

These recommendations are based on the document, “1st Round Prioritization of Ideas/Action Items,” which REAC members scored individually as High, Medium or Low priority (see separate scoring summary.) The rankings were converted to a scoring system with a total possible score of 32. NPS staff have added detailed suggestions for some of the general action items and have added a few recommendations that were not on the action item list. This list represents the combined high priority action items recommended to be implemented first by Holly Larson, Barrett Steenrod, and Jeremy Edwards.

Trails & Other Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvements:

- **Wayfinding:** Plan & install a comprehensive wayfinding system for bicyclists, pedestrians and other non-motorized trail users along the riverfront trail system and connecting to it. The wayfinding system would also brand the city or riverfront by including a unique logo & color scheme. The system should include kiosks with maps, mileage, and information on nearby businesses, interpretation, etc.; directional signs; and digital maps posted on social media platforms. (Action Items #44-48; Committee Scores: 32, 28, 22, 17 & 24/32 respectively)
- **Ames—Sechler Connection:** Connect Ames Park to Sechler Park: Connect the east end of the West River trail at Laurel Ct. & Sechler Park Road with a trail under the Hwy 3 bridge, if possible, connecting to the existing signalized Hwy 19 crosswalk on the SE side of Hwy 3. (Action Item #24, Committee Score 15/32)
- **Arboretum Connection:** Work with Carleton College to identify & sign walking and bicycling connections from the 14 miles of trails at the Arboretum to the riverfront trail system with existing sidewalks and on-street bicycle routes as soon as possible, possibly along Hwy 19. Work with Carleton to create a long-term solution: develop an off road trail, or fill in sidewalk gaps and create bicycle lanes. (Action Items #35, 25; Committee Scores 14/32, 13/32)
- **Riverfront Trail Access:** Construct new or improved connections to the riverfront trails:
 - Create a short connector trail from the East River Trail to the Ice Arena parking lot and an on-street route along Bollenbacher Drive to Jefferson Parkway, to meet the future Mill Towns State Trail. Create a mini-trailhead at the ice arena parking lot by adding signs to the parking lot and a map kiosk. (Action Item #13, Committee Score 18/32)
 - Pave the informal trail connection from the end of Babcock Lane to the East River Trail, between the ballfield and outdoor hockey rink. (Not on Action Item List)
- **Mill Towns Trail:** Complete the Mill Towns State Trail through Northfield. (The river portion is existing, but completion will improve bicycling tourism.) (Toole Study alignment is not on the Action Item List.)
- **Ames--North Connection:** Connect the trail gap between the pedestrian bridge between 2nd St. & Water St. to Ames Park. May involve widening sidewalks into bike/pedestrian trails & an agreement with Post. (Action Item #26, Committee Score 17/32)
- **Bridge Bike Lanes:** Add bicycle lanes to the Water St., 2nd St., and 5th St./Hwy. 19 bridges through “road diets:” reduce the number of motorized vehicle lanes on the existing bridge structures to one each way. (Action Item #17—2nd St., Committee Score 25/32)
- **North River Access:** Mow a temporary trail on City land from the 2nd St. bridge along the west side of the river behind Fairfield Inn and the Northfield Crossings apartments to allow people to start using the land. Enhance area with native shoreline plantings & nature interpretive signs. Connect to the intersection of St. Olaf Ave. & Water St. if the private property owner will allow it. (Consider

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connection under 2nd St. bridge as longer term, future project.) (Part of Action Item #31; Committee Score 24/32)

River Access:

- **Fishing Dock/River Overlook:** Create an ADA accessible paved trail to the riverfront in a natural location at either Sechler or Babcock Parks. Create a river overlook/fishing dock at the end of the trail. Northfield does not have an easy access to the river in a natural setting. May need to be onshore, depending on Wild & Scenic River requirements. Use flood resistant materials & design for the dock/overlook. Ask experienced people who fish for the best location, consider a creating an ad hoc focus group. (Action Item #49; Committee Score 16/32)
- **Informal Fishing Spot:** Improve the popular fishing area already being used on the SW side of the 2nd St. bridge on the west side of the river. Appears to be popular with immigrants (equity issue). Improve the area with an organized parking lot, landscaping, trash cans, etc. Only the waterfront is City owned. The area used for parking is private. Either negotiate with the private landowner for a permanent solution, provide parking for fishermen using this area elsewhere nearby, or reduce the demand on this area with the fishing dock proposed above. (Action Item #49; Committee Score 16/32)
- **Canoe/Kayak Access:** Build a canoe/kayak public water access at Babcock Park with easy access, a loading area, parking for cars and trailers, good turnaround space for trailers, and good wayfinding. Consult with canoeists/kayakers/outfitters to find the best location. (Improvements in Parks were not scored. Related to general Action Items #50, 51; Committee Scores 22, 18 respectively)

