



Legislation Text

File #: 21-353, **Version:** 1

City Council Meeting Date: June 15, 2021

To: Northfield City Council

From: Mitzi A. Baker, AICP, Community Development Director
David Bennett, City Public Works Director, City Engineer

Consider a motion of support for Park priorities within the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan.

Action Requested:

The City Council is requested to make a motion of support for Park priorities within the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan as listed below:

Years 1& 2:

- Bridge Square - verify preliminary design priorities; complete design work; budget and bid improvements
- Riverside - Lions - complete pickleball court siting and construction
- Ames Park - Begin design and engagement process

Years 3&4:

- Ames Park - begin construction, phase I
- Sechler Park - Begin design and engagement process
- Riverside-Lions - Begin design and engagement process

Year 5:

- Ames Park - construct phase II

Summary Report:

A proposed sequence of projects for implementing the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan was presented to the City Council on May 11, 2021. Following that meeting, staff collected feedback on the sequence of projects from the Planning Commission, EDA, and Parks Committee. Members offered comments individually through discussion. A document with a summary of comments is attached.

Since the Action Plan was approved in December 2020, effort has been made to begin to prepare the City to apply for a Regional Park Designation. Additionally, potential sequencing of the parks and public space improvements was developed for consideration.

The City Council is asked to make a motion to verify park priorities within the Riverfront Enhancement Action

Plan implementation, with focus on those action in the first 5 years. The sequence of projects will need to be re-visited from time to time to adjust to unforeseen time-sensitive opportunities and respond to potential barriers.

Efforts related to developing programs, policies or performing regular maintenance or reinvestment in relation to the Riverfront and parks are on-going. At this time, the Council is being asked to verify the sequence and priority for Parks where more substantive planning or design work and construction is considered. Specifically, within Bridge Square, Ames Park, Sechler Park and Riverside Lions, the following are proposed.

Years 1& 2:

Bridge Square - verify preliminary design priorities; complete design work; budget and bid improvements

Riverside - Lions - complete pickleball court siting and construction

Ames Park - Begin design and engagement process

Years 3&4:

Ames Park - begin construction, phase I

Sechler Park - Begin design and engagement process

Riverside-Lions - Begin design and engagement process

Year 5:

Ames Park - construct phase II

The City Council is asked to make a motion with regard to the above proposed projects and initial tentative timeline.

Background/Informational

The Action Plan and supporting documents are available on the project web page. These documents are not final for construction, but a collection of area concepts, action steps, programs and policy considerations to guide improvement, activate spaces, and create a Regional Park Destination.

The indented text below includes information previously shared with the City Council and posted on the project web page. A link to the project web page and background documents is included in the attachment.

The Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan is a framework to guide improvements along the River and future design of park spaces. It is intended to create enthusiasm, and identify actions necessary to further enhance Northfield's riverfront parks into an exciting regional experience. While some actions can be implemented in the next few years, many will be longer term and may require incremental steps to complete.

Engaging with property owners and key users before advancing major improvements is important to facilitate successful implementation, and will be part of future actions. There will be opportunities to further explore how to implement the vision and to expand more year-round activity. The Action Plan is not a construction plan document and not a final design approval for park improvements.

Early Actions, Est. Years 1-5:

The Action Plan identifies steps necessary to move toward the greater vision of a regional park destination. In the early years of implementation, those steps will likely include:

Parks: Ames Park and Bridge Square emerge as early priorities for park improvements. While Ames Park will require additional design, coordination with the adjacent property owners and identifying alternate design options to accommodate the DJJD carnival event or secure a desirable alternate location, Bridge Square improvements to expand pedestrian spaces could advance to implementation more quickly.

Regional Designation and Technical Studies: Additional early effort will be necessary to pursue a regional park designation, identify and pursue potential funding streams, develop partnerships, evaluate flood related issues and study potential alternate designs for the dam.

Aesthetics: Improving how structures relate to the river and aesthetics along and adjacent to the River will be incremental and can start early. This might include cleaning up the riverbank, addressing aesthetics and considering artwork and lighting.

Connections: Steps may include enhancing connections to the River by improving public spaces that connect to the commercial district, eliminating gaps in sidewalks and trails, and pursuing design solutions to create a series of pedestrian loops that extend to both sides of the River and connect to the urban historic core of the community.

Way Finding: Developing a way finding plan and design approach for signs and kiosks, securing funding and implementing.

Alternative Options:

If the Council would like to suggest different priorities and/or timelines we would request getting specific examples identified and by year. Then, staff would take that feedback to evaluate staff capacity to implement and bring back some alternatives for consideration at a future meeting.

Financial Impacts:

On-going commitment to implementing the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan will be needed in order to move the project forward and achieve the overarching vision.

The Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan and City Council priorities will inform budget requests for 2022 and future years. Local City funding is not anticipated to be a sole source for implementation for all projects and can be used to seek matching funds.

The Action Plan creates opportunities to leverage funding from State and Federal agencies, non-profits and philanthropy. A Regional Park designation through the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails Commission, for example, opens opportunities to access MN Legacy grant dollars allocated to this program for designated Regional Parks.

Tentative Timelines:

- Implementation of the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan is intended to be a priority, based on the Strategic Plan (2021-2024) in development and anticipated for approval in June.
- Implementation will be on-going.

