

## Community Development Department

222 Lewis Street  
River Falls, WI 54022  
715.425.0900  
www.rfcity.org



### PARK AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD AGENDA

January 21, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.  
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS

#### CALL TO ORDER

#### ROLL CALL

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Minutes of the December 17, 2025 meeting

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS

#### ACTION ITEMS

2. Park Impact Fees Analysis and Recommendations

#### DISCUSSION ITEMS

#### STAFF REPORTS

3. Conservation and Parks Report

#### CALENDAR

The next Park and Recreation Advisory Board meeting will be 02/18/2026 at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

#### ADJOURNMENT

***Council members may be in attendance for informational purposes only.  
No official Council action will be taken.***

**NOTE:** Any person who has a qualifying disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act that requires the meeting or materials to be in an accessible location or format may contact City Clerk Amy White at (715) 426-3408 or in person at 222 Lewis Street for accommodations. Requests for accommodations should be made at least three (3) business days in advance of the meeting. Every effort will be made to arrange accommodations.

Post: City Hall/Library/Police Department 01/16/2026

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## PARK AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES DECEMBER 17, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. CITY HALL TRAINING ROOM

### CALL TO ORDER

Meeting convened at 5:30 p.m.

### ROLL CALL

**Members Present:** Matt Janquart (Chair), Jeff Bjork (Council Rep) 5:49 p.m., Mei Mei Abdouch, Phil Galli, and Brenda Gaulke.

**Members Absent:** Melissa Pedrini and Natasha Schaefer.

**Staff Present:** Brooks Ostendorf-Conservation and Parks Manager, Erica Ellefson-Public Works Manager, Kyle Mackey-Recreation Coordinator, Levi Myers-Natural Resources Coordinator, and Brenda Rundle-Customer Service Representative.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. **MSC Gaulke/Galli approve the minutes of the Nov. 19, 2025 Park and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) meeting. Unanimous.**

### PUBLIC COMMENTS

William Hansen of the Town of River Falls appreciates local dam and hydro power to avoid line loss, and mentioned that he taught swimming at Glen Park Pool in the early 1960's.

### ACTION ITEMS

### DISCUSSION ITEMS

2. Brooks shared a history of Glen Park Pool renovations and maintenance. A leak was detected in fall 2025 that needs to be repaired. Staff recommends conducting a ground penetrating radar test and repairing the known leak in spring 2026 with the goal of opening the pool in early June as usual. If needed, additional repairs could be done in fall 2026. Because a newly constructed pool is a medium-priority, long-term project (2045), staff recommends maintaining efficient operation and maintenance of the existing pool for the next 15-20 years. This will likely include a new pool filter, pool liner, and annual rivet repairs in addition to any unexpected maintenance or repair projects. The pool operates at a financial loss, as a City service. Park Board understands that repairs need to be made but seems to encourage the City to consider an upgraded pool to be a priority, while honoring the historic bathhouse.

### STAFF REPORTS

3. Levi announced that the City was awarded a \$25,000 2026 Urban Forestry Grant and the City will match that amount. The money will be used for planting new trees and hiring a forestry intern. After a bid process, Willow River Company was selected as the City's new tree care services contractor for the next three years beginning next month. Services will include tree removal, pruning, stump grinding, and emergency response assistance. Kyle shared that online registration is open for the

winter adult drop-in basketball session. Online reservations for park shelters will open on Monday, Jan. 5 at 8 a.m.

**CALENDAR**

The next Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meeting will be Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MSC Abdouch/Galli to adjourn the meeting at 6:04 p.m. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted,



Brenda Rundle, Customer Service Representative

DRAFT

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Park and Recreation Advisory Board

**FROM:** Brooks Ostendorf, Conservation and Parks Manager

**DATE:** January 21, 2026

**TITLE:** **PARK IMPACT FEE ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Park Impact Fees, authorized under Wisconsin Statute 66.0617 and established locally by City Ordinance No. 2002-17, are collected from new development to fund the capital costs of public park facilities required to serve a growing population. While the City's informal practice has been to direct fees to the parks nearest to the developments that generated them, this approach has created imbalances in available funding between newer neighborhoods and more established areas. This memorandum provides analysis of the City's current collection and use of Park Impact Fees in order to shift to a more strategic and equitable use to better meet community needs.

Drawing on park inventories, condition assessments, and strategic priorities, this memo identifies specific short-term funding recommendations and proposes a more flexible, city-wide approach for managing Park Impact Fees moving forward. Priority projects include completing Phase 02 of the Glen Park Master Plan, implementing key elements of the Sterling Ponds Park master plan, and providing water service at DeSanctis Park to accommodate Grow To Share's move from Hoffman Park. Longer term, the development of a master plan for each City park is recommended to ensure that future Park Impact Fee investments are guided by a clear vision, informed by community input, and focused on equitable access and amenity distribution. This shift in policy will position the City to use Park Impact Fees more effectively, avoid the risk of funds expiring unused, and ensure that investments address the highest-priority needs across the park system.

### **BACKGROUND**

#### ***Park Impact Fees***

Wisconsin Stat. § 66.0617 gives cities, villages, and towns explicit authority to enact ordinances imposing impact fees (cash contributions, contributions of land or interests in land, or any other items of value) on developers of land to pay for some or all of the capital costs necessary to accommodate a development project. "Capital costs" means the costs to construct, expand, or improve certain public facilities required because of new land development. Eligible "public facilities" are highways and other transportation facilities, traffic control devices, facilities for collecting and treating sewage, facilities for collecting and treating storm and surface waters,

facilities for pumping, storing, and distributing water, parks, playgrounds and land for athletic fields, solid waste and recycling facilities, fire protection facilities, law enforcement facilities, emergency medical facilities, and libraries. "Public facilities" does not include facilities owned by a school district. Impact fees must have both an "essential nexus" to the government's land-use interest and a "rough proportionality" to the development's impact on that land-use interest. See *Sheetz v. County of El Dorado*, 144 S.Ct. 893 (2024)

In April 2002, a Facilities Needs Assessment report was published for the City of River Falls and set the basis for the imposition of parks and fire protection facilities impact fees, which was subsequently approved by Council via City Ordinance No. 2002-17. The ordinance states that impact fees "shall be placed in one or more segregated, interest-bearing accounts and shall be accounted for separately from other City funds." It also states that they should be used within 20 years after collection to pay the capital costs for which they were imposed or otherwise be refunded to the owner to which the fees were imposed. The ordinance also states that the impact fees be used "solely for the purpose of paying the proportionate costs of providing public facilities that may become necessary due to development." Relevant to this memo, Wisconsin State Statute 66.0617(6) sets the following standards for the use of Impact Fees:

- Shall bear a rational relationship to the need for new, expanded or improved public facilities that are required to serve land development.
- May not include amounts necessary to address existing deficiencies in public facilities.
- May not include expenses for operation or maintenance of a public facility.

