

REPORT PREPARED FOR:  
CITY OF REDWOOD FALLS, MINNESOTA

# 2015 ALEXANDER RAMSEY PARK MASTER PLAN

REDWOOD COUNTY, MINNESOTA



AUGUST 1, 2015



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to the following agencies and individuals for their support and involvement in the Alexander Ramsey Park Master Planning Project:

### CITY OF REDWOOD FALLS

Keith Muetzel	City Administrator
Jackie Edwards	Parks and Recreation Director
Jim Doering	Public Works Project Coordinator
Paul Hagert	Parks and Recreation Maintenance Superintendent

### PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Darcy Josephson	Chair
Vonnie Roberts	
Matt Smith	
Jeannie Prescott	
Chris Omtevedt	

### FRIENDS OF THE PARK BOARD

Vonnie Roberts	President
Corrine Gertsema	Vice President
Theresa Oberloh	Secretary
Gail Ripka	Treasurer
Gary Bestmann	
Lisa Hansen	
Cheryl Davis	
Brenda Joines	
Gordy Jensen	

### CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Corey Theis	Mayor
Paul DeBlieck	First Ward Council Member
Mike Salmon	Second Ward Council Member
Bob VanHee	Third Ward Council Member
John T. Buckley	At-large Council Member
Jim Sandgren	At-large Council Member

### PLANNING TEAM

I+S Group, Inc.

## PROPOSER AND IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES

### REDWOOD FALLS PARKS AND RECREATION:

The mission of the Redwood Falls Parks and Recreation Department is to provide quality facilities and programs for all. Quality Parks and Recreation Programming enhances economic development, community crime prevention, and adds to the quality of life for ALL residents and visitors of the community.

We would like to achieve a “community climate” of personal wellness, and mutual respect. Community facilities and parks are used by citizens of all ages participating in meaningful recreation activities. Facilities are well cared for due to a systematic plan for immediate care and crucial long-term maintenance. All citizens will be welcomed and encouraged to utilize the park system and participate in the City Recreation programs.

### FRIENDS OF THE PARK

Together we work to gather funds through private donations and annual fundraising events to help maintain and improve Alexander Ramsey Park. Join us as we preserve and protect Ramsey Park so generations to come can discover the welcoming beauty of our Park.

### MN PARKS AND TRAILS COUNCIL

Exists to acquire, protect, and enhance all critical land for the public’s use and benefit. [www.parksandtrails.org](http://www.parksandtrails.org)

### TATANKA BLUFFS

Their mission is to create vibrant, prosperous corridor stretching along the Minnesota River and across Redwood and Renville Counties that teems with economic, cultural and recreational opportunities because citizens repeatedly join hands to strengthen and share its unique assets. [www.tatankabluffs.com](http://www.tatankabluffs.com)

### Contact:

For more information on this plan, contact:

Jackie Edwards  
Parks and Recreation Director, City of Redwood Falls, MN  
507.644.2333  
[jedwards@ci.redwood-falls.mn.us](mailto:jedwards@ci.redwood-falls.mn.us)

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## INTRODUCTION

### HISTORY

Alexander Ramsey Park is the largest municipal park in Minnesota. With current additions to the original 217 acres transferred by the State of Minnesota in July 1957, Alexander Ramsey Park now encompasses 256 acres which extends up to Lake Redwood.

The Park was named after Alexander Ramsey, the first Territorial Governor when the territory was established in 1849 and Second Governor of the State of Minnesota from 1860-1863. Alexander Ramsey was also a United States Senator for the State of Minnesota and was also appointed the Secretary of War in President Hayes' Cabinet. Alexander Ramsey Park was founded as a State Park in 1911 and was dubbed "The Little Yellowstone of Minnesota". Governor Eberhart appointed Joseph Tyson as the first superintendent of "Ramsey" Park in 1912. A special anthem was written for the park in 1919 titled "The Ramsey Park March".



