



DATE: September 4, 2020

TO: Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan Advisory Committee (REAC)

FROM: Mitzi A. Baker, AICP Community Development

RE: Draft Action Plan documents

The REAC was established at the end of 2018 as a temporary committee to advise development of a Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan. The City Council adopted a resolution 2018-115 in November 2018 to create the Riverfront Enhancement Advisory Committee to further the City's strategic priorities, including:

- "riverfront enhancement";
- "enhanced tourism"; and
- "expanded downtown"

All of which contribute to "Economic Development: A Community That's Economically Thriving".

The Council adopted resolution established an expectation that the Committees work would include preparation of a Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan that includes the following:

- Prioritization to align with the strategic plan; and
- Concept plans for strategic park improvements; and
- Identified short term and long term projects and funding sources; and
- Preservation and conservation of the riverfront; and
- Identification of stormwater management project priorities; and
- Strategies for increased active use of the riverfront; and
- Opportunities for business expansion on the corridor.

Over the last 18 months, the REAC had the benefit of significant support from the National Park Service through a Technical Assistance Grant. Among many things, the NPS staff catalogued existing City plans and policies, both formal and informal, and facilitated a process to sift through a myriad of ideas to translate into actions. They facilitated identifying characteristics of the River to identify "Districts". NPS also helped the City engage experts to inform the Committee about river ecology and the potential impacts of modifying the Ames Mill dam in ways that would facilitate a passage and re-connecting river systems.



All of this, including the REAC's active participation in scanning nearly 200 documented potential improvements, informed direction to this project. Ideas were further illuminated through active participation in workshop sessions with the Park Board and resulted in bubble diagrams documenting concepts for improvements. Consultants joined this project to augment the effort, infuse their expertise and create Action Plan documents. They held listening session, helped organize the Plan, and developed visually engaging concepts that inspire. Their contributions developed the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan into a series of brief documents that are a call to action.

The REAC has now reached the exciting milestone of seeing this work presented. This is not a "doorstop" plan, but a series of brief documents that quickly convey the grand opportunity Northfield has to develop its riverfront area as a Regional Park destination. The images inspire building off great assets - to complete connections, provide new opportunities, and stimulate excitement and energy that draws residents and visitors alike. Full implementation will take time, but meaningful improvements can be realized in the early years while simultaneous efforts position the City for larger project implementation.

Congratulations, and thank you for all your time and effort. Congratulations to the National Park Service Staff, Consultants and Co-Chairs for navigating a massive undertaking to develop Northfield's Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan. You have a great opportunity to establish a Regional Park designation and destination!

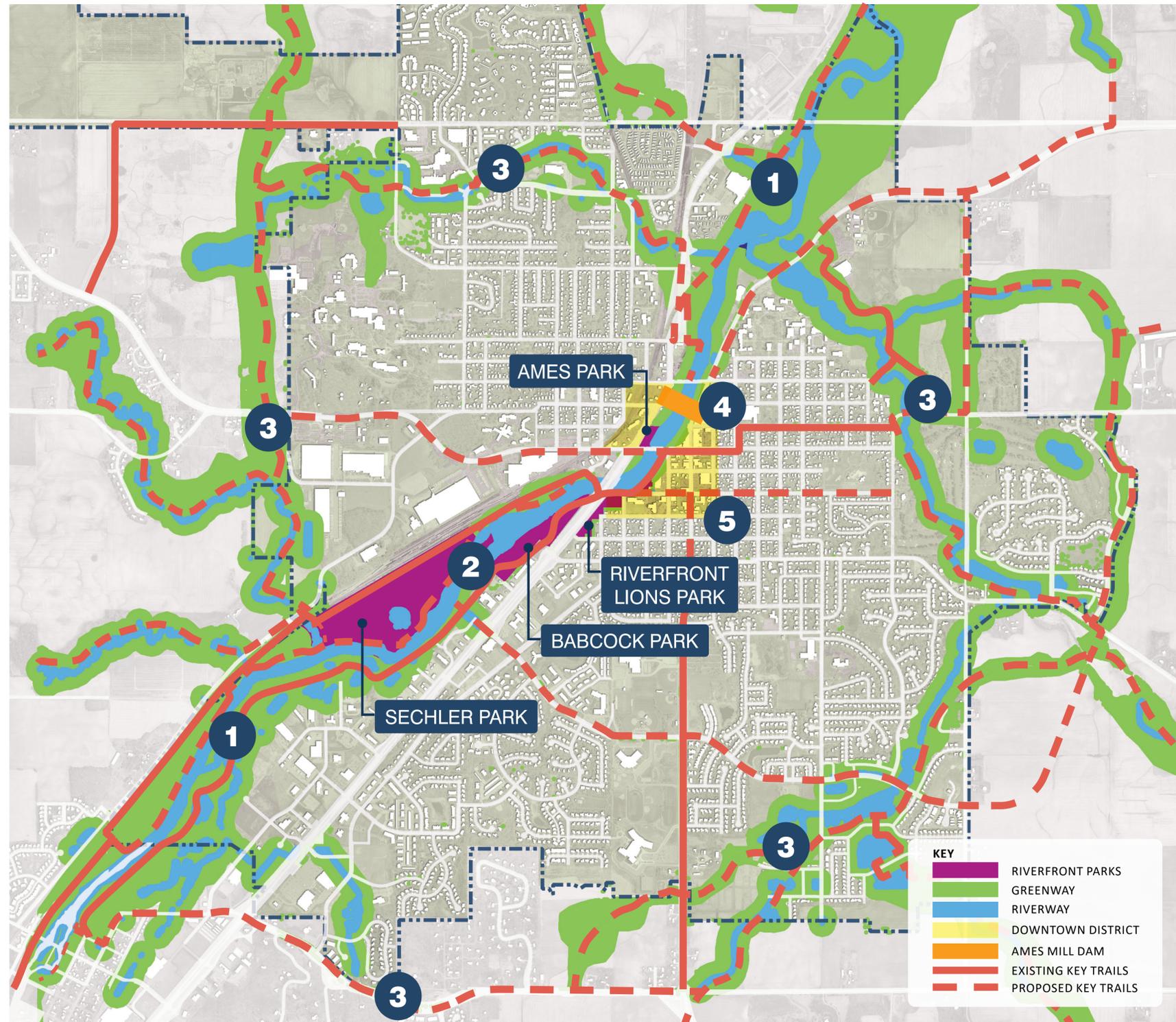
What's next?

Following the September REAC meeting, the Action Plan materials will be packaged for broader distribution and feedback from the community, stakeholders and local boards and committees. Comments will be collected and synthesized to inform finalizing documents for the Council's consideration later this year.

Notes:

- Correction of typos and additional wordsmithing will be required prior to finalization.
- A link to the REAC's webpage or other background resources will be part of finalizing documents.

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE



ESTABLISH

ESTABLISH NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK

1



Northfield is on the cusp of realizing a tremendous opportunity, to build on the four completed conceptual park diagrams as the basis for a unified Regional Park Master Plan. This will focus on environmental restoration, recreation and connectivity as the hallmarks for a local and regional park destination. With potential partners including nearby cities, Rice and Dakota Counties, and the Cannon River Watershed Partnership, Northfield is well-positioned to apply for formal designation as a Regional Park in Greater Minnesota.

Immediate Actions:
 » Begin the application process with the goal of submitting by the June 30th, 2021 deadline.

2

ENHANCE + ACTIVATE YOUR RIVERFRONT PARKS

ENHANCE



Key to a successful application as an exciting, charismatic regional park are the unique natural features and panoply of recreational opportunities that create a true destination. The four city parks in Northfield have very distinct identities, based on location, context, and expressed park-user needs. With a common focus on the Cannon River, complemented by the historic downtown and other nearby assets, Northfield's riverfront parks are the cornerstone of a compelling new recreational and ecologically restored system.

Immediate Actions:
 » Develop all elements of Ames Park as a first priority
 » Start planning for multi use building at Babcock Park
 » Resolve relocation of rodeo and dog-park from Babcock Park
 » Develop canoe/kayak water access

COMPLETE

COMPLETE YOUR LOCAL + REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM

3



As important as the distinct qualities found within the four city-owned parks are the connections between them and to the larger regional trail system. It's noteworthy that the system of trails in the Cannon Valley and beyond comprise one of the most beautiful, diverse and extensive systems in the entire state. Missing links within the city's borders should be completed. Safe, local connections to surrounding neighborhoods and the colleges should be developed for locals and visitors alike.

Immediate Actions:
 » Plan/install a comprehensive wayfinding system
 » Connect Ames Park to Sechler Park
 » Complete the Mill Towns State Trail
 » Add bike lanes to downtown bridges
 » Mow temporary trail on City land along west side of river

4

EXPLORE AMES MILL DAM RECONSTRUCTION OPTIONS

EXPLORE



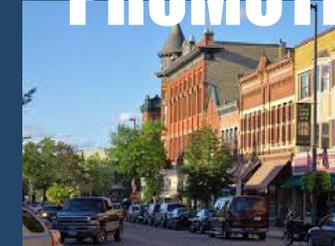
There is excitement building around the possibility that the Ames Mill Dam might play an important role in reinforcing the health, continuity and variety of the Cannon River State Water Trail. Designated as a wild and scenic river, the Cannon still suffers from environmental degradation and human intervention. A reconstruction for the existing dam has the potential to be both a restorative feature and significant recreational regional attraction.

Immediate Actions:
 » Conduct the dam study recommended by DNR staff
 » Assess alternatives for the future of the dam
 » Apply for grant funding (design + construction)

PROMOTE

PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT + TOURIST DESTINATION

5



Northfield is a beautiful and inviting community, possessing attributes that many communities would love to have. 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. But, this effort is not simply a parks plan. It is also an economic development strategy that benefits both the local community and attracts a regional audience. Proposed park improvements must align with broader Regional Park Master Plan objectives.