Upon collecting park impact fees, the City has applied an internal policy to allocate those funds to Regional or Local Parks, dependent on where the development generating the fees is located. The intent being that the immediate area surrounding development will be most affected and the local park, in turn, should proportionately receive funding for improvements. The split between funds allocated to Regional and Local Parks has roughly been 40% and 60%, respectively, though there are exceptions. There are fees collected from development that cannot be tied to a specific development or neighborhood park, and are thus collected in a "Miscellaneous/All" neighborhood park category. All park impact funds also collect interest over time, which gets placed in a third "General/Regional" category. Because interest isn't generated from any particular development or geographic area it has been placed in a general category to allow for greater flexibility in where it can be spent. Table 1 summarizes fees available for each park: eight neighborhood parks have fees available while four neighborhood parks are not included on the list due to a lack of nearby development. Golf View Park is the lone park identified as having negative fees: this is related to the installation of the play structure in the park in 2007. This is indicative of the lack of new development in the surrounding area, as impact fees have not been collected at a significant rate to offset that cost.

Table 1 – Available Park Impact Fee Summary

Park Impact Fee Summary	
Park	Fees Available
Collins Park	\$13,250.48
Golf View Park	-17,735.01
Highview Meadows Park	\$96,677.07
Knollwood Park	\$18,969.97
Rolling Hills Park	\$22,371.13
Spring Creek Park	\$82,144.92
Sterling Ponds Park	\$102,726.60
Westdale Park	\$3,001.86
Whitetail Ridge Park	\$23,471.22
Misc/All	\$56,882.68
<b>LOCAL PARK TOTAL</b>	<b>\$401,761.00</b>
<b>REGIONAL PARK TOTAL</b>	<b>\$230,132.00</b>
<b>GENERAL/REGIONAL TOTAL</b>	<b>\$111,239.00</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE</b>	<b>\$743,132.00</b>

### Outdoor Recreation Plan

Completed in March 2023, the Outdoor Recreation Plan lays out a roadmap for implementing the community's vision for outdoor recreation, including how future needs and demands can be addressed within existing city parks. In this memo, seven goals listed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan have been used to guide the utilization of Park Impact Fees:

1. Maintain existing parks to continue offering a variety of amenities and activities.
2. Maintain active partnerships with the community and agencies that support recreation needs.
3. Enhance existing network of green corridors.
4. Prioritize spaces that create opportunities to connect with people and resources.
5. Balance recreational needs, social opportunities, cultural celebration, and public art opportunities into park infrastructure.
6. Provide access to all.
7. Focus maintenance and operations to ensure safe, equitable, and accessible recreational opportunities for all.

The Outdoor Recreation Plan also addresses priorities for improvements in the short (2030), medium (2035), and long (2045) term. Many of the priorities relate to the Kinni Corridor Plan, which will not be addressed as a part of this effort due to the ongoing status of the US Army Corps of Engineers' feasibility study. Of the existing parks, Sterling Ponds and Glen Park were identified as parks with short term goals with medium to high priority for implementation. Those parks will be addressed in more depth in this document. Improvements identified in the Outdoor Recreation Plan that can be addressed through Park Impact Fees include the following:

- Provision of accessible play features.
- Provision of accessible amenities.

- Non-traditional and natural elements, including pollinator gardens, natural playgrounds, and sensory gardens.
- Enhancing green corridors.

### **Master Plans**

There are 28 parks in the City but only three have master plans: Hoffman Park, Glen Park, and Sterling Ponds Park. These master plans identify short- and long-term actions that guide investment and decision making, and Park Impact Fees are a critical funding source for accomplishing those actions. Without a master plan, decision making for a park tends to be reactive rather than proactive and results in more piecemeal improvements.

A master plan provides a vision for a park that is reflective of its existing conditions while identifying opportunities for improving it based on the City's dynamic needs. Having a master plan for each City park would provide clear direction for park improvements and inform staff on how and when to appropriate Park Impact Fees. For the purposes of this memo, priority should be given to Glen Park and Sterling Ponds Park, both of which have master plans and have had some, but not all, elements of those plans implemented. Due to the ongoing Hoffman Detention Basin Study, an update to the Hoffman Park master plan should be completed before any further construction occurs. Staff intends to complete master plans for each City park to guide future improvements.

### **Park Amenities**

At a Park and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) meeting in February of 2024, there was a discussion about what the Board recommends as standard amenities for three levels of City Park (Pocket, Neighborhood, and Regional). Linear and Special-Use Parks were not specifically addressed. In summary, the board made the following recommendations for the type of amenity that should be present in each park category:

#### Pocket Parks

- Picnic tables, garbage cans, and dog bags.

#### Neighborhood Parks

- Picnic tables, garbage cans, dog bags, equitable shade\*, an accessible play structure, accessible swings, and a sporting activity item (i.e. baseball backstop, basketball hoop, etc.).

#### Regional Park

- Picnic tables, garbage cans, dog bags, equitable shade\*, an accessible play structure, accessible swings, and a sporting activity item (i.e. baseball backstop, basketball hoop, etc.), flushable toilets, water fountain, closed air shelter, a trail/path system, and sufficient parking.