In 1902, A.C. Burmeister built a dam on the Redwood River which was intended for hydroelectric power production. Mr. Burmeister was quoted in the May 9, 1900 Edition of the Redwood Gazette *"The idea is to dam the River at a point 100 feet south of the bridge. It is to be built high enough to flood all of the land that is to be purchased, and hence will form a beautiful lake, which is to be stocked with fish, and which can be used for boating, bathing and other purpose"*

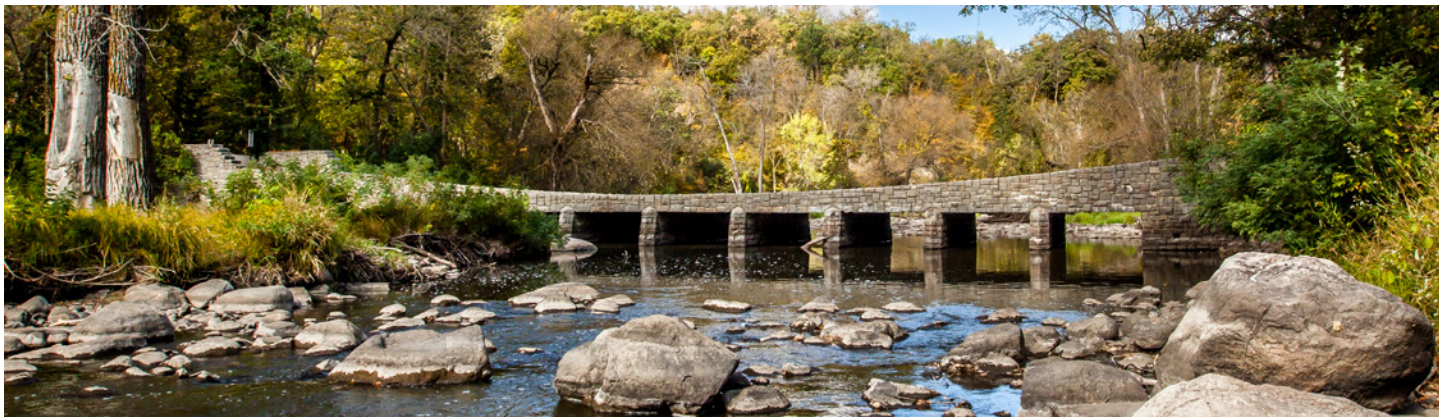
Currently there are only two lakes in Redwood County and both are man-made, and Lake Redwood is one of those two. The establishment of hydroelectric power in 1902, make it the oldest hydro electric facility in the State. A grist mill and lumber mill were also located in the area the Park now encompasses.

Unique structures were also erected by the W.P.A. This includes the Lower Shelter and Restroom along with the Swayback Bridge which are all constructed of local hand cut granite and remain prominent park structures to this day.

The park continued to be managed by the State of Minnesota until July of 1957 when the park was transferred to the City of Redwood Falls. At that time the State charged a 25 cent entry fee. Free admittance was implemented upon the transfer to the City. The transfer document (Item 10) ends with a covenant stating:

*"is hereby transferred to the City of Redwood Falls, County of Redwood, State of Minnesota; together with all buildings, roads and permanent structures thereon; provided that the City of Redwood Falls shall use the property above described solely for public park, recreational or other civic and cultural purposes and for no other."*

The covenant was signed by Gorge A. Selke, Commissioner of Conservation, and stamped with the Official Seal of the State of Minnesota Department of Conservation. The City of Redwood has followed that executive order to this day and maintains "The Little Yellowstone of Minnesota" which continues to have State wide and National significance.



*The Ramsey Park Swayback Bridge was constructed by WPA crews during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Spanning 183 feet it is the only known bridge to be constructed using the swayback design of a reversed arch with its lowest section in the middle of the span. The bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is also in the National Bridge Inventory. It was recently repaired in 2013-2014 due to damage from flooding and now stands proud again as a prominent feature in the park.*



## COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL DESTINATION

In 2015, regional significance was established and Alexander Ramsey Park is now showcased on the MNDNR website as a regional park ([http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/rpg8\\_profile.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/rpg8_profile.html)).