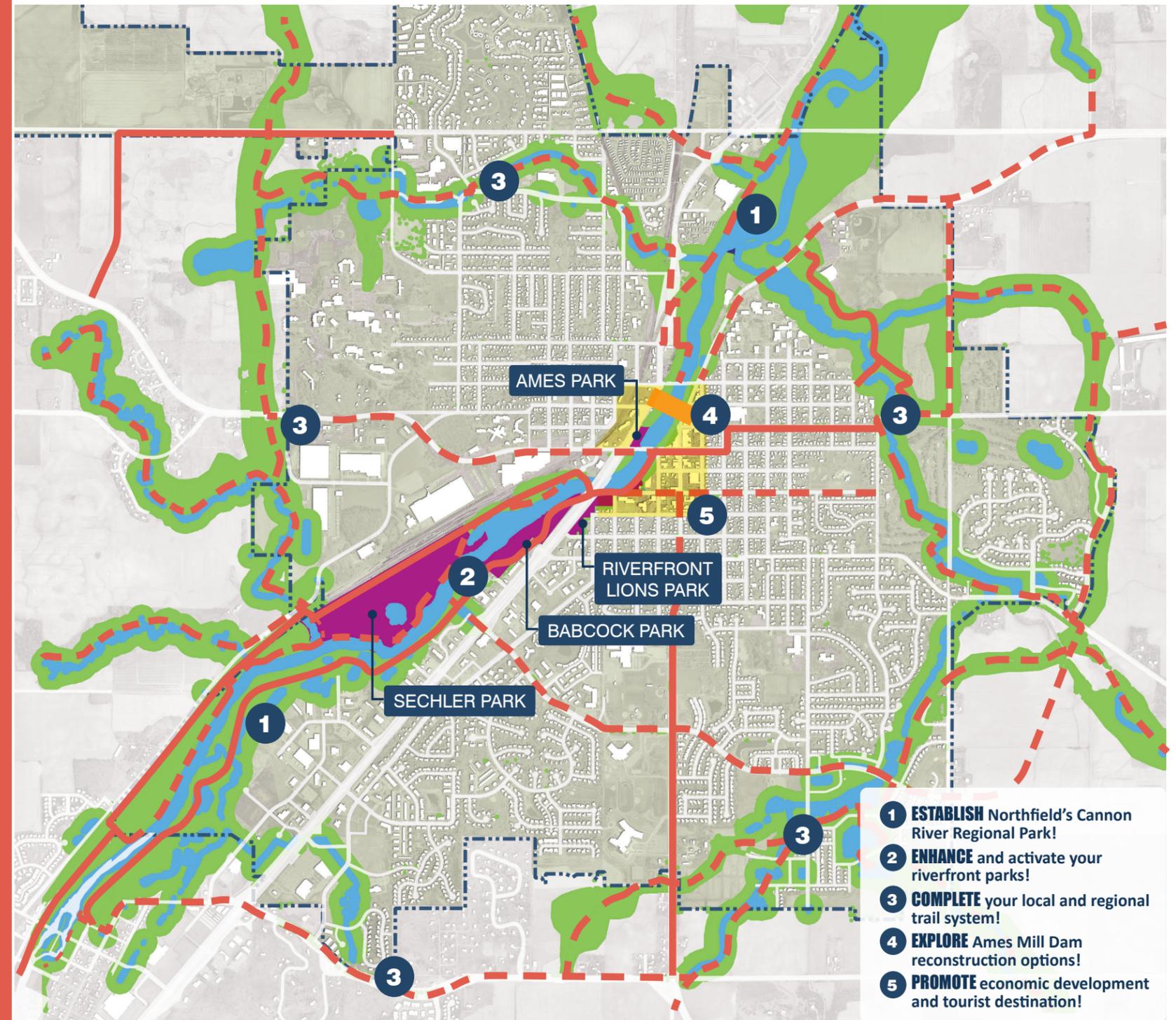
Immediate Actions:
 » Explore incentives to improve river-side of downtown buildings
 » Work with one or more businesses as pilot projects
 » Apply for grant funding

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

Existing City guiding documents and past studies outline vision, objectives and strategies around the value of the Cannon River as an economic engine and perhaps more importantly, as an essential component of Northfield's overall identity. Its scenic beauty, natural resources, and recreational opportunities support a variety of current and ongoing project initiatives that focus on how to better integrate the river into all aspects of community life.

The resolution also established the Committees' Work Plan, including the specific charge to prepare a Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan that specifically addresses the following:

- » Prioritization to align with the City Strategic Plan
- » Concept plans for strategic park improvements
- » Identified short term + long term projects and funding sources
- » Preservation and conservation of the riverfront
- » Identification of stormwater management project priorities
- » Strategies for increased active use of the riverfront
- » Opportunities for business expansion in the corridor



- 1 ESTABLISH** Northfield's Cannon River Regional Park!
- 2 ENHANCE** and activate your riverfront parks!
- 3 COMPLETE** your local and regional trail system!
- 4 EXPLORE** Ames Mill Dam reconstruction options!
- 5 PROMOTE** economic development and tourist destination!

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR THE NORTHFIELD EXPERIENCE!

Five KEY ACTIONS emerged from the REAC planning process; each of which is fundamental to the TRANSFORMATION of Northfield's riverfront parks into an EXCITING CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE!

1 ESTABLISH



ESTABLISH NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK

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4 EXPLORE



EXPLORE AMES MILL DAM RECONSTRUCTION OPTIONS

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- » Conduct the dam study recommended by DNR staff
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5 PROMOTE



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Northfield is a beautiful and inviting community, possessing attributes that many communities would love to have. 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. But, this effort is not simply a parks plan. It is also an economic development strategy that benefits both the local community and attracts a regional audience. Proposed park improvements must align with broader Regional Park Master Plan objectives.

Immediate Actions:

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NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

THE PROCESS

The City Council adopted a resolution in November 2018 to create the Riverfront Enhancement Advisory Committee to further the City's strategic priorities, including:

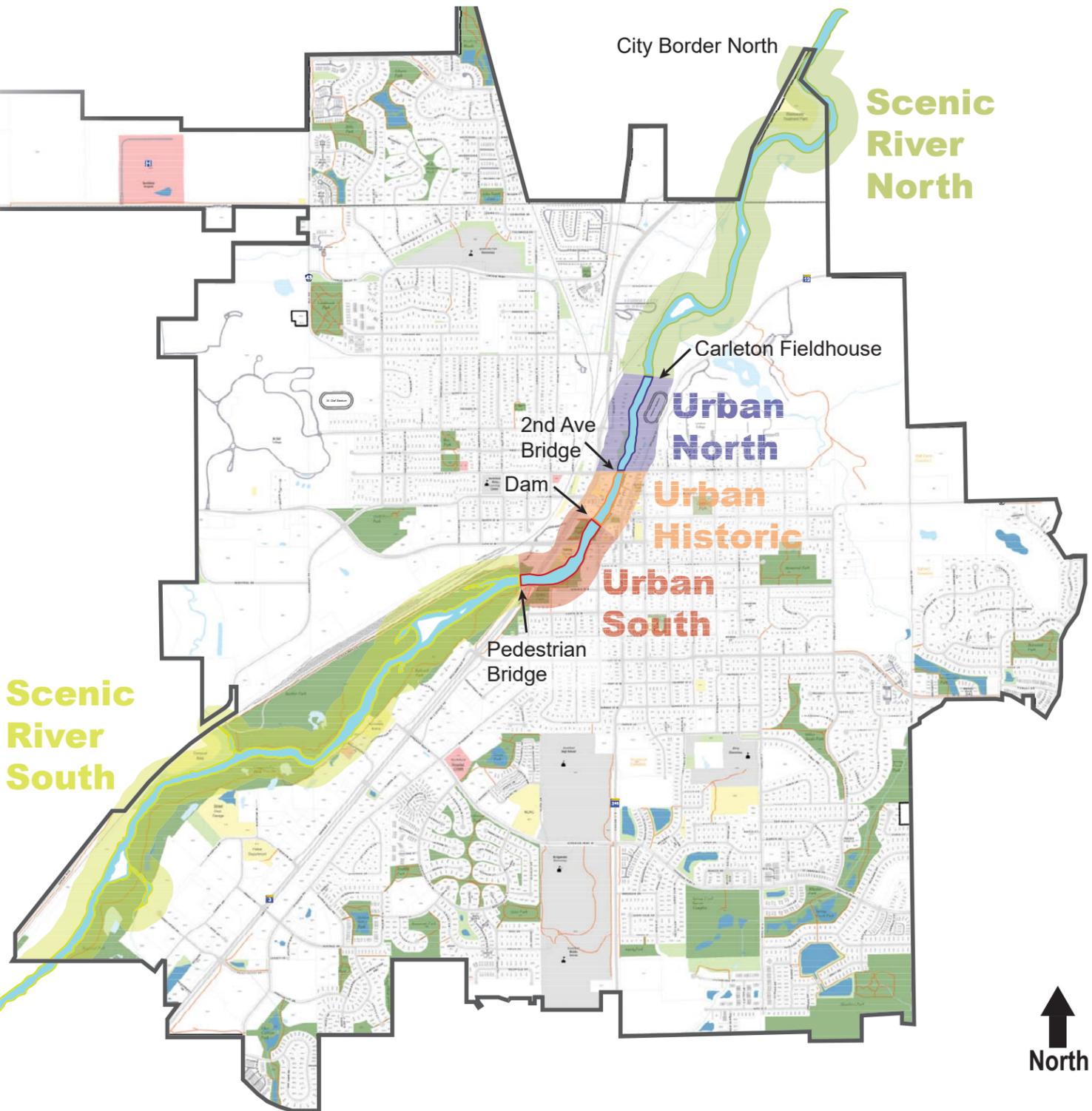
- 1) riverfront enhancement
- 2) enhanced tourism
- 3) expanded downtown

– all of which contribute to their Strategic Plan objective: "Economic Development: A Community That's Economically Thriving".

The Northfield Riverfront Enhancement Advisory Committee (REAC or "committee") was formed at the direction of the Northfield City Council by resolution 2018-115 in November 2018 to assist the City with the preparation of a Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan that includes the following:

- » Prioritization to align with the strategic plan.
- » Concept plans for strategic park improvements.
- » Identified short-term and long-term projects and funding resources.
- » Preservation and conservation of the riverfront.
- » Identification of stormwater management project priorities.
- » Strategies for increased active use of the riverfront.
- » Opportunities for business expansion on the corridor.

The City received a Technical Assistance Grant from the National Park Service (NPS). NPS Staff was retained in March, 2019 to facilitate an extensive effort to review past plans and documents, identify initiatives and improvements and help REAC through a series of ranking exercises. The committee partnered with the NPS to map out and discuss several river districts plans, ultimately deciding on a plan of five river districts organized as Scenic River North, Urban North, Urban Historic, Urban South, and Scenic River South. These river districts were created to help the committee create actionable steps and goals focused on the REAC charter from the City Council to "Enhance the assets of the Cannon River."



NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE



NPS facilitated meetings with REAC to explore park design program ideas.

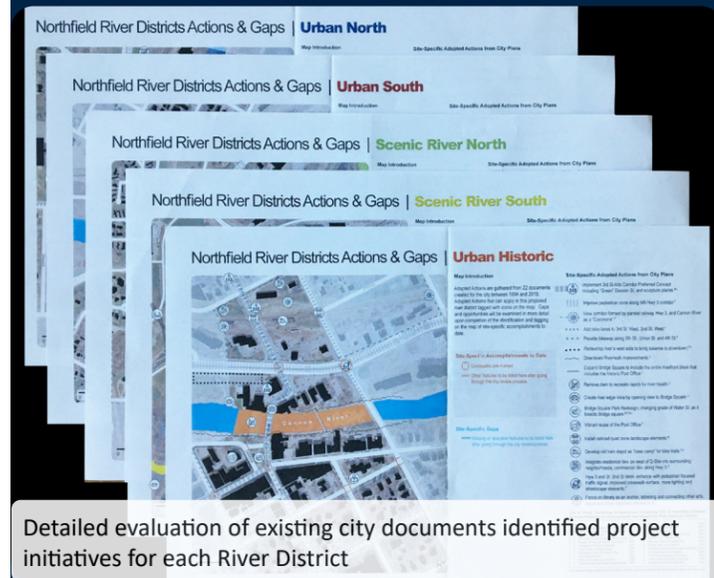
The NPS team led an extensive process that began with a comprehensive review of previous proposals, documents and plans dating back 30 years. Improvement ideas were listed and mapped. The Committee then brainstormed additional specific ideas to augment those listed from earlier studies. This process was closely tied to the goals of the City's 2008 Comprehensive Plan.

