible year-round. However, we need to work together to find a solution that will allow the DJJD celebration to have a future by remaining in downtown Northfield and its surrounding parks. This can only happen if DJJD is given the opportunity to meet directly with the Riverfront Enhancement Advisory committee and be included in any future planning discussions for the parks so that we may all co-exist.

Respectfully,

Defeat of Jesse James Days Board of Directors  
Galen Malecha, Committee General Chairman, 612-220-6041  
Deb Anthony, Board Chairman, 612-986-4152  
Jessica Irwin, Treasurer, 507-649-0551  
Debby Larsen, Secretary, 507-581-0743  
Sandy Vesledahl, Director, 507-645-6523  
Bridgette Hallcock, Director, 507-271-3262  
Martha Kasper, Director, 612-483-1323

cc: Ben Martig  
Mitzi Baker  
Norman Oberto