The park serves as a focal point for community and regional events, festivals, and summer activities. The park also features campground facilities including park shelters, nearly four miles of paved hiking trails, a Department of Natural Resources trout stream, scenic overlooks, and a zoo.

Alexander Ramsey Park is open 7 days a week from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. The main access and exit serving the park is Grove Street which is open 24 hours a day 7 days a week and is plowed during the winter months. The Redwood Falls City Police Department and the Parks and Recreation Department staff patrol the Park during closed hours since Alexander Ramsey Park is not gated.

## PICNIC FACILITIES

Alexander Ramsey Park has five picnic areas with shelters which have been set in the park's natural woodlands; each offering unique experiences. Three of these shelters can be reserved, which are highlighted below:

### The Lower Shelter

The park's original and largest passive recreation area features the 1930's W.P.A. Vintage Lower Shelter with its massive timber and granite construction. Nearby activities include a playground structure, ball field, Ramsey Park Zoo, and campground/restroom facilities.

### Ramsey Falls Shelter

One of the park's most popular attractions is the Ramsey Falls observation area, which utilizes rather unique bridges and pathways to access many varied scenic vistas of Ramsey Falls and Ramsey Creek. The Falls area also provides ample picnic space with an open shelter featuring 1930's W.P.A. hand cut Morton Gneiss block, a restroom building, and access to some of the park's most scenic hiking trails. A new playground feature was added next to the shelter in 2012 to bolster use and meet user requests.

### Zeb Gray Overlook Shelter

This portion of the park features the unique Zeb Gray Shelter, which was recently renovated in 2015. This shelter features a scenic overlook of the Redwood River and the park's hogback peninsula. This area also offers a playground structure and access to the mill site waterfall which bears the City's name. The Falls is spanned by a pedestrian bridge providing a striking view of the Redwood River gorge.





## CAMPGROUND

The campground is seasonally opened Mid May through Mid October. The City campground has 31 individual sites with 30 amp electric service hookups. The campground also provides restroom facilities with modern services and showers. In addition, the City water and sanitary disposal station is located near the restroom facility. The City of Redwood Falls has also developed an online reservation system for convenience. All camping spaces are for short-term rental only and the designated primitive (tent) camping area is rented on a first come first served basis.



*Existing Alexander Ramsey Park Campground*



## ZOO

The Zoo is located near the campground and features animals such as buffalo, elk, deer, prairie dogs, and numerous species of upland game and waterfowl.



*Existing Alexander Ramsey Park Zoo*



### TRAILS

The park offers almost four miles of paved hiking trails and a quarter-mile of natural surface trail. The trail network also maintains connections to the existing City trail network as well as future planned state trail connections, including the Minnesota Valley State Trail and the Casey Jones State Trail.



### THE FALLS

The Falls is one of the primary destinations within the park and region. The recently renovated overlook area provides incredible views of the 33-foot waterfall that cascades over the natural rock outcropping formation. This area is often used for special events such as weddings, company outings, etc.





## PARK PROGRAMMING

The City of Redwood Falls provides summer recreation programs such as Junior Rangers, geocaching, orienteering, and other outdoor immersion programs. Junior Rangers is an outdoor program for children to learn about all the environment has to offer. Some class activities include learning how to canoe and fish, as well as taking care of the zoo animals. Children will also learn about everything that contributes to parks, such as trees, flowers, bugs, birds, fish, campsite setup, park rangers, water quality, pollution, and much more. All programming events do not interfere with regular daily public usage.



## PARTNERSHIPS

All park rehabilitation has been spear headed by a grass roots organization "Friends of the Park". They are organized to preserve and protect Ramsey Park so generations to come can discover the welcoming beauty. They work to gather funds through private donations, annual memberships, and fundraising events. Friends of the Park is an independent organization that operates exclusively for recreation purposes under the umbrella of Redwood Area Communities Foundation, Inc. with 50(C) (3) status.

