



Legislation Text

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Meeting Date: May 18, 2023

To: Members of the Planning Commission

From: Mikayla Schmidt, City Planner

Riverfront Action Plan Update and Discussion.

Action Requested:

The Planning Commission receives an update from staff and the consultant team for the Riverfront Action Plan and related planning and design efforts.

Summary Report:

In 2014, the City created a Vision Plan for Bridge Square, and not quite a decade later, implementation is underway. When the City began updating its Strategic Plan, the 2018-2020 version included within the “Economic Development” Strategic Priority area a strategic initiative for “Riverfront Enhancement.” To assist in policy review and process guidance on exploring how to achieve this goal, the City Council established the Riverfront Enhancement Advisory Committee (REAC) via Resolution 2018-115 in November 2018 as a temporary committee to advise development of a Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan. The intent was to further the City’s strategic priorities, including:

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

All of these contribute to “Economic Development: A Community That’s Economically Thriving”.

The Council adopted a resolution that further established an expectation for a Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan that includes the following elements:

- 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.

In December 2020, the City Council approved the Riverfront Enhancement Action plan, 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.

The City Council approved a budget of \$100,000 for 2021 to support implementation of the Riverfront Action Plan. 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. An initial sequence was established:

- 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

Since the approval of the REAP in 2020, the City Council has continued to promote and provide resources to move a number of priority projects identified in that Plan from initial planning and concept studies toward implementation. At the same time, the City is also seeing heightened private-sector developer interest in several redevelopment sites along the Northfield Central Riverfront, including the former site of the Archer House, the former site of the Byzantine, and properties at the intersection of 5th and Water Streets.

To further support city efforts, Bruce Jacobson, Bob Close (B2), and Teresa Jensen have been asked to facilitate a comprehensive Community Outreach and Engagement process to provide information and invite public input, work that has been ongoing since Summer 2022.

B2 have subsequently been contracted to develop master plans for Riverside/Lions Park and Ames Park. These parks are connected to the riverfront and the goal is to get a shared vision of the final master plan that can be utilized to develop the parks.

B2 will assist with the community/stakeholder engagement as the master plans for the parks are developed, boards and commission, led by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB), will advise on how to create individual park master plans that align with the goals in the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan. The goal is to have the master plans adopted by Council at the end of 2023.

All of these efforts flow naturally into the development of the City's 2045-horizon Comprehensive Plan, which will support and be supported by these previous initiatives and integrate them into a comprehensive and complementary policy direction to drive implementation and integration of not only these efforts, but also the City's Racial Equity Action Plan, Climate Action Plan, Clean Energy Transition Plan, existing bicycle and pedestrian plans adopted after the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, and other initiatives underway.

Alternative Options:

N/A

Financial Impacts:

N/A

Tentative Timelines:

- ✓ 2014 - Council adopts Vision Plan for Bridge Square
- ✓ August 8, 2017 Council adoption of Strategic Plan Summary (2018-2020)
- ✓ October 9, 2018 and November 13, 2018 Council approved Resolution Establishing Riverfront Enhancement Committee and Mayoral Appointments
- ✓ December 1, 2020 - Council resolution approving Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan
- ✓ June 15, 2021 - Council approved Strategic Plan (2021-2024)
- ✓ June 15, 2021 - Council approved motion to support park priorities within the Riverfront Action Plan to include Years 1 through 5.
- ✓ October 12, 2021 - Council Update/Input on Draft Bridge Plan
- ✓ October 12 - Nov 23, 2021 - Public Input on Bridge Square Plan
- ✓ December 14, 2021 - Council - Collaborate and Refine Bridge Square Plan with Council
- ✓ December 2021 - June 2022 - Board/Commission Input on Bridge Square and State Historic Preservation Office
- ✓ Spring 2022 - EDA developed criteria and identified funding for the Riverfront Enhancement Grant program
- ✓ June 14, 2022 - City Review of Final Concept Plan
- ✓ June 21, 2022 - Adopt Final Concept Plan
- ✓ November 1, 2022 - City Council approved professional Service Agreement for Phase 1 Final Design.
- ✓ November 2022, Council approved an agreement with Barr Engineering to study the potential removal of the Ames Mill Dam
- ✓ Spring 2023 - Council authorizes staff to develop scope, schedule and budget for 2045-Horizon Comprehensive Planning efforts with consultant team (Stantec and NEOO Partners)

Upcoming:

- May 2023 - Board and commission and stakeholder input
- Next Steps Timeline to Be Determined