A list of 182 unique action items were identified and reviewed for feasibility by City staff. With NPS input, a new list was developed that focused on the four city-owned riverfront parks. The action items list was then winnowed to 123 ideas that were eventually categorized with high, medium, or low scores. The REAC committee is working toward identifying which action items should be prioritized for implementation in the next three to five years.

In December, 2019, a park planning workshop involving REAC members and Northfield Park Board members was facilitated by NPS staff. The outcome was a series of 4 programmatic concept diagrams for each of the four parks, which were presented back to the REAC Committee; an NPS facilitated discussion led to preferred programs for each park. These were developed into more refined concepts by the consultant team retained by the City. More detail about each of the park concepts is addressed in the individual project pamphlets.



Facilitated workshops produced preferred park program diagrams



Detailed evaluation of existing city documents identified project initiatives for each River District

In 1973 the Minnesota legislature established the State Wild & Scenic Rivers Program to protect rivers with outstanding natural, scenic, geographic, historic, cultural and recreational values. Rivers are categorized as Wild, Scenic and Recreational. One of six such rivers in the state, the Cannon River was designated in 1980 from Faribault to Cannon Falls (including Northfield) as a Recreational River, the least restrictive category. From Cannon Falls to the confluence with the Mississippi, it is a Scenic River.

While the Recreational River categorization imposes some restrictions on how the river may be developed, such as building setbacks, vegetation removal and bridge crossings, the Wild and Scenic River Rules do not prevent the committee's ideas from being executed. Pedestrian bridges, for example, are not specifically addressed in the rules, although how they are located could be impacted. It is recommended by the NPS staff that the City of Northfield should work within the bounds of the regulations when carrying out the recommended action items.

CATEGORY AND PROJECT CONSIDERATIONS

NPS Staff recommendations are based on the document, "1st Round Prioritization of Ideas/Action Items," which was reviewed by REAC to help define Action Plan priorities. NPS used this input to further refine their list of suggested phase-one implementation projects that include the categories and representative projects outlined below:

Trails Improvements

- Wayfinding
- Ames—Sechler Park

Connection

- Arboretum Connection
- Riverfront Trail Access
- Mill Towns Trail
- Ames--North Connection
- Bridge Bike Lanes
- North River Access

River Access:

- Fishing Dock/River Overlook
- Informal Fishing Spot
- Canoe/Kayak Access
- Walking/Biking Loops
- Mill Towns Trail
- Canoe/Kayak Take Out
- Colleges

Promotions/Marketing

- Business River Sides

For a complete list of REAC + NPS Recommendations and other more detailed information, refer to the Project Description Pamphlets and these links and websites:

Arts

- Crosswalks
- Murals
- Art Walk

Park Improvements

- Ames Park
- Babcock Park
- Bridge Square

Conservation

- Ames Mill Dam Feasibility Study
- Management Plan
- Native Plantings

Programming/Events

- Water Fest
- Existing Events
- Bridge Fest
- Park Events

Policy Changes

- Trail Easement

REAC Committee Members

- » Tracy Heisler, Co-Chair, Northfield Planning Commission
- » Norman Oberto, Co-Chair, Business Owner
- » Suzie Nakasian, Northfield City Council
- » Kristi Pursell, Executive Director, Cannon River Watershed Partnership (CRWP)
- » Joe Glasior, Principal Project Manager, Post Consumer Brands
- » Robert Stai, Contractor
- » Greg Siems, Executive Director, Northfield Downtown Development Corporation (NDDC)
- » Peter Hark, Department of Natural Resources Field Operations Manager

Northfield City Staff

- » Ben Martig, City Administrator
- » David Bennett, Public Works Director
- » Mitzi Baker, Community Development Director
- » Tim Behrendt, Streets and Parks Manager
- » Mikayla Schmidt, City Planner

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

AMES PARK PROJECT FOCUS

Primary ACTION PLAN Objective: To create a **signature downtown public park** that complements and connects with Bridge Square, serving to enhance and promote the Main Street Business District as a local activity hub and a premier regional destination.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

There is widespread agreement among the groups about Ames Park's key role in Northfield's new Regional Park Experience. It has been identified, in its entirety, as a **high priority, Phase One project**. Some specific initiatives include the following:

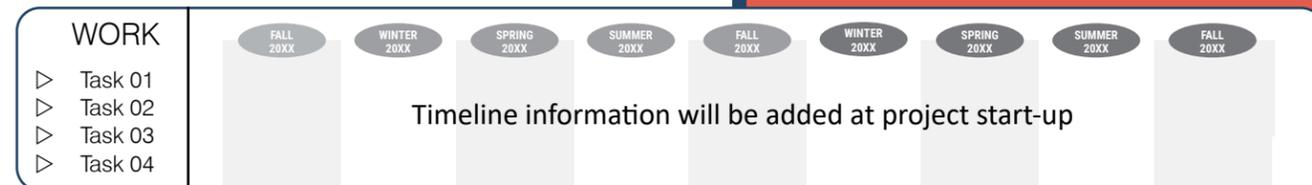
- ▷ Develop a refined park design program based on REAC/NPS 'bubble diagrams' and illustrative 'Park Concept Diagrams'
- ▷ Pursue an agreement with Post Properties for a shared parking strategy in the existing parking/service area as an essential component of park design
- ▷ Remove 'free' right turn from 5th to northbound Highway 3
- ▷ Explore potential for parallel parking and ADA drop-off drive alongside the park on northbound Highway 3
- ▷ Create bike lanes and widened pedestrian walks on the Hwy 19/5th St. Bridge
- ▷ Close the street between Bridge Square and the Downtown Riverwalk; activate the space with food trucks, sponsored activities, educational exhibits and other attractions

GETTING STARTED!

- ✓ Confirm park design program and Phase One project components
- ✓ Coordinate park program and final design with proposed Downtown Riverwalk and Bridge Square improvements creating continuous loop along both sides of the river
- ✓ Identify potential public and private sector partners, influential stakeholders, and agency review criteria, including Wild and Scenic River constraints
- ✓ Research and pursue available funding sources, including grants, capital improvements programs, private investment
- ✓ Begin design process with qualified consultant, through conceptual design, design development, construction documents, bidding, contractor selection and completed construction

For a complete list of recommendations, please refer to the Links and Related Documents provided below.

PROPOSED PROJECT TIMELINE



RELATED LINKS

Will be added as part of final edits

CONTACT INFORMATION

Will be added as part of final edits

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

AMES PARK "VILLAGE GREEN ON THE WATER"

Strategically located along Highway 3 and directly across the Cannon River from the heart of downtown, Ames Park has a multiple roles to play in Northfield's emerging regional park experience.

As an iconic landmark greeting travelers, Ames has the space and character to accommodate gatherings, performance and cultural events. But equally compelling is its role in accessing the riverfront itself and establishing places for strolling, viewing and quiet reflection along an exciting new segment of the Downtown Riverwalk. Safe access and parking must be addressed, as should select screening of the highway, but proven economical strategies are available to do so.



People are drawn to the water's edge as part of daily routine or special events



NPS-facilitated REAC workshops explored ideas summarized in design program diagrams



AMES PARK

“VILLAGE GREEN ON THE WATER”

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE



KEY PROGRAMMING FEATURES

- ORIENT PARK DEVELOPMENT AND RIVERFRONT ACCESS TO INTERACT WITH EAST SIDE OF RIVER AND STEPS/STAGE
- PRESERVE OPEN SPACE AND SIMPLICITY OF CHARACTER WITHIN PARK - FOCUS ON RIVERFRONT AND BEYOND
- GATEWAY AND SWEEPING PROMENADE DRAW TOWARDS THE RIVER
- PLINTH ALLOWS ACCESS TO WATER IN UNIQUE WAY FOR INCREDIBLE VIEWS OF FALLS AND EAST SIDE
- CONTINUE THEME OF ARTFUL ELEMENTS ALONG WALKS IN CONNECTION TO EAST-SIDE RIVERWALK AND IN FURNISHINGS, PAVEMENTS, PLAYGROUND, ETC - A CONTEMPORARY TAKE ON ART IN THE LANDSCAPE
- CONSERVATIVE WITH INFRASTRUCTURE TO ACCOMMODATE FLOODING/WEATHER WEAR
- PROVIDE AUTO ACCESS FOR SHORT TERM PARKING, DROP OFF, ADA, MAINTENANCE/EVENT VEHICLES

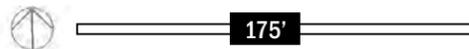
LEGEND

- PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN PATHS
- PROPOSED RIVERWALK

KEY

- GATEWAY: PHYSICAL/VISUAL CONNECTION TO WATERFRONT WITH VERTICAL FOCAL POINT FEATURE, SEATING, PLANTINGS, KIOSK
- PROMENADE WITH SPECIAL PAVING
- “THE POINT” PLINTH WITH SPECIAL PAVING MATERIAL, TRANSPARENT RAILING ALONG WATER AND ARTFUL SEATING NODES ALONG WALKWAY
- SPECIALTY GARDENS: POLLINATOR, COLOR, FOCAL POINT FROM EAST BANK OF RIVER
- LONG LINEAR SEATWALLS
- BOULEVARD GARDENS AND PROMENADE
- ICONIC PLAYGROUNDS WITH ABSTRACT AND COLORFUL PLAY EQUIPMENT FOR ALL AGES
- STORMWATER GARDENS AND COLLECTION, INFILTRATION AND CONVEYANCE
- INTERPRETIVE WALK WITH ART/STORY WALK INTERACTIVE FEATURES
- HEAVY CONIFEROUS AND DECIDUOUS SCREENING ALONG ADJACENT INDUSTRIAL
- INFORMAL SEATING - BENCHES BENEATH TREES WITH NATIVE/HABITAT ENHANCING SHORELINE VEGETATION RESTORATION
- FLEX/MULTI-USE LAWN
- REMOVABLE SCULPTURAL PERFORMANCE SHADE CANOPY - HIGH END CANVAS SHADE CAN BE INSTALLED AND REMOVED SEASONALLY
- ADA PARKING AND DROP OFF
- POTENTIAL FUTURE STREET PARKING FOR TEMP PARKING AND EVENT VEHICLES - FOOD TRUCKS, ETC.
- POTENTIAL FUTURE RIVER STAGE AND STEPS
- POTENTIAL FUTURE RIVERWALK CONNECTION
- POTENTIAL FUTURE SHARED PARKING LOCATION AT POST PROPERTY
- POTENTIAL PICNIC/SHADE SHELTERS