The Friends of the Park Board's mission is to have a source of funds through tax deductible, private donations, grants, and fund-raisers that can be used to maintain and improve Alexander Ramsey Park.

Donations from Friends of the Park have exceeded \$200,000.00 in monetary contributions for matching grant funds. This does not account for picnic table and park bench donations and extensive volunteer hours spent on the betterment of the park system. More recent improvements spearheaded by the group include the Falls Overlook and the Zoo, which also included many private donations.

In addition to the workings of Friends of the Park, the Redwood Falls City Council developed a Park and Recreation Commission to listen to the public, and prioritize and recommend projects to the Council. This Commission is made up of Redwood Falls Citizens who have a vested interest in improving and maintaining the park system.

## ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS

In 2009, the City was awarded funding through the MNDNR Park Legacy Grant. This enabled the City to improve the Ramsey Falls Scenic Overlook, which totalled over \$230,000 in construction costs and was completed in May of 2011. The grant also included various components of the zoo which are highlighted on page 7.



*The Falls Overlook*

In 2011, the City was again fortunate to receive funding through the 2011 MNDNR Park Legacy Grant to complete the following improvements:

- Upgraded the remaining 430 feet of park roadway, complete with curb and gutter to capture stormwater.
- Installed 573 feet of safety fencing including safety impact rails.
- Completed the park pedestrian loop by adding in accessible walkways.

The years Legacy funding was not received, the City of Redwood Falls continued to work on projects outlined in the parks master plan. These projects are listed below with the associated partners.

#### WESTSIDE + PERKS PARKS

**Improvement:** Two playground replacements.

**Cost:** \$129,000 (City)

**Implementing Agency:** City of Redwood Falls

#### ZEB GRAY SHELTER

**Improvement:** Refurbish existing shelter.

**Cost:** \$180,000  
(Donations + City)

**Implementing Agency:**  
City of Redwood Falls

**Partners:** Friends of the Park, Otto Bremer Foundation, Carl & Verna Schmidt Foundation, and the Redwood Falls Rotary



#### TRAIL STEPS

**Improvement:** Refurbish all stair treads within the park that are part of the overall trail system.

**Cost:** \$17,000 (City)

**Implementing Agency:**  
City of Redwood Falls



#### CUSTOM BENCH

**Improvement:** Provide a custom bench for the zoo entrance.

**Cost:** \$25,000 in private donations

**Implementing Agency:** Friends of the Park



#### PARK AMENITIES

**Improvement:** Upgraded fire pits, picnic tables, benches, and enhanced landscaping.

**Cost:** \$40,000+ (Donations + City)

**Implementing Agency:** City of Redwood Falls

**Partners:** Friends of the Park





## ZOO

**Improvement:** New fencing, seating, and buildings. In addition to roadway and trail pavement resurfacing including ensuring site accessibility, overall landscaping improvements, duck pond renovations, and upgrading of the bird exhibits.

**Cost:** \$652,500 over three phases (Donations + Legacy Grant + City)

**Implementing Agency:** City of Redwood Falls

**Partners:** Friends of the Park, Private Contributors



The City and contributing partners have continued to make park improvements over the past several years in addition those supported by Legacy funding. However, these improvements have diminished the City's current funding sources (including both the City of Redwood Falls & Friends of the Park). Both groups will continue to search for alternative funding sources to help complete the projects still remaining. However, at this time, the City and contributing partners are working on rebuilding funds.