*\*Note: there was no discussion at the PRAB Meeting about what defines "equitable", but the intent was to encourage the provision of shade at neighborhood and regional parks. Shade can be provided through natural means (i.e. mature canopy trees) or constructed (i.e. built shelter or canopy structure).*

The following table is an inventory of each City park relative to the recommendations made by PRAB:

Table 2 – Park Inventory Summary

PARK INVENTORY													
Park Type	Park Name	Picnic Tables	Garbage Cans	Dog Bags	Shade	Accessible Play Structure	Accessible Swings	Sporting Activity Item	Flushable Toilets	Water Fountain	Closed air shelter	Trail/Path System	Off-Street Parking
Pocket Parks	Inlow Park	-	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Corner Park	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	City Hall Plaza	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Ostness Park	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X
	North Winter Parkway	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Veterans Park	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Triangle Park	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Power Plant Park	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Neighborhood Parks	Brandan's Park	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Collins Park	X	-	-	X	-	X	X	-	-	-	X	-
	Hamilton Park	X	X	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-
	Highview Meadows Park	X	X	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	X	-
	Knollwood Park	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-
	Larson Park	X	X	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	X	X
	Rolling Hills Park	X	X	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	X	X
	Spring Creek Park	X	X	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	X	-
	Sterling Ponds Park	X	X	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	X
	Wells Park	X	X	-	X	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-
Westdale Park	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Regional Parks	DeSantis Park	X	X	X	X	-	X	X	X	-	X	X	X
	Glen Park	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Hoffmann	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Linear Parks	Mound Park	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-
	River Hills Park	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-
	Kinnickinnic Pathway	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X
	Heritage Park	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	X	-	X	X
Special Use Park	Whitetail Ridge Park	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	X	X
	Golf View Park	X	X	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	X
	River Falls Dog Park	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X

While the recommendations are reasonable for new parks, it is worth considering the financial implications of providing those amenities at each existing park in the City. The physical characteristics of a site may also preclude the provision of an amenity from being installed: for example, Brandan's Park is only 0.8 acres and may not have the room to accommodate all the prescribed amenities. PRAB's recommendations should serve as a goal addressed in each master plan, in which analysis of the opportunities and constraints of each site – in addition to community feedback – will direct which amenities are feasible for the site. PRAB did not assign priority to the order in which these amenities should be incorporated, nor did they assign priority to which parks should be improved as a part of this exercise. Further discussions need to be had with PRAB to determine these priorities.

Accessibility needs to be addressed at the master plan level to ensure that amenities are integrated into the design of each park and are not added on simply to meet a requirement. As currently designed, many of the playgrounds in the City do not have an accessible entrance, surfacing, or play features. It is possible to add additional structures on to existing play areas, however this would not be an inclusive approach as it would be segregating areas by user's capabilities. Prior to adding accessible equipment to existing play structures that were not designed accordingly, they should be re-assessed at the master plan level in the context of other amenities and site conditions.

## **2025-2026 Strategic Initiatives**

City Council establishes and implements strategic initiatives to create a roadmap for allocating resources, guiding policy, and measuring progress. Workplans for the strategic initiatives are drafted in two-year cycles to reflect the vision and priorities for the community and organization. The adopted 2025-2027 Strategic Initiatives includes 11 priority projects and includes Glen Park Phase 2, which falls under the Connected Community strategic priority. It is clear that the organization, community, committee members, and Council are in alignment with implementing Phase 02 of the Glen Park Master Plan and availability of Park Impact Fee funds presents an opportunity to readily do so.

## **DISCUSSION**

### ***Glen Park***

#### *Description and Inventory*

Glen Park is centrally located within River Falls and is one of the City's largest regional parks. It is sited at the intersection of the Kinnickinnic River and the South Fork of the Kinnickinnic River, with the former Lake Louise basin to the west, and thus benefits from water along three sides of its boundaries. Residential neighborhoods surround the park opposite the river to the north, along the east side, and to the south. To the west beyond the former Lake Louise basin is city-owned land, utilities (wastewater treatment plant; municipal power plant), and open space.

Established in 1898, Glen Park is the oldest park in River Falls and offers a scenic, naturalistic setting for park visitors. It is broadly divided into two topographic areas: 1) the "upper area" is a generally flat plateau approximately 200 feet above the Kinnickinnic River and former Lake Louise basin where large mature trees provide a substantial canopy; and 2) the "lower area", with wooded slopes and nature trails that weave throughout. The variety of natural resources within the park offers different opportunities for visitors to interact with nature, including picnicking, hiking, and gathering.

Glen Park also offers a variety of active recreational uses. One of the most popular amenities is the municipal swimming pool. Built in 1934, the swimming pool continues to be a local highlight in the summer, and the bathhouse was recently renovated. The splash pad was completed in 2020 along with a pavilion, additional parking, and vehicular entry drive. Other athletic features in the park include a basketball court, sand volleyball court, and four pickleball courts. Additional amenities include picnic areas, river access, a pavilion structure with bathrooms and storm shelter, an open-air picnic shelter, and a bathroom structure.

There is a series of four independent play areas that offer different types of play structures for a range of ages. The 2015 Master Plan and subsequent 2017 Preliminary Design Package for the park consolidate these four play areas into one centralized location just east of the pavilion. The curbs for this play area have been poured but only the tot lot equipment (ages 2-5) and some safety surfacing has been installed. The intent is for the play area to have a nature-theme.

Access into the park from the north is available by way of W Cascade Avenue and the Swinging Bridge: this access point was proposed to be improved in the master plan. This route was highlighted to be improved as pedestrian traffic is likely to increase following implementation of

the Kinni Corridor and Main Street projects. It is also intended to provide a safer pedestrian connection to Glen Park for those traveling from the Riverwalk Pathway and the west side of the Kinnickinnic River.

**Master Plan**

The City initiated the Glen Park Master Plan in 2013 to create a long-term vision that addressed circulation, access, activities, and future maintenance needs of the park. With guidance from city staff, stakeholders, consultant HKGi, and extensive community input, the plan was finalized and adopted in June 2015. The master plan outlines improvements to better serve a growing community while incorporating feedback gathered from open houses, surveys, and public hearings. It also provides a comprehensive analysis of the Glen Park site, highlighting the wooded nature of the site, relationships between park features, circulation, and issues and opportunities for the park. One of the primary concerns was access into and out of the park and circulation legibility.