AMES PARK CONCEPT DIAGRAM



DRAFT



PARKS CONCEPT DIAGRAMS
05.08.2020



Celebrate the urban interface with the river



Plant gardens to beautify + enhance environmental health



Provide choices for informal gathering and relaxation



Create inspirational and iconic play spaces

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

RIVERSIDE LIONS PARK PROJECT FOCUS

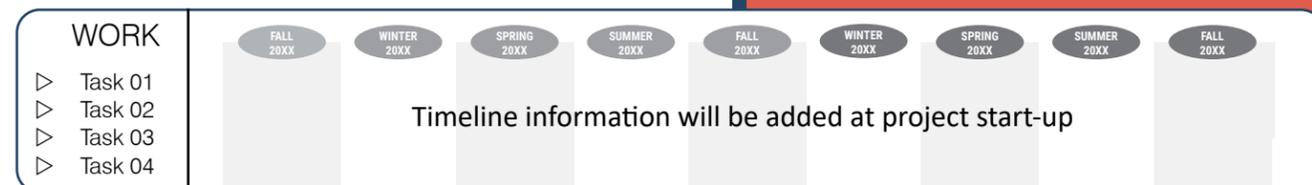
Primary ACTION PLAN Objective: To enhance and expand existing activity areas and amenities through phased implementation of key projects, building on the strong neighborhood presence and devoted users of the park.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Already a well-used and appreciated neighborhood-oriented park, Riverside Lions Park is in need of updating, including better management of flooding and stormwater, new play and exercise facilities, and improved circulation through and within the space. The park is designated as a Phase Two project. Key initiatives include the following:

- ▷ Determine and develop list of potential Riverside Lions Park improvements as a Phase Two project
- ▷ Review and refine detailed park design program based on REAC/NPS 'bubble diagrams' and illustrative 'Park Concept Diagrams'
- ▷ Manage stormwater in a series of linear basins that also act as pollinator gardens, to better define spaces for additional recreational uses and other park design program components
- ▷ Provide a central flex/green space to accommodate small summer gatherings, with conversion to a skating rink in winter
- ▷ Upgrade restroom and picnic facilities
- ▷ Explore design options to improve the Farmers Market experience at the foot of 7th St
- ▷ Explore potential to create space for dog park (moved from Babcock Park)

PROPOSED PROJECT TIMELINE



RELATED LINKS

Will be added as part of final edits

GETTING STARTED!

- ✓ Confirm design program and "Essential Park Improvements" for Phase Two design and construction
- ✓ Coordinate volunteer riverbank clean-up and pollinator garden planting events
- ✓ Identify potential public and private sector partners, influential stakeholders, and agency review criteria, including Wild and Scenic River constraints
- ✓ Research and pursue available funding sources, including grants, capital improvements programs, private investment
- ✓ Outline design process and project scope to insure fit with Phase One projects

For a complete list of recommendations, please refer to the [Links and Related Documents](#) provided below.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

RIVERSIDE LIONS PARK "ENGAGING NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITY"

More than any of the other parks, Riverside Lions Park is embedded in the neighborhood context. The nature and strength of neighborhood parks is their attention to meeting the needs of a varied constituency with a variety of smaller venues. Elements such as the existing memorial, new pickle ball courts and shuffleboard courts, potential fitness and art pods, all lend character to the park. A winter skating rink is also proposed to enhance year around use of the park. The regional trail provides two options for traversing the park in the event of high water under the Highway 3 bridge.



Stormwater management components are integrated with park design features



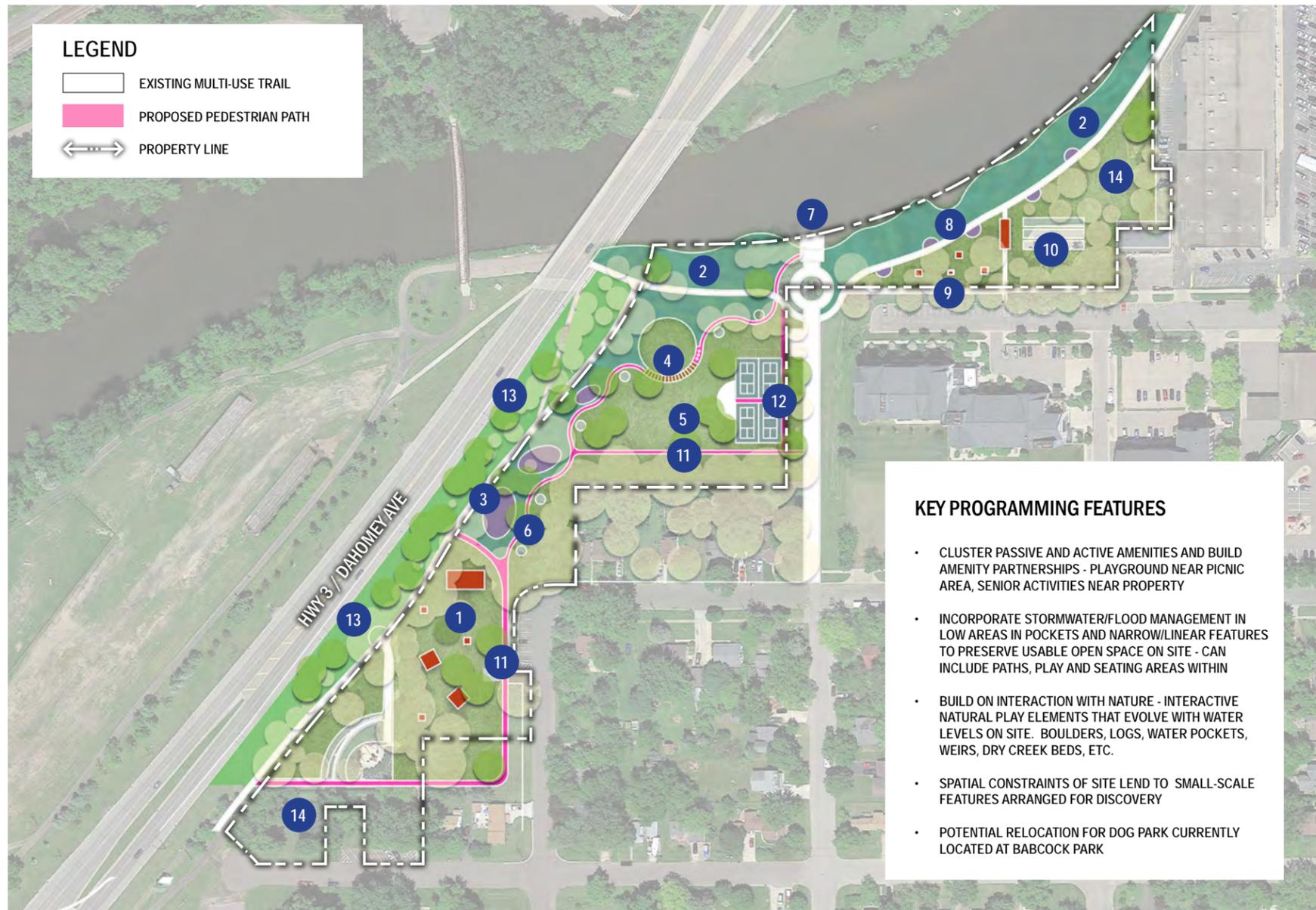
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RIVERSIDE LIONS PARK

“ENGAGING NEIGHBORHOOD
AMENITY”

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE



RIVERSIDE LIONS PARK CONCEPT DIAGRAM

DRAFT



PARKS CONCEPT DIAGRAMS
05.08.2020



Develop unique, family-friendly winter experiences



Use native landscapes for stormwater and flood-control gardens



Create unique and whimsical places for play



Construct state-of-the-art, multi-use game courts

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

BABCOCK PARK PROJECT FOCUS

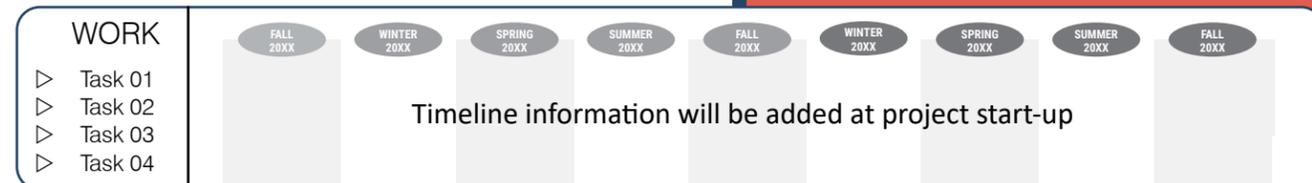
Primary ACTION PLAN Objective: To create an **active recreation-based local and regional destination** that will attract all age groups with year-round activities and flexible spaces to accommodate a range of programmed uses and special events.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Historically underutilized, Babcock Park has the space and flexibility to accommodate a wide range of unique recreational activities and improved river access in a transformed site. The park has been designated a Phase One project. Important initiatives include:

- ▷ Develop a refined park design program based on REAC/NPS 'bubble diagrams' and illustrative 'Park Concept Diagrams'
- ▷ Identify and refine high priority projects for Phase One development
- ▷ Undertake a feasibility study for potential multi-use building as Northfield's first indoor, public riverfront space
- ▷ Explore potential building uses including: nature interpretive center, trailhead, restrooms, rental facilities, storage for programmed activities
- ▷ Explore potential profit-generating activities to offset operating costs including equipment rental, snack shop, fitness center, rental space for private events
- ▷ Relocate DOJJ rodeo and dog park out of Babcock Park once new locations are identified and constructed
- ▷ Develop canoe and kayak water access as part of the Cannon River Trail

PROPOSED PROJECT TIMELINE



RELATED LINKS

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GETTING STARTED!

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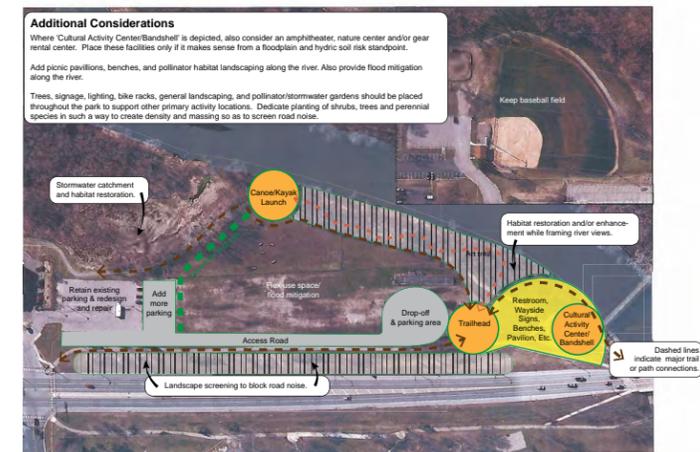
BABCOCK PARK "DESTINATION ADVENTURE PARK"

Babcock Park has the potential to become an exciting signature destination that will draw enthusiasts from Northfield and beyond. Envisioned as an active recreational facility, the conceptual diagram envisions a number of challenging bicycle attractions designed for varied ages and skill levels. In addition, a canoe and kayak landing is part of the recreational experience. A rental and maintenance facility with restrooms is also part of the concept, as are a new trail head and improved connections to the pedestrian bridge over the Cannon River.