## GOALS OF THE MASTER PLAN

The goals of the master planning process are to:

- 1 CREATE AN OUTLINE FOR FUTURE ACTIVITIES AND IMPROVEMENTS**
- 2 IDENTIFY PARTNERSHIPS AND IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES**
- 3 RECOGNIZE SHORT, MID, AND LONG-TERM PRIORITIES AND TIME LINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION**
- 4 FOSTER COMMUNITY INPUT AND ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THE MASTER PLANNING PROCESS AND AS FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS ARE FURTHER CONSIDERED AND DEVELOPED**
- 5 ENABLE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND EXPANSION OF ALEXANDER RAMSEY PARK THAT WILL REFLECT THE SHARED VALUES OF THE COMMUNITY**
- 6 PREPARE A WORKING DOCUMENT TO SERVE AS A DELIVERABLE WITHIN APPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PARK & TRAIL LEGACY FUNDING, AND ANY OTHER TYPE OF FUNDING IN THE FUTURE.**

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## SETTING AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

### SURROUNDING PARKS AND TRAILS

#### COUNTY & STATE WILDLIFE AND RECREATION AREAS

Redwood Falls is located in the southwest quadrant of Minnesota. Ramsey Park is one of the two regional parks located in Redwood County. Other County and State wildlife management and recreation areas include: Beaver Falls County Park, Willow Lake, Mammenga, Waterbury, Gales, Westline State, Rohlik, Daubs Lake, and Luescher-Barnum State Wildlife Management Areas. Outside of the county limits, but located just to the Northwest of Alexander Ramsey Park is the Upper Sioux Agency State Park and Skalbekken County Park, which are located in Yellow-Medicine County, Minnesota near Granite Falls.



#### STATE TRAILS

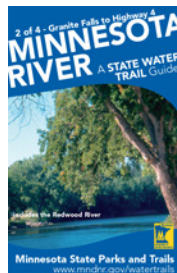
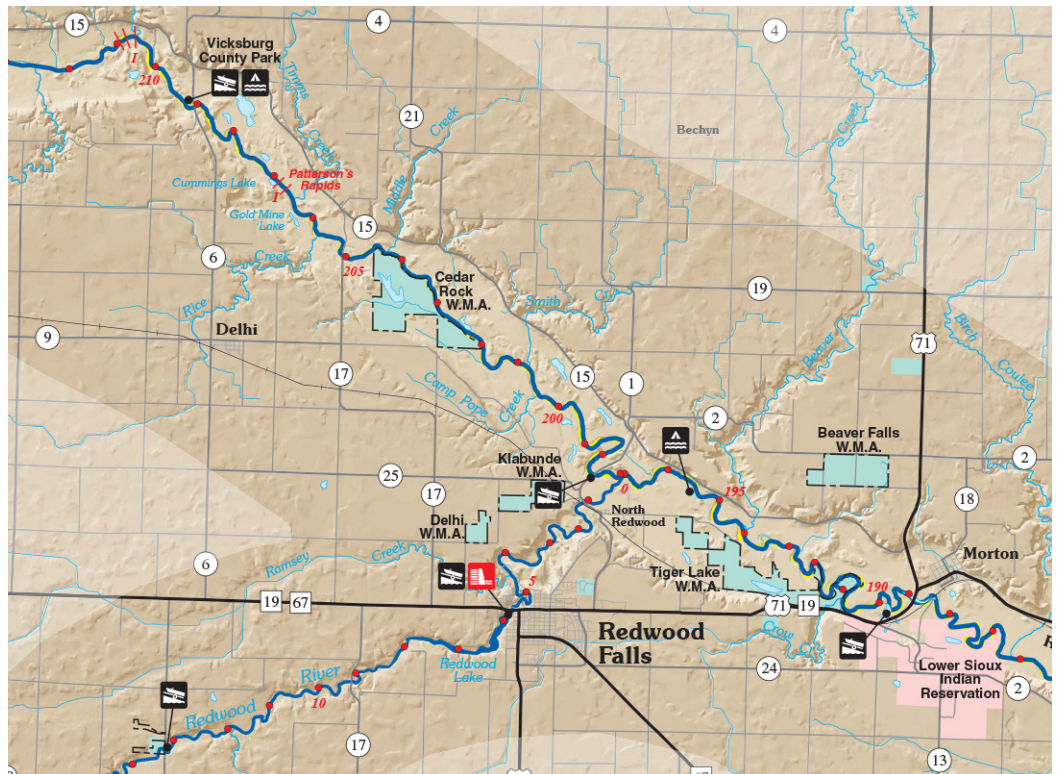
There are a couple of state trails that are planned to connect to the Redwood Falls area in the future. They include the Casey Jones State Trail and the Minnesota Valley State Trail.