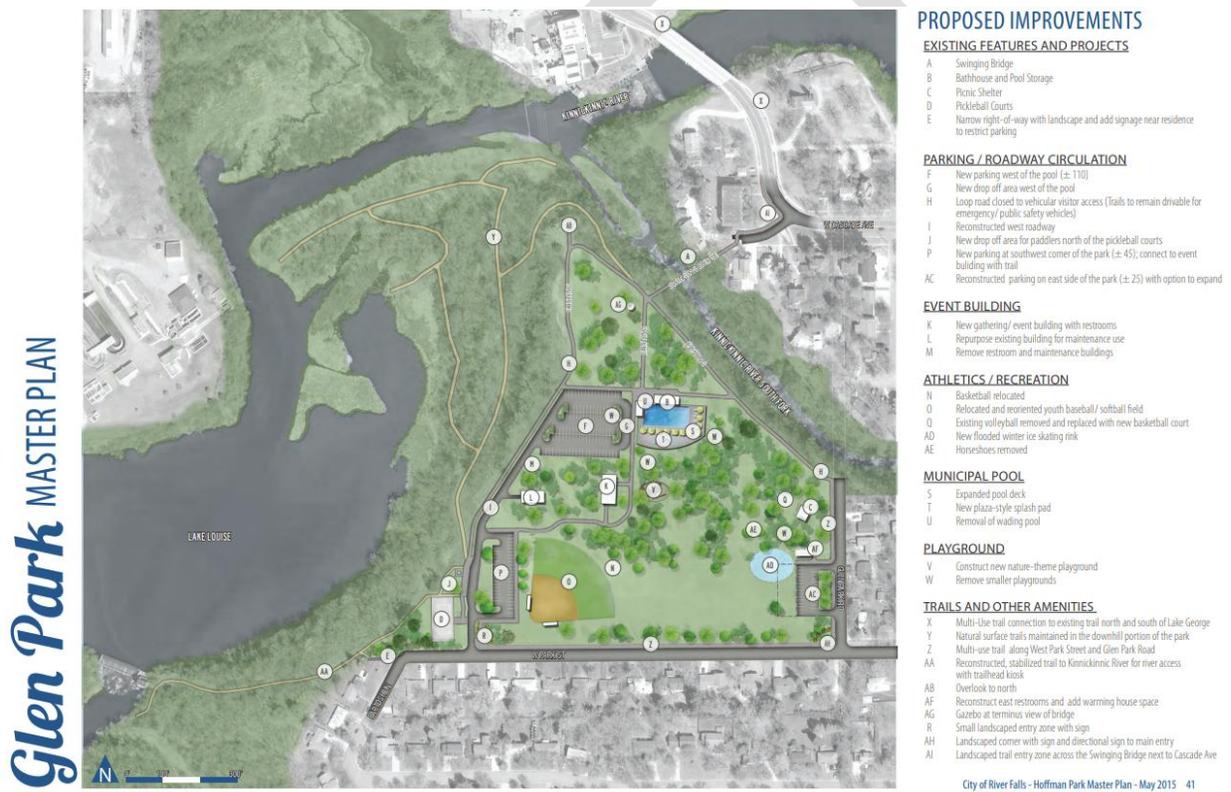


Figure 1: 2015 Glen Park Master Plan

City Council later decided to implement much of the plan in a single coordinated project, funded in part through the Capital Improvement Program and supported by a FEMA grant for a safe room integral to the new event building. Between 2017 and 2018, the project team refined the renovation plans through public meetings, input sessions, and collaboration with various city boards and committees. Cost estimates showed that full implementation of all improvements would exceed the \$4.4 million budget, prompting prioritization of key components. PRAB identified the Glen Park Pavilion, parking and trail adjustments, a splash pad, western trail loop improvements, and conversion of an existing building for maintenance as the top priorities.

Additional features, such as a creative play area and picnic shelter, were listed as secondary priorities if funding became available. Staff and consultants made further modifications to reduce costs while preserving the plan's overall vision, and in March 2018 the revised preliminary plans received favorable consensus from PRAB and later approval by City Council for the final design of the renovation.

The remaining improvements from the 2017 plan include pool reconstruction, a multi-use sport court, a multi-purpose park building, nature-themed play area, overlook and improved/restored lower trail connections, watercraft unloading area and trailhead at West Park Street, and additional parking and circulation. The short-term goals listed in the Outdoor Recreation Plan for Glen Park include completion of Phase 2, which includes the completion of the play area, construction of a multi-use sports court, construction of a multi-purpose park building, and access improvements from W Cascade Avenue.

### *Recommendation*

Completion of Phase 02 of the Glen Park Master Plan should be prioritized. This will include the following work:

- Removal of the existing bathroom structure, open air pavilion, and associated pavement.
- Removal of sand volleyball court.
- Removal of all play structures, not including what was installed as a part of Phase 01.
- Removal of existing trees as needed to construct multi-purpose park building.
- Construction of multi-use sport court.
- Construction of multi-purpose park building.
- Completion of play area, including poured-in-place safety surfacing and playground equipment.
- Construction of paved pathways to connect the proposed amenities to the existing trail system.
- Improved access from W Cascade Avenue.

### ***Sterling Ponds Park***

#### *Description and Inventory*

Sterling Ponds Park is a neighborhood park located in the Sterling Ponds Neighborhood, one of the newer communities in the City. Sterling Ponds Park features a playground, basketball half-court, and sand volleyball court surrounded by an open grass area. The site also includes benches and picnic tables, along with a small mound that is used for sledding. There are trees planted throughout the park but are not yet large enough to provide significant shade. There are no paved trails in the park and none to connect the various park amenities.

The park is also adjacent to an undeveloped 5.12 acre outlot dedicated to the public for park space. The total acreage of the developed and undeveloped outlot is 9.16 acres. The park borders the Sterling Ponds subdivision to the northeast, Sterling Ponds Corporate Park to the northwest, STH 35 to the southwest, and a newer phase of the Sterling Ponds subdivision to the southeast.

The Sterling Ponds Neighborhood has experienced significant changes since it was first planned in the early 2000s. Originally envisioned entirely for residential development, shifting market conditions in the late 2000s led the City to designate part of the area for the Sterling Ponds Corporate Park, which opened in 2014. While the 2003 preliminary plat showed about 22–23 acres of parkland, much of that land was later reconfigured, leaving two dedicated park outlots totaling 9.16 acres, recorded in 2009 and 2017. Since annexation in 2002, the neighborhood has steadily grown with multiple housing phases, a church and pavilion, and a 60-unit apartment complex, with additional mixed housing. Though not a part of the Sterling Ponds Neighborhood, Brookgreen Townhomes are currently under construction: this development is west of STH 35 but will add 100 units that will have access via pedestrian trail to Sterling Ponds.

Although the only dedicated public parkland in the neighborhood is Sterling Ponds Park, other forms of open space exist throughout the area. These include stormwater infrastructure corridors and Sterling Hill Disc Golf Course. Additionally, Sterling Heights Townhomes maintains a small stormwater pond and a 0.41-acre private playground as part of its developer's agreement. While the park itself was built in 2012, construction of the surrounding community was recently completed and the overall composition of the neighborhood is changing. A master plan for the park was completed in 2020 to address the needs of the growing community and adapt the park to those needs.