Promotions/Marketing

- **Walking/Biking Loops:** Sign and map existing loop walking and bicycling routes using existing trails & sidewalks & promote.
 - A walking loop on existing trails and sidewalks that can be promoted now is: between the pedestrian bridge between 2nd St. & Water St. to the pedestrian bridge at Babcock Park using East River Trail (about a mile around).
 - Create a signed bicycling loop route that can be promoted now, using existing river trails between Dundas and the bike/ped bridge in Babcock Park. Work with Dundas to sign an on-street bicycle route from Memorial Park in Dundas to the west end of the East River Trail. (Part of Wayfinding System, Action Item #44, Committee Score 32/32)
- **Mill Towns Trail:** Work with the Mill Towns Trail Board and DNR to promote the Mill Towns State Trail's existing segment from Dundas to Northfield. (Promotion action items were not scored.)
- **Canoe/Kayak Take Out:** Promote Northfield as a take-out location for canoe/kayak trips with outreach to clubs, social media paddling sites. Consider a "FAM" (familiarization) trip for club trip organizers. (Fairbault to Dundas is a popular route. You need to convince trip organizers to end at Northfield for more food/drink opportunities after the paddle!) (Promotion action items were not scored.)
- **Colleges:** Market the riverfront amenities to Carleton & St. Olaf students and faculty. Consider a Carleton-St. Olaf race between campuses using some of the riverfront trails to promote trail use among campus faculty, staff and students. (Action Item #52, Committee Score 16/32)

Economic Development

- **Business River Sides:** Target businesses or blocks to provide incentives to improve the river side of their buildings (Hwy. 3 bridge to 2nd St. bridge?) Work with one or more businesses as a pilot project to fund through grants. (Action Items #1, 2, 15, 106; Committee Scores: 21, 23, 18, 25/32, respectively)

Arts

- **Crosswalks:** Work with Northfield Arts Guild to design and install creative crosswalks near the river (Action Item #43, Committee Score)
- **Murals:** Work with the Northfield Arts Guild to create a mural on the Hwy 3 bridge underpass on the trail in Riverside Park. Create additional murals near the riverfront, especially on the river side of businesses. (Action Item #41, Committee Score 25/32)
- **Art Walk:** Create and install art sculptures or artistic children's play structures along the trail in Riverside Park. It is close to downtown, so should draw downtown clientele to the river, and may draw Mill Towns Trail users to Riverside Park and downtown. The art walk could be extended in future phases. Could be done as a contest, or a temporary exhibit to gauge interest. (Action Item #42, Committee Score 25/32)

Park Improvements

- **Ames Park:** Develop all elements of Ames Park as a first priority. An agreement with Post for parking is an essential part of this park plan, as are the bike lanes on the Hwy 19/5th St. bridge. Park improvements were not scored. (Gateway at Ames part of Action Item #40, Committee Score 32/32)
- **Babcock Park:**
 - Start planning for a multiuse building at Babcock Park to have a more conspicuous presence on the river. Northfield appears to have no public riverfront indoor space. It could be a nature/interpretive center, Mill Towns State Trail trailhead, restrooms, attached bandshell, etc. Profit making activities to offset operating costs could include: rental facility (canoes/kayaks, stand up paddleboards, bicycles), café/snack shop, fitness center w/memberships, or facility rental.
 - Move the rodeo and dog park out of Babcock prior to the development of new facilities there, and when new locations are found for these activities.
 - Develop canoe/kayak water access (see River Access section above.) Park improvements were not scored. (Related to Action Items 6, 50, 51; Committee Scores: 23, 22, 18/32)
- **Bridge Square:** Close the street between Bridge Square and the Riverwalk. Could be closed temporarily to get people used to the idea. Activate the space with food trucks, etc. (Action Item #65, Committee Score 18)

Conservation

- **Dam:** Conduct the dam study recommended by DNR staff to assess alternatives for the future of the dam; apply for grant funding for it. FEMA Hazard Mitigation Advance Assistance Grant is a possibility. (Action Item #90, Committee Score 22)

- **Management Plan:** Use the completed natural resources assessment (update if necessary) to create a natural resources management plan for the riverfront parks. (It could be done for all City Parks or all City-owned land.) Consider invasive species, wildlife habitat, species of special concern, floodplain, water quality, fish habitat, etc. Some recommendations to include: increase the density of tree coverage, especially in the Wild & Scenic River buffer area. Remove invasive species; consider goats to graze invasive species. (Related to Action Items #80-83, 85-89, 92-95; Committee Scores: 30, 23, 28, 30, 30, 30, 21, 26, 26, 30, 27, 32, 21, respectively)
- **Native Plantings:** Start a turf to pollinator/native restoration program along the riverfront at Ames and Riverside parks, and on the inactive turf areas around the ballfields at Sechler Park. (Action Items 93, 92; Committee Scores: 27, 30)

Programming/Events

- **Water Fest:** Expand the Cannon River Art & Water Fest to include biking & walking tours and on-water activities (kayak/canoe tours, stand up paddleboard demos, etc.) (Action Items 6, 97, 99; Committee Scores: 23, 26, 24, respectively)
- **Existing Events:** Use existing events along the river, such as the farmers market, to add on river related programming when people are already gathered, such as biking/walking tours of the riverfront trails. Could use high school or college students to conduct tours. (Action Item #6, Committee Score 23)
- **Bridge Fest:** Consider creating a public event on the 5th St. or Water St. bridge, and include activities at Ames Park and Bridge Square/East Riverwalk to emphasize the connection between parks across the river. (Action Items 7, 6; Committee Scores 22, 23)
- **Park Events:** Program more events at the riverfront parks, such as: portable climbing walls, hot air balloons, (Action Item #6, Committee Score 23)

Policy Changes

- **Trail Easement:** Change land development regulations to require a park/trail easement or land donation for any development of parcels identified in City Plans for the planned riverfront trail system. (Action Items #115, 121, 123; Committee Scores: 24, 25, 26, respectively)
- **Garbage:** Change pertinent policies as necessary (re: garbage location, etc.) for businesses to develop the river side of their buildings. (Action Item #106, Committee Score 25/32)