Minnesota Bicycle Trails, Source: Minnesota DNR

## STATE WATER TRAIL

The Redwood River bisects the park and is one of the main recreational and environmental attractions. The river is part of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources designated State Water Trails Network and feeds into the Minnesota River just north of Redwood Falls. The park serves as a trailhead as well as a rest area for those canoeing or kayaking.



### A STATE WATER TRAIL GUIDE TO THE MINNESOTA RIVER (Granite Falls to Highway 4)



**The Minnesota River**

The Upper Minnesota River Valley is one of the most impressive landscapes in southwestern Minnesota. The vegetation found along the floodplain—river maple, willow, cottonwood and ash—is a pleasing contrast to the upland bluffs of red cedar and pockets of prairie grasses.

**Wildlife**

The Minnesota River is a haven for bird life. Several species of waterfowl and wetland birds use the river corridor for nesting, breeding and resting during migration. Phalaropes and grey (longspurred) partridge find thick cover in the river valley for nesting and for protection from harsh winter storms.

**Fishing**

The Minnesota also supports a large and relatively diverse fish population. Although carp and other invasive fish predominate, anglers searching the snags and roots wade can occasionally hook fathead catfish exceeding 40 pounds. Anglers searching river runs and pools can also hook channel catfish exceeding 10 pounds.

**Boating**

Wallowe, singer, and white bass are fairly numerous and vulnerable to angling when overgrazed. Anglers may also catch an occasional northern pike, smallmouth bass, and shorewalleye. Anglers fishing backwaters areas can occasionally find largemouth and black crappie.

**Rest Areas and Camping Sites**

Public rest areas are available along the route to rest, picnic and explore.

- Camp only in designated campgrounds, which are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

**Planning a Safe River Trip**

A successful river trip is safe. To enjoy a safe journey, you should be prepared by acquainting yourself with your route. Choose a distance that is comfortable for you. Water levels can spend up or slow down your trip. Get information about water levels from the regional DNR office, DNR website, or DNR Information Center. Protect the water and shorelands and leave nothing behind you except footprints. Remember that much of the shorelands are privately owned.

**Trip Planning**

- Travel with a companion or group. Plan your trip with a map before you depart and advise someone of your plans, including planned departure and arrival times.
- Most people paddle two to three river miles per hour.
- Bring a first-aid kit that includes waterproof matches.
- Be cautious of river obstructions, such as overhanging and dead trees in the river.
- You must pack out all trash.
- Leave only footprints, take only photographs!

**Sustainable Ecosystems**

Outdoor recreation is dependent on a healthy and attractive natural environment. Sustainable outdoor recreation enables people to enjoy the outdoors without negative impacts on the environment.

Communities working together can improve water resources by promoting environmentally sensitive land-use practices along rivers and throughout watersheds. Natural shoreline buffers improve water quality by filtering out pollutants and sediments.

Healthy and diverse native shoreline plant communities are attractive and provide important habitat for birds and wildlife.

**Minnesota State Parks and Trails Area Office**

10100 County Road 8 NE  
Spoon, MN 56288  
(218) 736-2161

Online water trail information and maps can be found at [www.mn.dnr.gov/watertrails](http://www.mn.dnr.gov/watertrails)

**DNR Information Center**

The DNR Information Center is available to provide for publications of brochures and maps as well as answer questions pertaining to DNR recreational opportunities in Minnesota.