### *2020 Park Plan*

The Sterling Ponds Park Plan provides an extensive analysis of the neighborhood, demographics, and existing park, noting that the size of the park – including the developed and undeveloped portions of the park – exceeds what would typically be expected of a neighborhood like Sterling Ponds. The plan concludes that the City's resources should be focused on providing high-quality park features within the existing park space rather than minimally developing areas that don't currently have any amenities. The City's analysis, coupled with a public engagement process, determined that the park should incorporate the following:

- Picnic Shelter
- Paved trails
- Additional playground equipment
- Benches
- Signage
- Upgraded Berm Trees and Landscaping

Given the age of existing trees, there is currently a lack of shade and therefore doesn't meet the minimum requirement set forth by PRAB. Additionally, the features that are present are not accessible due to the lack of paved trails.

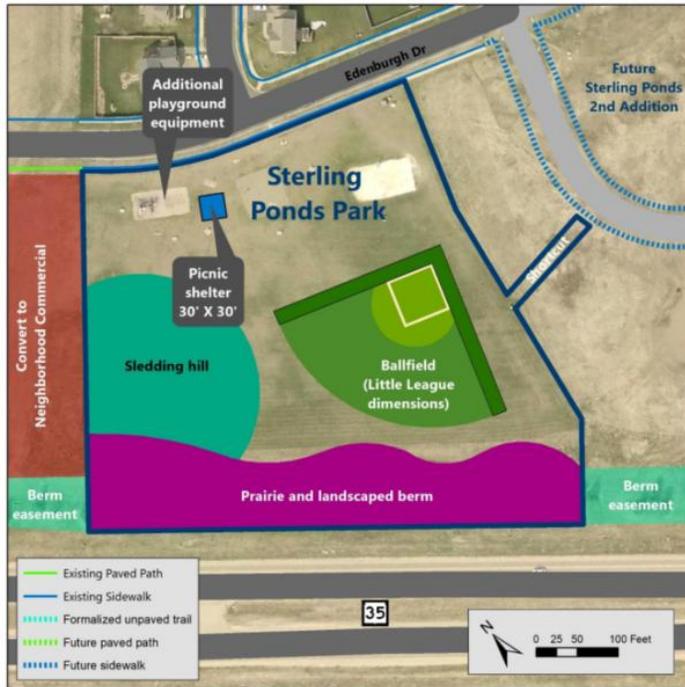


Figure 2: 2020 Sterling Ponds Park Plan

### Recommendation

The City should pursue completion of the Sterling Ponds Park Plan, prioritizing a picnic shelter and an accessible trail. Consideration should be given to upgrading site landscaping with an emphasis on pollinator gardens and tree plantings: additional trees on the berm will further screen the park from STH 35.

The Sterling Ponds Park Plan also includes paving a trail from Kettering Road to Huppert Street along the Old Jersey Road alignment past the Sterling Hill Disc Golf Course. Staff recommends paving this trail when Huppert Street is urbanized to provide an accessible connection to a future trail on Huppert Street. The existing gravel roadway has been suitable for providing access and parking for the Sterling Hill Disc Golf Course but should be improved/paved in the future.

### DeSanctis Park

The City acquired DeSanctis Park through the DeSanctis Family Trust by way of assistance of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Urban Green Space Program grant in 1995. The conditions of the associated development agreement stipulated the park should be a family-oriented park with no organized or competitive sport activities. The DNR grant requires that all uses of the park be publicly accessible and consistent with the intent of providing public outdoor recreation. For those reasons the park became the City's designated passive park, emphasizing low-impact recreational activities in a naturalized setting.