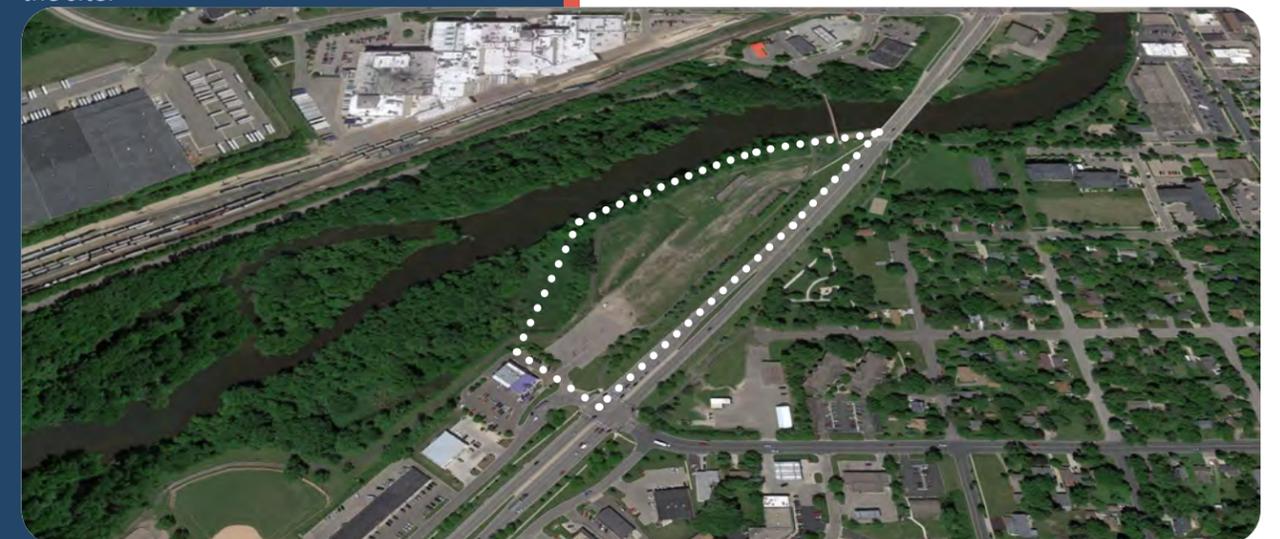
Babcock is envisioned as an active place for all — families with young kids, athletes honing their competitive skills, water lovers visiting town and wanting to rent a canoe. The riverfront trail passes through the park, making it easily accessible for cyclists and cross-country skiers alike. Additional parking is located at the southern end of the site.



Potential multi-purpose building like this one at The Trailhead in Wirth Park, Minneapolis



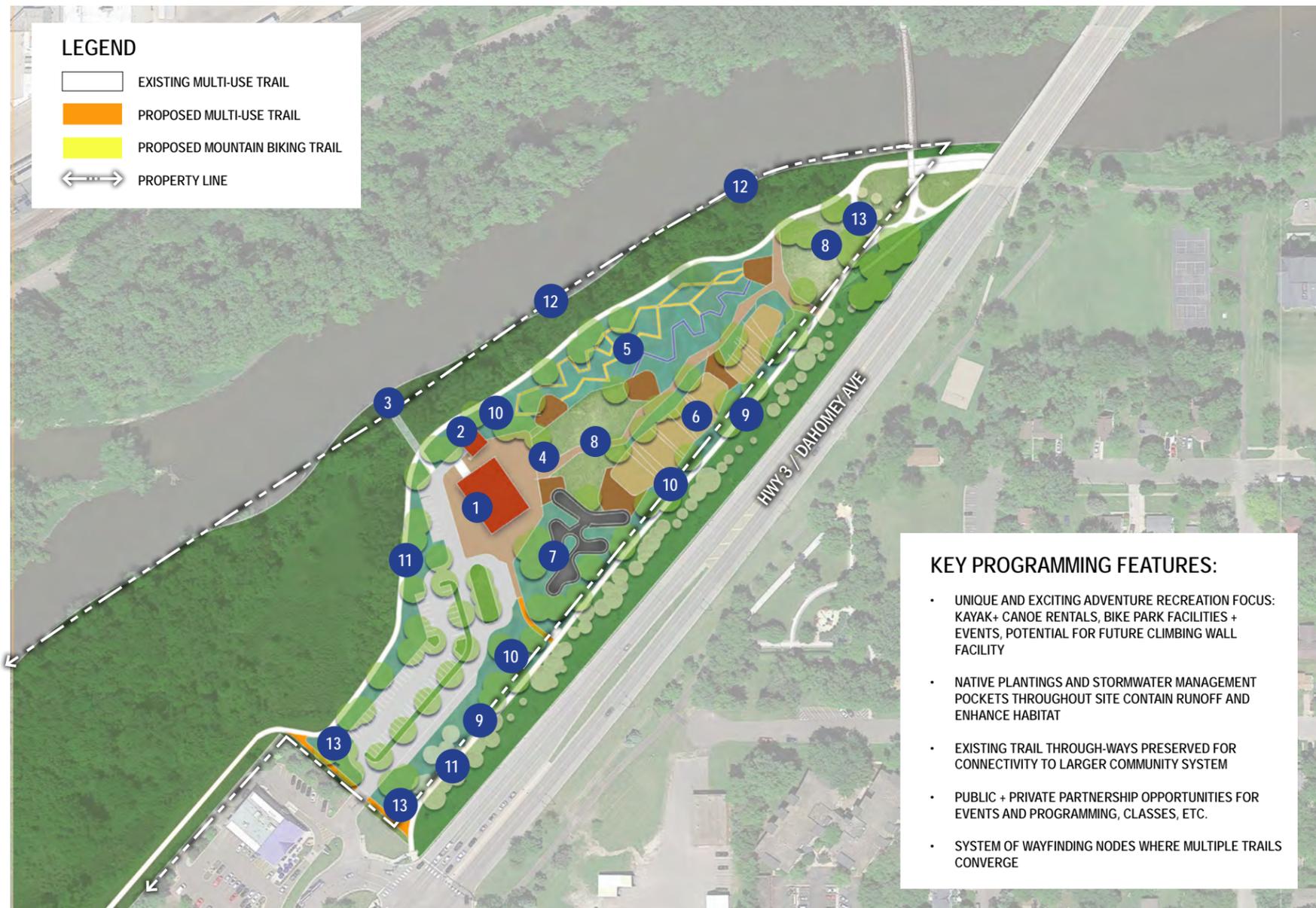
NPS-facilitated REAC workshops explored ideas summarized in design program diagrams



BABCOCK PARK

“DESTINATION ADVENTURE PARK”

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE



BABCOCK PARK EAST CONCEPT DIAGRAM



DRAFT



PARKS CONCEPT DIAGRAMS

05.08.2020



Develop a variety of unique and challenging experiences



Include facilities to attract a wide range of users



Enhance physical fitness with popular elements such as climbing walls



Strengthen riverfront connections and landings

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

SECHLER PARK PROJECT FOCUS

Primary ACTION PLAN Objective: To enhance this major city amenity as the primary destination for organized team sports, nature-based activities and immersion in the ecosystems adjacent to the river.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Already a successful and loved park for organized sports, Sechler Park has the potential to augment existing facilities with added play and picnic features among the game fields and a natural experience with trails and interpretive elements in the woodlands. The park is designated as a **Phase Two** project. Initiatives include:

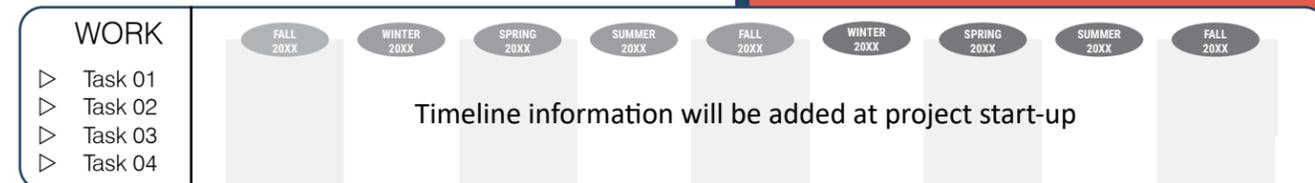
- ▷ Determine and develop list of potential Sechler Park improvements as a Phase Two project
- ▷ Develop a refined park design program based on REAC/NPS 'bubble diagrams' and illustrative 'Park Concept Diagrams'
- ▷ Explore bike trail alignments in the lower portion of the park and identify potential private sector partners for trails development
- ▷ Explore possible funding sources to enable trail improvements to be implemented

GETTING STARTED!

- ✓ Confirm design program and "Essential Park Improvements" for Phase Two design and construction
- ✓ Determine feasibility of adding a pedestrian and bike bridge connection between Sechler Park and Babcock Park
- ✓ Coordinate volunteer riverbank clean-up and pollinator garden planting events
- ✓ Identify potential public and private sector partners, influential stakeholders, and agency review criteria, including Wild and Scenic River constraints
- ✓ Research and pursue available funding sources, including grants, capital improvements programs, private investment
- ✓ Outline design process and project scope to insure fit with Phase One projects

For a complete list of recommendations, please refer to the Links and Related Documents provided below.

PROPOSED PROJECT TIMELINE



RELATED LINKS

Will be added as part of final edits

CONTACT INFORMATION

Will be added as part of final edits

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

SECHLER PARK "HOME FOR SPORTS AND NATURE"

With a focus on organized team sports, Sechler Park has a unique role among Northfield's riverfront parks. With space to accommodate picnicking and playgrounds as well as numerous game fields and parking, the upper part of Sechler is a well-maintained and appreciated destination for athletes and fans. A proposed bridge across the Cannon will make the park much more accessible for bicycles and pedestrians.

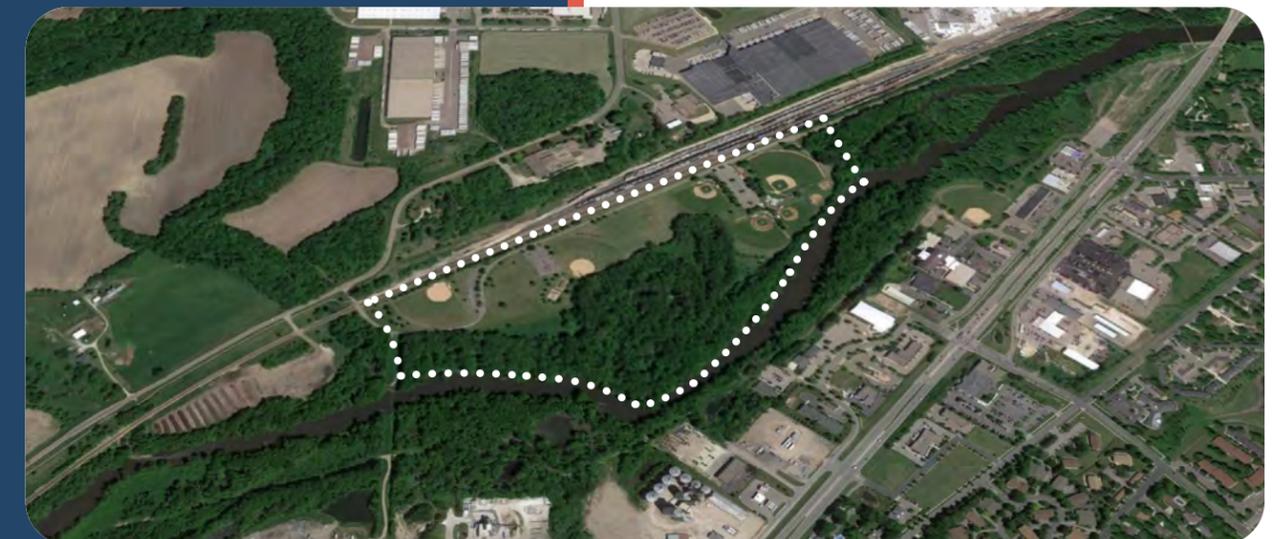
The lower, more natural portion of this site offers excellent opportunities for mountain biking and a natural skills trail. Cross country skiing can also be accommodated in winter. Two trail heads link the upper and lower parts of the site together. The multi-use trail that skirts the edge of the park is an important link for the regional trail system on the west side of the river.