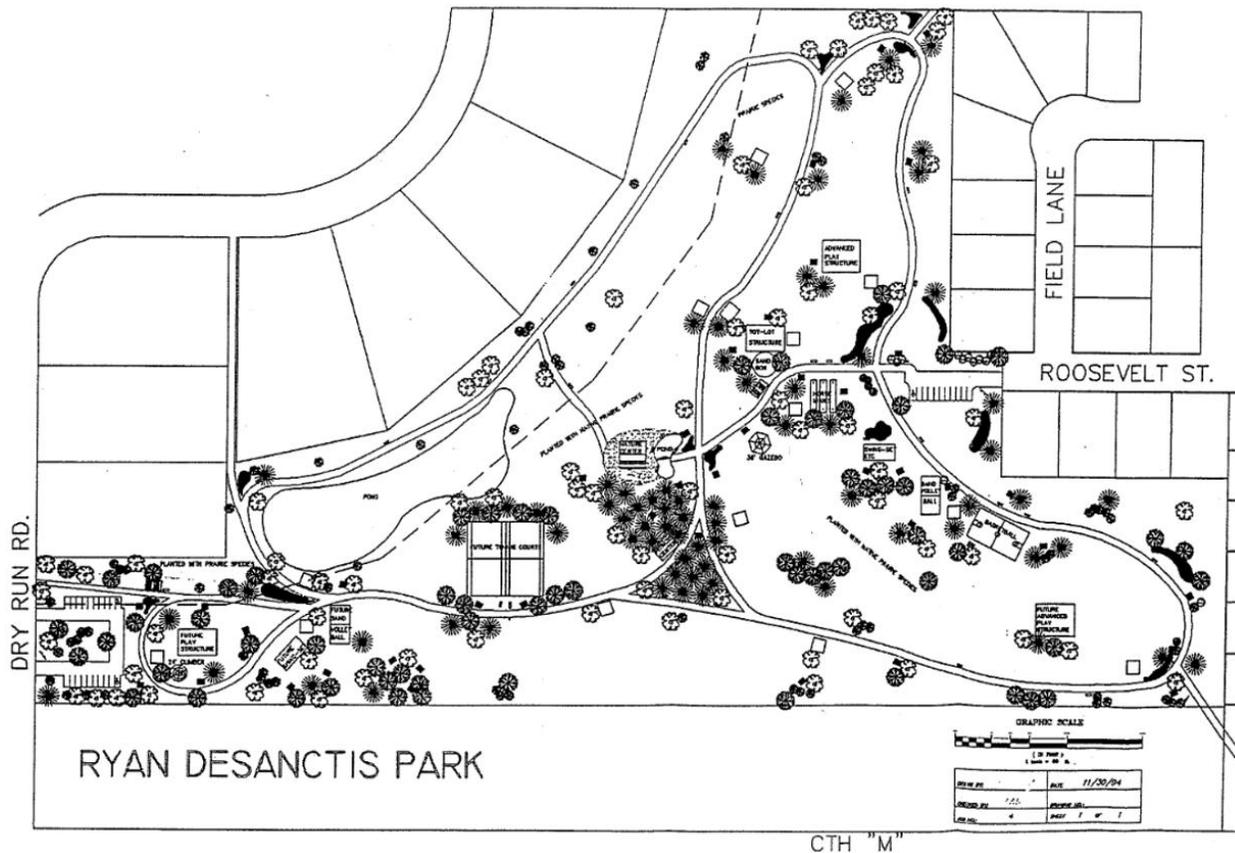


Figure 3: 1994 DeSanctis Park Plan

The 1994 Concept Plan for DeSanctis Park illustrated a variety of amenities throughout the park that would have made it a more active park, including several volleyball courts, tennis courts, basketball court, several play structures, and a nature center. While a basketball court and play structure have been constructed, tennis and volleyball courts have not been installed while Glover School House has replaced the nature center. Since the original 1994 plan, several improvements have been made, including:

- 1999: the City, with the services of the US Air Force 943<sup>rd</sup> Civil Engineering Squadron, graded the park to create level fields, ponds, and berms, including a sledding hill.
- 2000-2001: a new 1.1 mile-long pathway system was constructed.
- 2003: the Glover School House was moved to the park.
- 2007: a prairie was planted in the northeast section of the park.
- 2010: a play structure and a basketball half-court was installed.
- 2021: in conjunction with the construction of Milltown Residences on the DeSanctis property, a new parking lot was constructed at the south end of the park and the Glover School House was fully renovated.

The next improvement to the park will include the move of Grow To Share from Hoffman Park to the east end of DeSanctis Park. In July 2025, PRAB and City Council approved a new lease agreement for Grow To Share to create a community garden at the east side of DeSanctis Park,

acknowledging that a community garden falls within the passive nature of the park. Relocating to DeSanctis Park will provide Grow to Share greater certainty for future planning and allow the organization to continue offering gardening, education, and food donation programs while aligning with City goals for recreation, partnerships, and resource stewardship. Planning has begun for the move, though implementation of the plans will not begin until Spring of 2026. Additionally, a park shelter with a safe room in the park is currently a CIP item slated for design in 2027 and construction in 2028. This project is planned to be funded through a FEMA grant and TID #16, not by Park Impact Fees, though the availability of grants through FEMA for future projects is currently uncertain.



Figure 4: Grow To Share Leased Premises at DeSanctis Park

#### *Recommendation*

The lease agreement between the City and Grow To Share states that the City will provide water service to the leased premises, which Grow To Share will need in advance of their first growing season in summer of 2026. The City shall complete water line service to the Grow To Share community garden by spring of 2026.

#### **Spring Creek Park**

##### *Description and Inventory*

A 1.3 acre neighborhood park located within the Spring Creek Estates Subdivision. The park includes a play structure, basketball half-court, bike racks, and seating. The park is accessible via a paved pedestrian trail from Kimberly Circle to the west and Greenwood Valley Drive to the east. Aside from the accessways, the park is surrounded by single-family residential homes.

The paved trail runs east-west through the park: all park amenities are on the south side of the trail, while the north side of the trail is lawn area with a drainage swale running parallel to the trail. There is also a swale on the east side of the park, between the swings and the eastern-most residences. Swales excepted, the park is generally flat with open lawn throughout. There are several benches and picnic tables, mounted on concrete pads scattered throughout the park, in addition to a bike rack and two garbage cans. Large canopy trees are located throughout the park and provide shade for the amenities.

The play structure and swing structure are in separate areas: the play structure is contained by a modular curb system while the swing structure is in a mulch area with no containment. Neither area is accessible, but the play structure does have a path connected to it, albeit with no accessible ramp. The swing structure was added to the park in 2021.

The park's residential context creates an intimate and secluded setting offset from the adjacent roads. Mature trees within the park help buffer the park from the adjacent houses and provide sufficient shade for park uses. Aside from paved surfaces and the playground, the park is mostly open lawn area which provides flexibility in use but requires frequent maintenance. There is opportunity for converting lawn area to unmown area, ornamental landscape, or native restoration area, especially in the swale areas. While there are ADA accessibility issues – there are no accessible features or access to the playground structure - all the existing park amenities are in good condition.

Additionally, there are 56 acres of dedicated park land within the Spring Creek Estates Plat, which includes trail access to the Rocky Branch Creek. Trails within these areas are accessed via trailheads at Spring Creek Drive, Greenwood Valley Drive and Michael Lane, as well as Devin Lane. Trail entrances are paved for portions but are largely compacted, unpaved trails.

### *Recommendation*

While the park has \$82,144.92 in available funds, no park impact fees should be utilized at this time. There are no specific priorities or recommendations outlined in the Outdoor Recreation Plan for the park and the park currently meets most of the PRAB's recommendations. A master plan should be created to direct future park improvements, including addressing ADA accessibility upgrades. Improvements to trails within the Spring Creek Estates Plat should also be studied in the master plan.

### ***Highview Meadows Park***

#### *Description and Inventory*

Highview Meadows Park is a neighborhood park within the Highview Meadows subdivision on the east side of River Falls. There are several recreation amenities, including a backstop, horseshoe court, basketball half-court, in addition to a play structure with swings. The backstop and basketball court were added in 2013. There are several picnic tables, benches, and a covered

pavilion. With a high point of 1112', the park is the highest in the City and provides unique views of the surrounding landscape. The park is essentially a plateau, with a generally flat open space of 4 acres with moderate to steep slopes that define the remaining three sides of the park. The north side of the park is bordered by a path that runs east-west. The park is centrally located within the development and is surrounded by housing. The slopes of the park are planted with a native prairie mix with a 12' mown trail that navigates the slopes. Adolescent trees are planted throughout the park and a community orchard with a variety of fruiting trees is planted on the west slope.

The lone trail in the park is limited to the northern-most portion of the park and serves as the pedestrian entrance from the east and west sections of the Highview Meadows development. While it serves as the entrance to the park, there are no paved connections to any park amenity and therefore no amenities within the park are ADA accessible. Additionally, a paved loop trail would provide more access to viewpoints on the south side of the park. While there is a playground with swings, neither is currently ADA accessible and therefore does not meet PRAB's minimum requirements for park amenities.

*Recommendation*

While the park has \$96,677.07 in available funds, no park impact fees should be utilized at this time. There are no specific priorities or recommendations outlined in the Outdoor Recreation Plan for the park and the park currently meets most of the PRAB's recommendations. A master plan should be created to direct future park improvements, including addressing accessibility and providing a paved loop within the park.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

There is currently \$743,132 available in Park Impact Fees to fund projects at City parks. The following table is a summary of the anticipated costs for completing the recommended projects at Glen Park, Sterling Ponds Park, and DeSanctis Park:

*Table 3 – Cost Estimates for Priority Park Projects*

Cost Estimates				
Park	Project Description	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Notes
Glen Park	Playground	\$575,000.00	Park Impact Fees - \$575,000	Includes equipment, poured-in-place safety surfacing, shipping, and installation
	Multi-Use Sport Court	\$65,000	Park Impact Fees - \$65,000	45'x76' Court - Includes poured-in-place concrete slab, play tiles, basketball hoops, shipping, and installation
	Multi-Use Park Building	\$250,000.00	Park Impact Fees - \$250,000.00	20'x44' structure with 16'x16' enclosed area - includes materials, utilities, and installation
	Cascade Avenue Trail Connection	\$50,000	Park Impact Fees - \$50,000	
	Park Landscaping	\$8,000	Park Impact Fees - \$8,000	Tree planting, pollinator gardens at east entry
Sterling Ponds Park	Picnic Shelter	\$75,000	Park Impact Fees - \$75,000	24'x34' gable structure with concrete slab
	Looped Trail	\$200,000	TID #10 - \$120,000 WIDNR Recreation Trails Program Grant	10'-wide asphalt trail, 1000 linear feet
	Park Landscaping	\$5,000	Park Impact Fees - \$5,000	Tree planting, ornamental planting
DeSanctis Park	Water Service to Grow To Share Community Garden	\$15,000	Park Impact Fees - \$15,000	Includes extending water service from the water main on Roosevelt to the NW Corner of GTS's leased area.

*Note: estimated costs are based on input from City staff, solicited quotes from manufacturers, and recent completed projects. Final costs are dependent on final approved designs and are subject to change.*

Completing each of those projects would exceed the amount of Park Impact Fees available at this time. The current 2024-2028 Capital Improvement Plan lists an additional \$120,000 available from Tax Increment District #10 to fund improvements at Sterling Ponds Park. Additionally, grant opportunities are available, such as the WIDNR Recreation Trails Program Grant which can fund up to \$100,000 with a 20% local cost share. If only Park Impact Fee funding is available, the following projects should be prioritized:

- 1) Glen Park Playground - \$575,000
- 2) Glen Park Multi-Use Sport Court - \$65,000
- 3) Glen Park Landscaping - \$8,000
- 4) Sterling Ponds Park Picnic Shelter - \$75,000
- 5) Sterling Ponds Landscaping - \$5,000
- 6) DeSanctis Park Water Service - \$15,000

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It has been an unofficial City policy that Park Impact Fees be collected and earmarked for parks within the general vicinity of where development occurs. This practice is not dictated by State nor City statute, nor has it been formally adopted by any City board (City Council, Park and Recreation Board, etc.). Since the ordinance was adopted in 2002, parks in older, more developed neighborhoods are not collecting fees at the same rate as parks in newer developments, thus creating an imbalance in which parks receive updates. Additionally, a park that is only 15-20 years old – or has amenities that are less than 20 years old – may not need any improvements beyond routine maintenance, which could potentially result in the loss of funds (if not used within 20 years) or adding amenities for the sake of using the funds. An older park in an older neighborhood may need updates but have little to no impact fees available due to no new development nearby. More flexibility in how Park Impact Fees are utilized would allow the City to assess needs on a park-by-park basis and prioritize improvements accordingly. It is Staff's recommendation to have Park Impact Fees collected in a singular fund that can be utilized for any park, regardless of where the fees were collected from. Following the direction laid out in this memo, priority for which parks receive Park Impact Fee funds will be guided by the Outdoor Recreation Plan, community input, and a future PRAB workshop.

At the time of this memo there is a total of \$743,132 available in Park Impact Fees to fund projects at City parks. While every park in the City could benefit from improvements, projects have been identified in the Capital Improvement Plan and priorities have been set in the Outdoor Recreation Plan as well as Council's Strategic Initiatives for 2025-2027. Therefore, it is Staff's recommendation that available funds should be focused towards completing the following projects:

1. Glen Park – Playground, Multi-Use Sport Court, Multi-Use Building, Cascade Avenue Trail Connection, Landscaping
2. Sterling Ponds Park - Picnic Shelter, Landscaping
3. DeSanctis Park – Water service to Grow to Share Community Garden

Once these projects are complete and additional park master plans are completed, needs and prioritization therein will determine where impact fee funds are next utilized.

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City of  
**RIVER FALLS**

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

**FROM:** Brooks Ostendorf, Conservation and Parks Manager

**DATE:** January 21, 2026

**TITLE:** Conservation and Parks Report

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This staff report is specific to the Conservation and Parks Division.

**I) General Update**

- a. Monthly Comm Dev Director's Report has been included in the PRAB packet and will continue to be included moving forward.
- b. In the next couple of months Staff anticipates receiving conceptual plans for development at the proposed annexation of the Johnson property. The development will be ~50 acres and anticipate a 4-5 acre park to be included. PRAB should think about goals for this park, including layout of the park (one large park, several smaller parks, linear park, etc.), type of park (active, passive, natural, etc.), and desired amenities.



## **II) Natural Resources Report**

- a. The Prairie Enthusiasts have been working on buckthorn removal at Foster Cemetery and have completed several rounds of burning buckthorn debris.

## **III) Forestry Report**

- a. Tree removal and tree maintenance has begun throughout the City. Willow River is removing trees larger than 19-inches, the City is removing trees smaller than 19-inches unless conditions inhibit their ability to do so. The City has also begun tree pruning.