Natural areas weave through the park, creating green screens around active sports fields while providing landscape variety, habitat and discovery



NPS-facilitated REAC workshops explored ideas summarized in design program diagrams



SECHLER PARK

“HOME FOR SPORTS AND NATURE”

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

KEY PROGRAMMING FEATURES:

- INCORPORATE (2) NEW FIELDS TO AVOID WEST ORIENTATION AND ADD PARKING
- REORIENT WESTERN PORTION OF ROADWAY AND WESTERN PARKING TO ACCOMMODATE NEW WESTERN FIELD AND ESTABLISH HIERARCHY OF MAIN ENTRANCE AND CIRCULATION TO PICNIC SHELTERS, PLAYGROUNDS, TRAILHEAD, RESTROOMS, ETC.
- SIMPLIFY TRAIL CONSIDERATIONS FOR LOWER BLUFF AND EMPHASIZE MOUNTAIN BIKING IN THIS PARK - SIGNIFICANT TOPOGRAPHICAL VARIATIONS THROUGHOUT SOUTHERN HALF OF SITE
- EXPANDED PLAY SPACES TO INCLUDE FITNESS/SPORT-BASED PLAY CAMPUS (OBSTACLE COURSE, PARKOUR, NINJA WARRIOR, FITNESS)
- SPATIAL CONSTRAINTS LEAD TO LIMITED ADDITIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE AT TOP OF BLUFF
- UPGRADE TRAIL CIRCULATION IN THE VICINITY OF RAIL/ROAD CROSSING



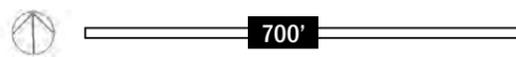
KEY

- 1 NEW CROSSWALK AND PAVED TRAIL CONNECTION ACROSS RAILROAD SEPARATED FROM STREET
- 2 WAYSIDE REST AND OVERLOOK
- 3 MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL TO FOLLOW NATURAL PATH ALIGNMENT
- 4 WOODED TRAIL-RIDING LOOP (BIKES)
- 5 TRAILHEAD
- 6 NEW TRAIL LOOP
- 7 NEW PICNIC SHELTER
- 8 NEW ICONIC SHELTER WITH RESTROOM BUILDING AND WAYFINDING KIOSK
- 9 NEW FIELD
- 10 NEW PARKING AT PICNIC / PLAYGROUND/TRAILHEAD AREA
- 11 NEW PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
- 12 ENLARGED FUTURE FITNESS-FOCUSED PLAYGROUND (OBSTACLE COURSE, NINJA WARRIOR, PARKOUR, FITNESS CIRCUITS - CONSIDER EXPANSION AND INTERACTION WITH EMBANKMENT TO THE SOUTH - CLIMBING WALL, HILLSIDE SLIDES, ETC.)
- 13 EXISTING MULTI-USE TRAIL

LEGEND

- EXISTING MULTI-USE TRAIL
- PROPOSED MULTI-USE TRAIL
- PROPOSED MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAIL
- PROPERTY LINE

SECHLER PARK CONCEPT DIAGRAM



Integrate shade structures to provide comfort



Develop play areas to augment existing facilities



Take advantage of the dynamic topography



Enhance the woodland trail system for year-round use

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

AMES MILL DAM PROJECT FOCUS

Primary ACTION PLAN Objective: To continue the study process already initiated to explore a range of concepts for the Ames Mill Dam (including leaving it in place), with associated costs/benefits analyses to determine the feasibility and efficacy of each option and arrive at a preferred path forward.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ames Mill Dam plays a key role in the recreational potential and environmental health of the Cannon River through downtown Northfield. While some favor removal and some favor keeping the dam, there is general agreement that more needs to be known to aid in that decision. Important considerations include:

- ▷ MUST be addressed in the plan and at a minimum must include an option of removal/reconstruction
- ▷ MUST consider potential impacts and benefits across multiple categories and criteria – environment, economic, sports and recreation, design aesthetics, and social and cultural objectives
- ▷ Concept options, as recommended by DNR Staff and other stakeholders, will assess a range of alternatives from keeping and repairing existing dam, to creation of a new “whitewater park” attraction
- ▷ Design solutions will connect and integrate with broader uses of the river corridor, maintain or enhance natural systems and ecological health, and ‘FIT’ within the context of the Cannon River Watershed.

PROPOSED PROJECT TIMELINE



RELATED LINKS

Will be added as part of final edits

GETTING STARTED!

- ✓ Meet with owners of the Dam and the DNR to re-start study process
- ✓ Determine if you need additional consultant expertise to support study process
- ✓ Complete fact-finding, precedent project research; explore and catalog range of options
- ✓ Evaluate options based on study objectives, program criteria, and potential costs/benefits
- ✓ Prepare detailed feasibility analysis; ‘schematic design’ drawings, cost evaluation
- ✓ Depending on outcomes, pursue partnerships, process and funding to implement

For a complete list of recommendations, please refer to the Links and Related Documents provided below.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Will be added as part of final edits

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

AMES MILL DAM RECONSTRUCTION FEASIBILITY STUDY



Anticipated dam maintenance and repair provides an opportunity to explore reconstruction options

There is growing enthusiasm about the possibility that the Post Dam might play an important role in reinforcing the health, continuity and variety of the Cannon River State Water Trail. Designated as a wild and scenic river, the Cannon still suffers from environmental degradation and human intervention. The Post Dam, admittedly an attractive feature downtown, inhibits the natural processes of the river and the exciting possibility that recreational paddlers could move through downtown rather than portage around the dam. A reconstruction of the existing dam has the potential to be both a restorative feature and significant recreational regional attraction.

A preliminary study of the dam reinforces the idea that an exciting and rare whitewater experience could be created with the combination of a smaller, navigable dam and weir and a constructed whitewater course. Research has begun that outlines the process of transferring the privately held dam to the City of Northfield. More study needs to be completed and discussion with Post properties should be ongoing to fully evaluate the implications of an eventual transformation.



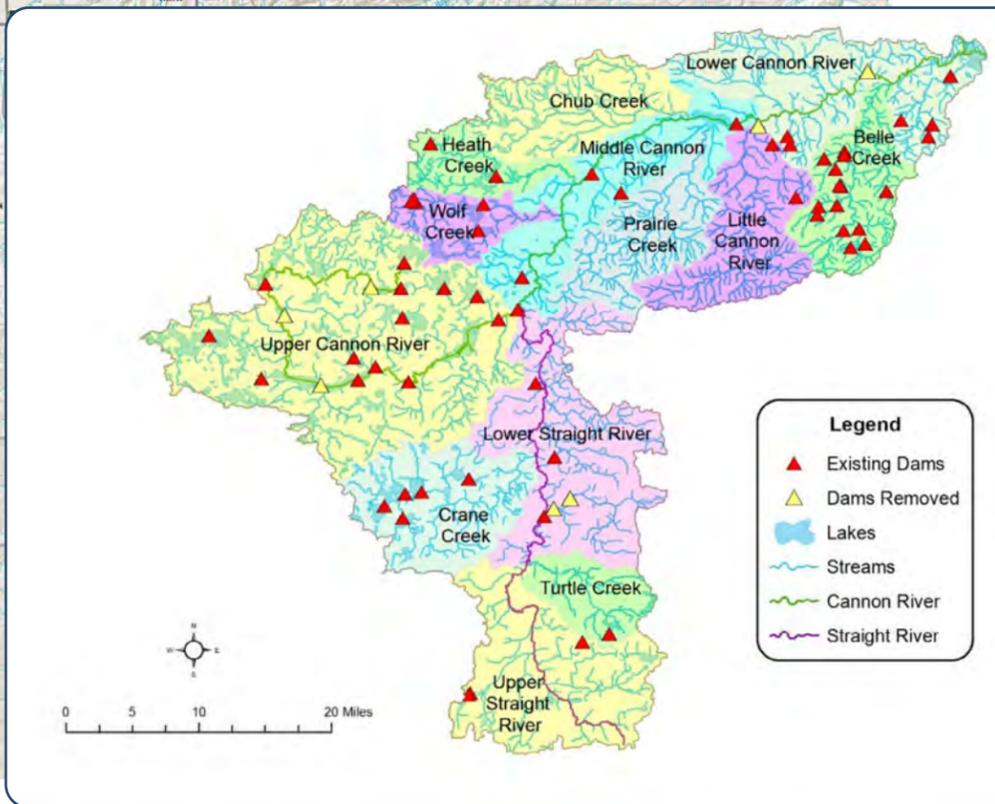
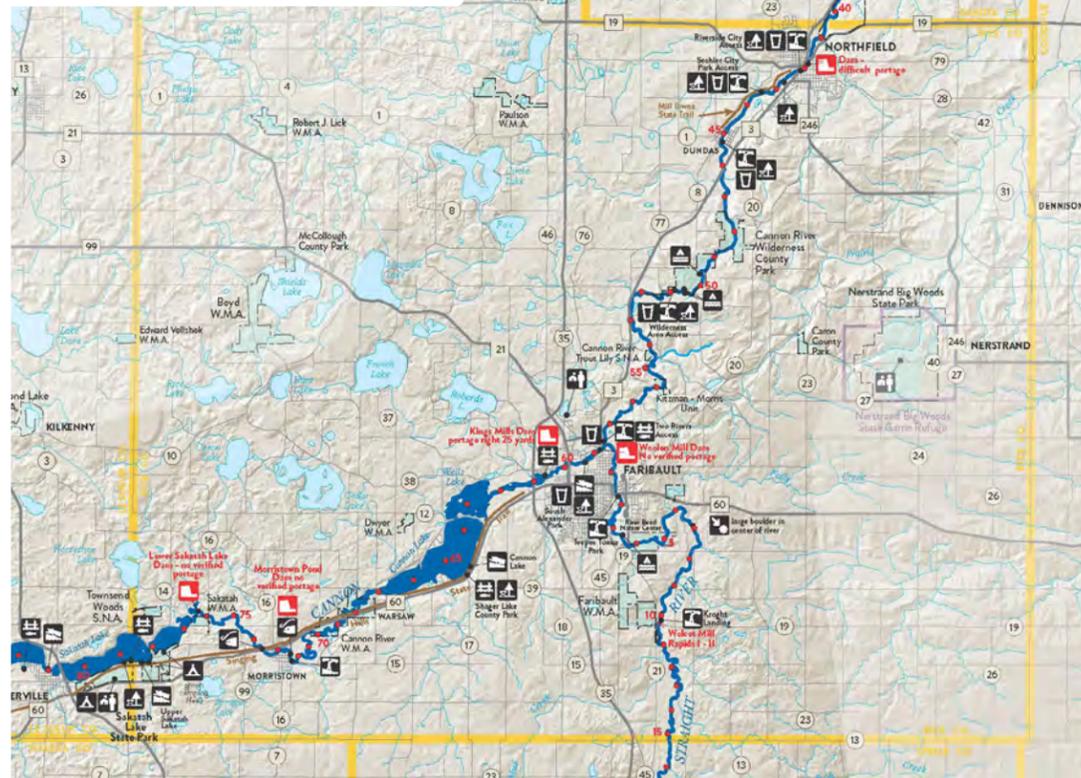
AMES MILL DAM RECONSTRUCTION FEASIBILITY STUDY

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

The Cannon River travels 112 miles from Shields Lake to the Mississippi River, with the 5 river segments identified in the Action Plan located almost exactly at the midpoint between the two. This strategic geography implies both opportunity and responsibility as Phase One projects seek to connect with this amazing resource.



Ames Mill and Dam 1930 (photo courtesy of the Northfield Historical Society)

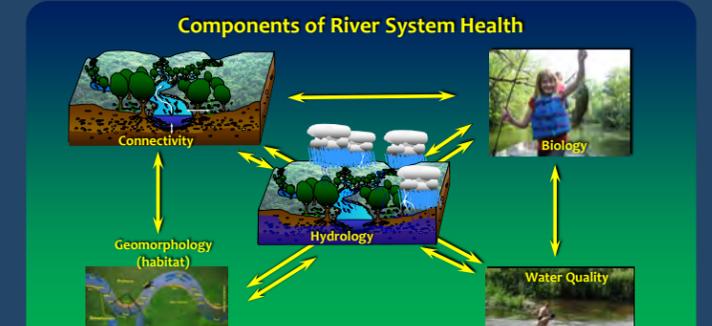


The Cannon River Watershed drains almost 1,500 square miles; it's interesting to note the number of dams, both existing and removed, indicated by the triangles on this map.

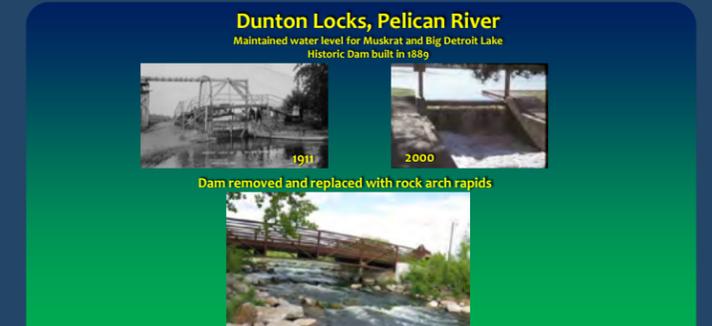
Study process will explore ideas and options including . . .



Preserve and repair existing dam



Respect and respond to the science of river health



Research and learn from similar projects



Evaluate a range of design alternatives

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

DOWNTOWN RIVERWALK PROJECT FOCUS

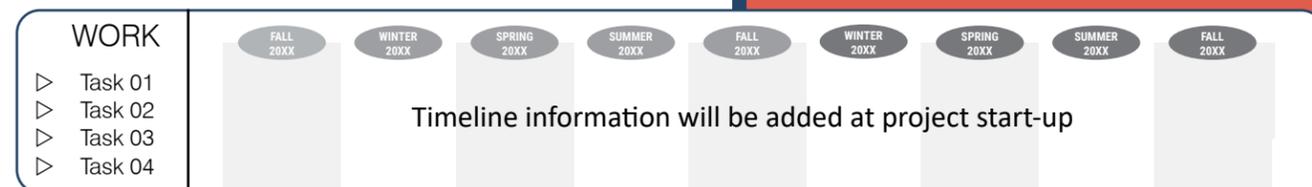
Primary ACTION PLAN Objective: To create a universally accessible, highly visible, signature destination loop walkway/trail that connects both sides of the river with the Downtown Business District, enhanced riverfront parks, the local and regional trail system and other city amenities and attractions.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Already an immensely popular feature of downtown, an improved and completed, universally-accessible Downtown Riverwalk has the potential to elevate Northfield's riverfront into world-class experience that is both intimate and dynamic. Key strategies include:

- ▷ Encourage integration of private and public properties; demonstrate how seamless, barrier-free connections with proposed riverfront enhancements delivers multiple benefits
- ▷ Provide incentives for specific land or building owners to improve the river side of their properties to share costs and benefits of riverfront enhancements
- ▷ Focus on wayfinding signs and maps to help orient visitors and increase trail use
- ▷ Fill in the missing pieces; connect with existing walks and trails to provide a completed loop

PROPOSED PROJECT TIMELINE



RELATED LINKS

Will be added as part of final edits

GETTING STARTED!

- ✓ Focus on actions that maintain and enhance existing segments with furnishings, lighting, seating, regular programming, improved river access
- ✓ Coordinate volunteer riverbank clean-up events
- ✓ Identify potential public and private sector partners, influential stakeholders, and agency review criteria, including Wild and Scenic River constraints
- ✓ Research and pursue available funding sources, including grants, capital improvements programs, private investment
- ✓ Begin design process for missing segments with qualified consultant, through conceptual design, design development, construction documents, bidding, contractor selection and completed construction

For a complete list of recommendations, please refer to the Links and Related Documents provided below.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Will be added as part of final edits

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

DOWNTOWN RIVERWALK



Action Plan objectives focus on creating multiple, highly visible connections between the Downtown District and the river

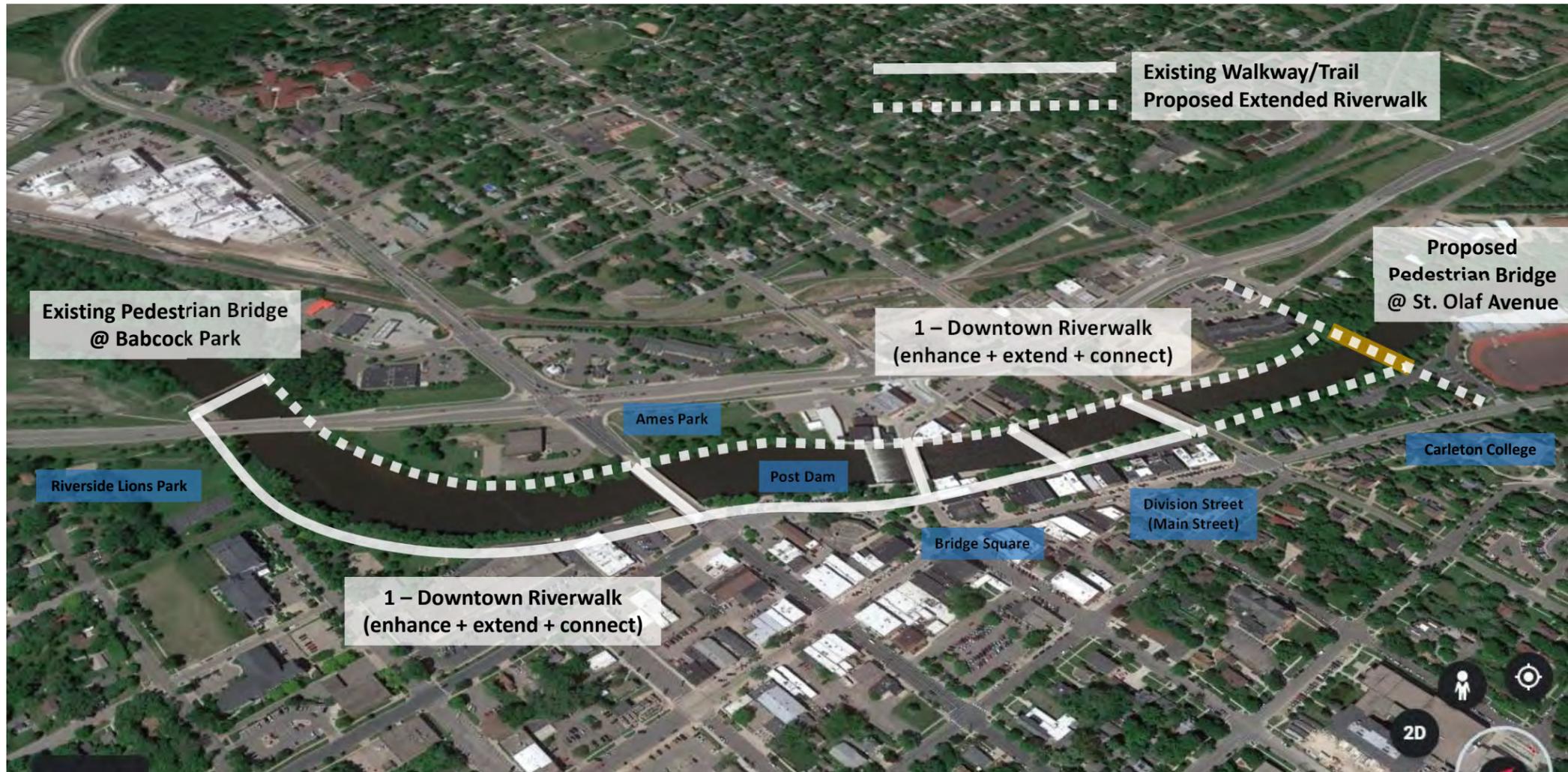
The beauty, scale and proximity of the Cannon River to downtown Northfield provide a unique and intimate experience for visitors and locals alike. The immediacy of the riverfront and the charm and integrity of downtown Division Street, Bridge Square and the Water Street Bridge set Northfield apart from most small river towns. The Riverwalk is envisioned to be a four-season walking attraction, lighted and inviting in winter and brimming with walkers and diners in summer. It should be universally accessible, allowing wheelchairs and families with baby stroller to enjoy the entirety of the urban riverfront.

Portions of the Downtown Riverwalk have been completed; there is much still work to be done to acquire property or obtain easements to facilitate a continuous public waterfront promenade from the 5th St. Bridge to the 2nd St. Bridge. With building uses spilling out onto the water's edge, the riverwalk has the potential to become a world-class riverfront experience.



DOWNTOWN RIVERWALK

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE



Much of the downtown riverfront property is either publicly held, or offers great opportunities to partner with private owners, to fill in the missing pieces of the proposed Downtown Riverwalk.

Trail connections and enhancements will require a variety of design solutions . . .