## **IV) Recreation Report**

- a. Online reservations for campsites in the 2026 season will open on Monday, February 2nd at 9:00am. (Season is from April 15th-October 15th)
- b. Summary of shelter reservations opening on Monday, January 5th:
  - i. 24 reservations within the first 4 minutes of registration opening. 65 in the first 18 minutes. 82 in the first 40 minutes.
  - ii. \$18,540 in revenue from shelter reservations made on opening day (January 5th).
  - iii. As of 1/15/26:
    1. 145 reservations for the Glen Park Pavilion from 2/1/26-12/31/26.
    2. 50 reservations for the Hoffman Park Storm Shelter from 2/1/26-12/31/26.
    3. 35 reservations for the Hoffman Park Octagon shelter from 2/1/26-12/31/26.
    4. 14 reservations for the Glover Station Schoolhouse from 2/1/26-12/31/26.
    5. 17 reservations for the Glen Park Open-Air Shelter from 2/1/26-12/31/26.
    6. 3 reservations for the Hoffman Park Open-Air Shelter from 2/1/26-12/31/26.

## Introduction

This report is provided monthly to update the Plan Commission, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, and other interested parties on Community Development efforts of the past month as it relates to the City's Strategic Initiatives and the Department work plan.

## 2025 Community Development Major Projects

\*Denotes a Council Strategic Initiative

### CONNECTED COMMUNITY

#### **Kinnickinnic River Corridor Plan Phase I: Complete USACE Feasibility Study and continue design and access planning work with the National Park Service\***

- USACE is working internally to complete the Feasibility Study review. Council workshop is set for January 13, 2026.

#### **Safe Streets Action\***

- Task Force Meeting # 2 was held on Monday, December 1<sup>st</sup>.
- A Safe Streets for all public open house was held Thursday, December 11<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Housing code amendments as part of the Comprehensive Plan implementation**

- Staff have drafted potential ordinance amendments to implement the Housing Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Plan Commission discussed the proposed amendments at a workshop on December 2, 2025 and directed staff to bring them to the next regular Plan Commission meeting.

#### **Locust Street design**

- Preliminary roadway design is complete. Staff is reviewing to determine feasibility of project and based on cost estimates may recommend reducing the project to a maintenance/pedestrian/emergency services trail and watermain only.

#### **Mapping**

- Map of [available sites](#) for development

### ECONOMIC VITALITY

#### **Downtown Project\***

- Staff are conducting an inventory of opportunities and issues to understand existing conditions. As part of this effort, Toole Design is analyzing the Riverwalk and the alley between Main Street and Second Street for opportunities and challenges related to alley usage, business access, utility relocation, and placemaking. The outcome of the study will include recommendations for future usage, improved business access, utility locations, stormwater management, wayfinding, and placemaking both during and after the reconstruction of downtown public infrastructure.
- Staff are continuing to work with Merchant Macintyre on potential downtown reconstruction grant funding sources, primarily a Federal Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant.

#### **Continued Infill in Corporate Parks/Innovation Center Expansion\***

- Council approved the sale of a lot in the Sterling Ponds Corporate Park
- Work with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) continues on the grant to expand the Innovation Center.
- With the help of Merchant McIntyre, the City submitted a Rural Business Development Grant for the St. Croix Valley Business Innovation Center.

#### **Ensure sustained (re)development of the City from the prospect stage through construction**

- Brookgreen – Occupancy granted for Buildings 1, 2, 3 and Clubhouse. Buildings 4-10 are under construction.
- Oak Hill – 1 CO issued.
- Construction for the Sycamore Two senior housing and 4 duplexes project has begun.
- Cinnaire Solutions applied for Specific Implementation Plan approval for the 50-unit income-based housing in the Mann Valley Residential neighborhood. Plan Commission reviewed the request on December 2, 2025 and forwarded it to Council with a favorable recommendation.

- An annexation petition was submitted by the Delbert and Elaine Johnson Trusts for approximately 55 acres south of County Highway M at County Highway U and 1060<sup>th</sup> Street. Plan Commission reviewed the petition at their meeting on December 2, 2025 and forwarded it to Council with a favorable recommendation.

<b>BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED</b>				
<b>Permit Type</b>	<b>December</b>	<b>YTD</b>	<b>Permit Value December</b>	<b>Permit Value YTD</b>
Building Permits	9	287	\$6,874,000	\$78,109,000
New Home Permits	0	68	\$0	\$18,899,750

## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

### Examine Impact Fees\*

- Finance Dept is working with a consultant to examine impact fees for development

### Economic Development

- The Economic Development Manager is a member of RFEDC, WEDA, River Falls Chamber, and St. Croix Valley Innovation Center Management Committee.

## QUALITY MUNICIPAL SERVICES

### Library Remodel\*

- Phase I is substantially complete and included new office spaces and much of the main floor.
- Phase II includes conference room expansion and the Teen Center and Children’s room and is in progress.

### Fire Station Remodel\*

- Council approved entering into a construction contract with BCI Construction at their September 23 meeting.
- The contractor expects to start demolition of the old Police Department area of the building in late January.

### Hoffman Basin Study

- The consultant provided a final copy of the Hoffman Basin Study.

### Conservation and Parks Division

- The City was awarded the 2026 Urban Forestry Grant from the WIDNR in the amount of \$25,000, which the City will match. The grant will fund tree planting efforts and updating our tree inventory.
- Council approved entering a contract with Willow River Company for the City’s Tree Care Services. The contract is a three year term from 2026 to 2028.

### Division Street crosswalks

- Staff is working with UW-Madison to develop conceptual plans for improved pedestrian crossings on East and West Division Street to provide safer access to DeSanctis and Hoffman Parks, respectively.

### WIDNR Urban Non-Point Source Pollution grant

- MSA Professional Services is completing a City-wide phosphorus model to document compliance with our stormwater MS4 Permit.
- City staff performed infiltration testing throughout the City to be included in the phosphorus model

### Stewardship of Public Infrastructure

- Staff is preparing the 2026 Mill and Overlay bidding and construction documents. The project is expected to mill and overlay portions of Paulson Road that are significantly deteriorated.

The Community Development Department oversees the [Plan Commission](#), [Parks and Recreation Advisory Board](#), [Business Improvement District Board](#), [Historic Preservation Commission](#), [City Board of Appeals](#), [Downtown Design Review Committee](#), [Extraterritorial Zoning Committee \(ETZ\)](#), [Extra Territorial Board of Appeals](#), and [River Falls Economic Development Corporation](#).