The 'urban edge' encourages a more integrated relationship between downtown and the river



Connect with existing bridge at Babcock Park and add new bridge at St. Olaf Avenue



Promote and enhance access to natural areas as part of your unique urban ecology



Explore cantilever or catwalk solutions to connect beneath bridges or along buildings adjacent to the river

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

LOCAL + REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM PROJECT FOCUS

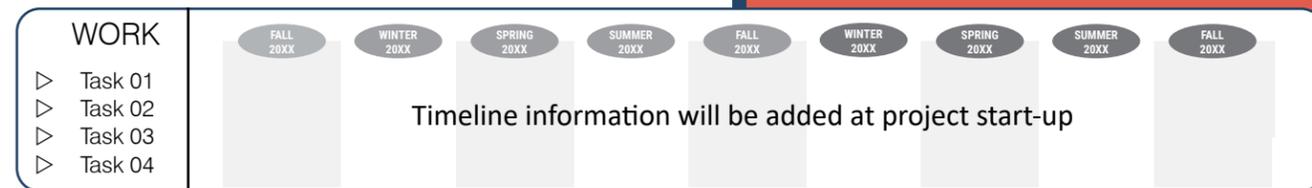
Primary ACTION PLAN Objective: Simply stated, the primary objective is to 'Connect-the-Dots' and complete and upgrade the missing or substandard segments of desired walkways or trail loops that provide links to both local and regional amenities and destinations.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Critical to the success of Northfield's Regional Park Experience are the connections between the parks and amenities. 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. Key considerations include:

- ▷ Connect with State Trail system; evaluate economic, and other benefits that inform construction phasing
- ▷ Connect with existing Cannon River Trail; begin coordinated planning effort to build advocacy
- ▷ Emphasize this multi-faceted river corridor that promotes both land-based and water-based activities
- ▷ Explore opportunities for WILD AND SCENIC river designation
- ▷ Promote the entire river corridor as a unique Northfield asset and regional park experience taking advantage of many acres of publicly owned land
- ▷ Install a comprehensive wayfinding system for bicyclists, pedestrians and non-motorized trail users
- ▷ Fill in missing pieces; connect new trail segments with existing walks and trails to provide a system of completed loops

PROPOSED PROJECT TIMELINE



RELATED LINKS

Will be added as part of final edits

GETTING STARTED!

- ✓ Focus on completing the Mill Towns Trail extension (DNR is currently working with Public Works on alignment)
- ✓ Select quick turnaround enhancement projects for existing segments, including Phase One wayfinding system design and installation, lighting, furniture and other improvements
- ✓ Coordinate volunteer riverbank clean-up events
- ✓ Identify potential public and private sector partners, influential stakeholders, and agency review criteria, including Wild and Scenic River constraints
- ✓ Research and pursue available funding sources, including grants, capital improvements programs, private investment
- ✓ Begin design process to define alignment and cost of missing segments

For a complete list of recommendations, please refer to the Links and Related Documents provided below.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Will be added as part of final edits

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

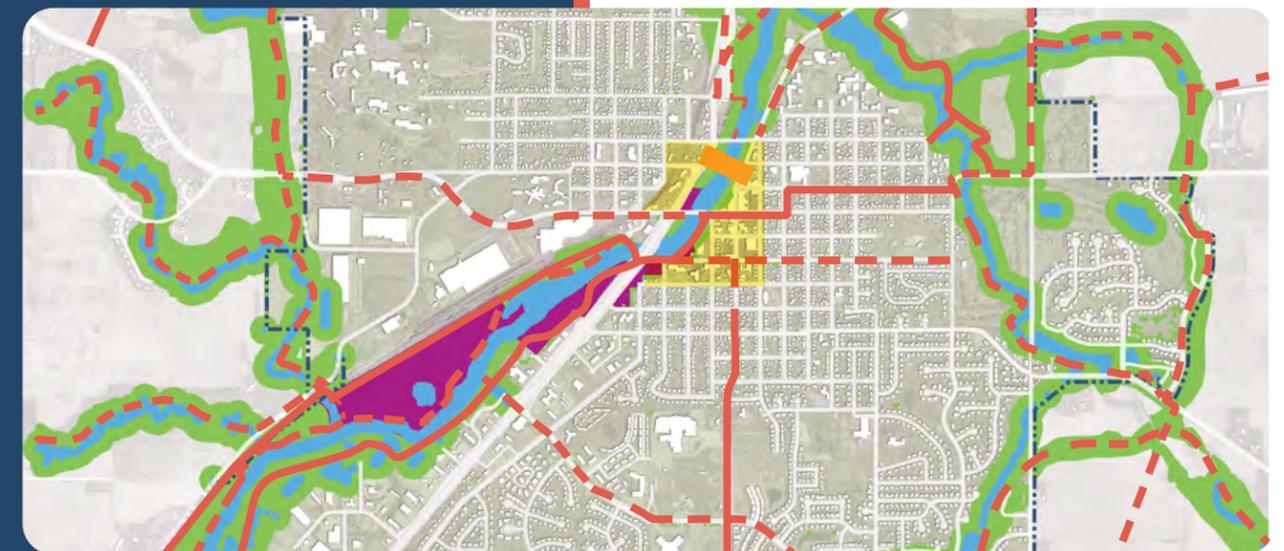
LOCAL AND REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM



Extend and provide connections to the existing trail system to enhance the network for local and regional visitors.

In addition to the Downtown Riverwalk, there is an exciting and expansive system of trails emerging in southeast Minnesota. The Mills Town State trail, which includes a three-mile portion from Northfield to Dundas, will eventually connect the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail with the west end of the Cannon Valley Trail to comprise one of the more beautiful network of trails in Minnesota. While portions of this system are in place, there are numerous places where the trail system is in disrepair or needs to be upgraded to meet the requirements of more stringent state standards. A coordinated sign system along the trails is also a key to their success, providing information about accessing links to other trails as well as finding downtown and other assets.

In Northfield, safe and plentiful connections to the surrounding neighborhoods need to be developed to provide easy access to it. In time, the trails in and around town, combined with the well-maintained surrounding County roads, Northfield can build on its existing reputation as a signature attraction for bicycle enthusiasts from around the state and beyond.



DRAFT FOR REVIEW 9/4/2020

LOCAL AND REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM

NORTHFIELD'S CANNON RIVER REGIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE

NORTHFIELD PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND TRAIL SYSTEM PLAN

Trail Classifications

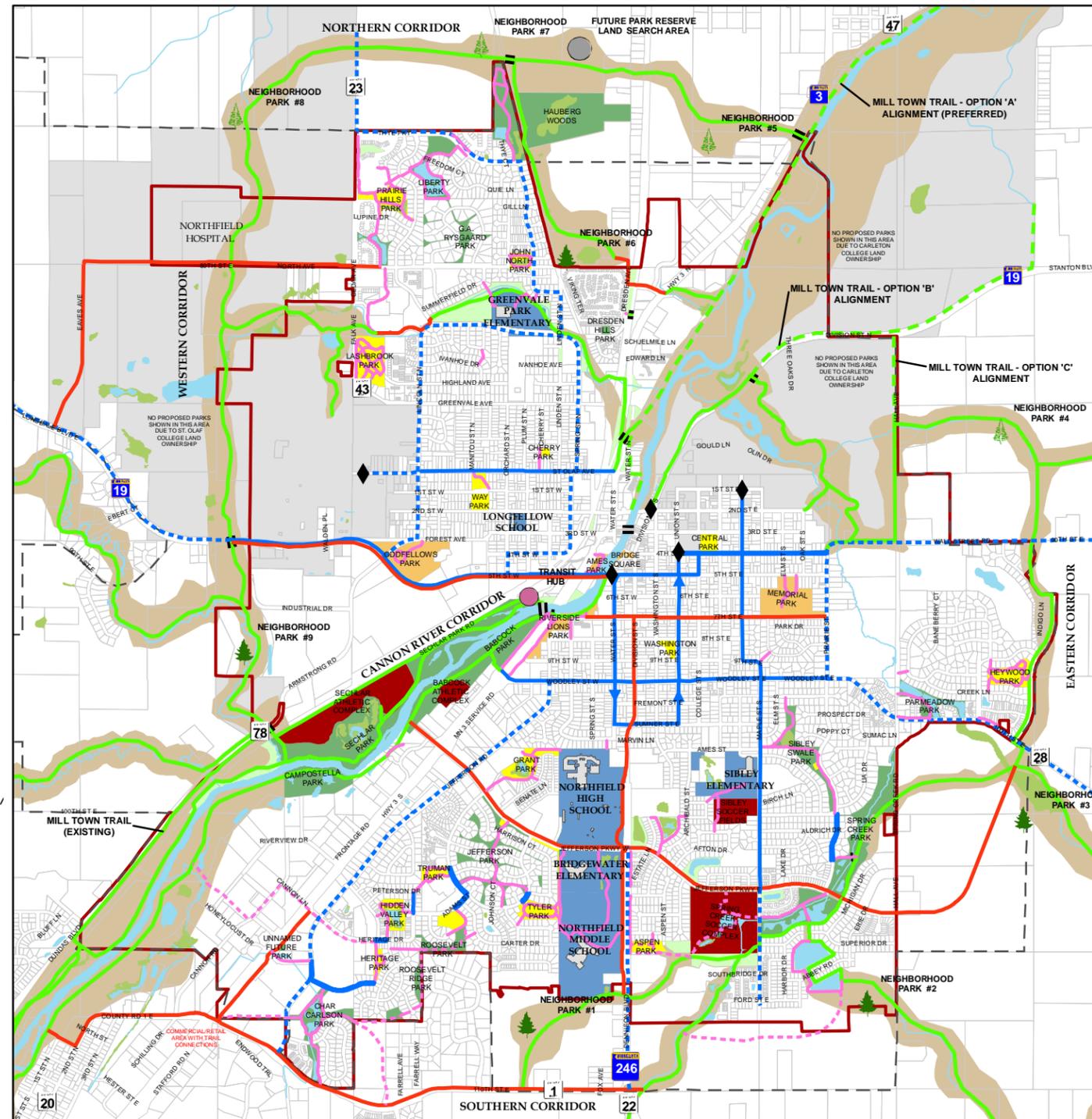
- ◆ Trail Classifications
- Destination Trail - Core
- Linking Trail - Core
- On-Street Bike Lane
- ▶ On-Street Bike Lane (One direction only)
- On-Street Bike Route
- Local/Neighborhood Trail
- Local/Neighborhood Trail (proposed connection)
- Grade-Separated Crossing
- Bridge

Park Classifications

- Neighborhood Park
- Community Park
- Athletic Complex
- Greenway/Conservation Area/Public Open Space
- Open Space
- Natural Greenway Corridor
- School Site
- Pond
- Wetland

Future Park Development

- Future Park Reserve Land Search Area
- Future Neighborhood Park Search Area, Inside Priority Growth Area
- Future Neighborhood Park Search Area, Outside Priority Growth Area
- Transit Hub
- Northfield - 2008 Corporate Boundary
- Priority Growth Area



Based on the Northfield Parks, Open Space and Trail System Plan

Updated Oct. 8, 2008



Design iconic wayfinding kiosks and signage to help orient users to amenities and destinations.



Establish more rustic riverside trails to augment paved trails and support increased water-based activities.



Where possible, use boardwalks and bridges to add interest and allow for intimate and unique river experiences.



Insure that all elements of the Local and Regional Trail System meet universal accessibility guidelines