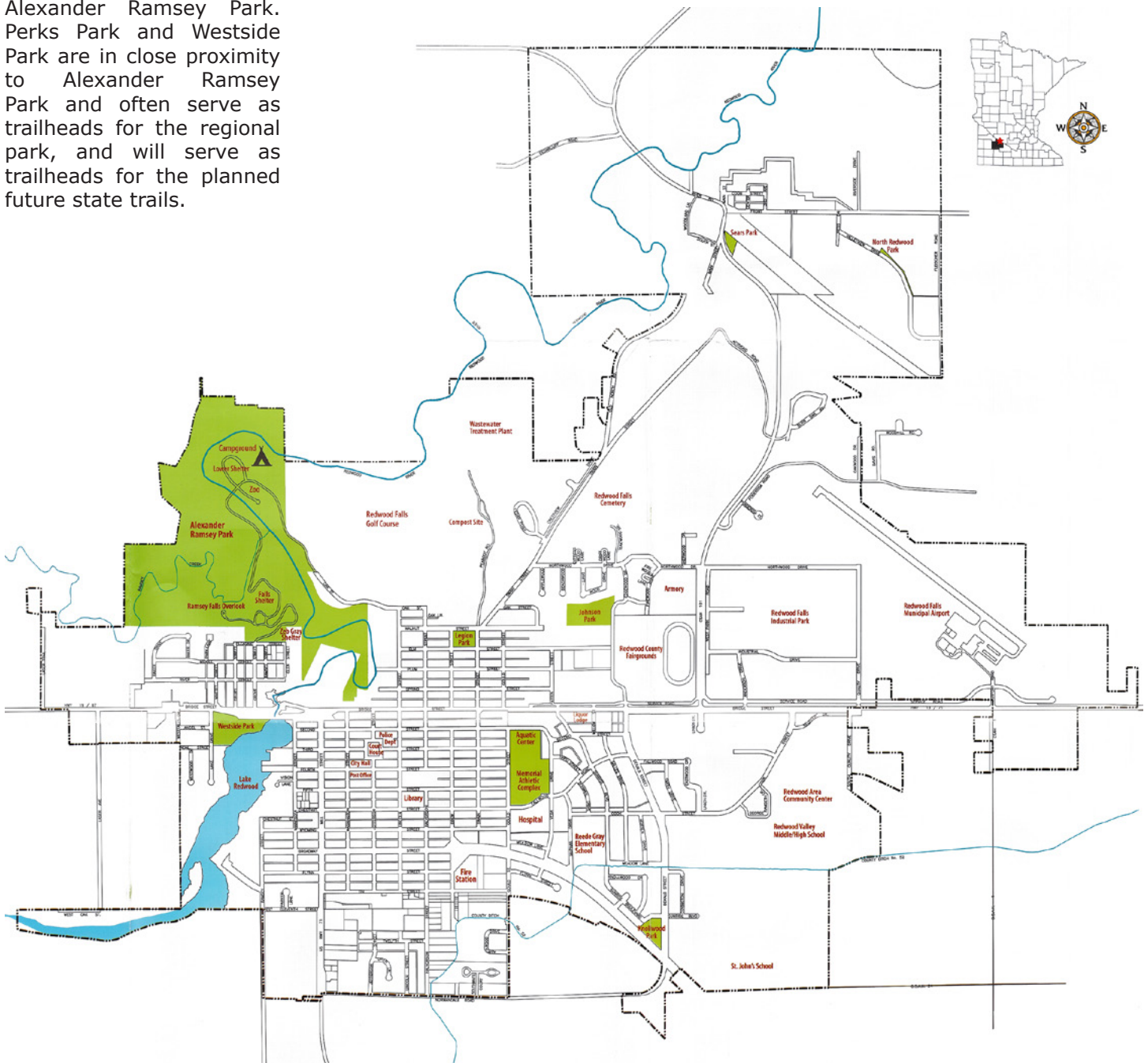
**The DNR Information Center**

2100 Highway 101 N., Box 100, 1001-1002  
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## CITY PARKS

The City of Redwood Falls has an outstanding park system including seven neighborhood parks, one athletic complex, and Alexander Ramsey Park. Perks Park and Westside Park are in close proximity to Alexander Ramsey Park and often serve as trailheads for the regional park, and will serve as trailheads for the planned future state trails.

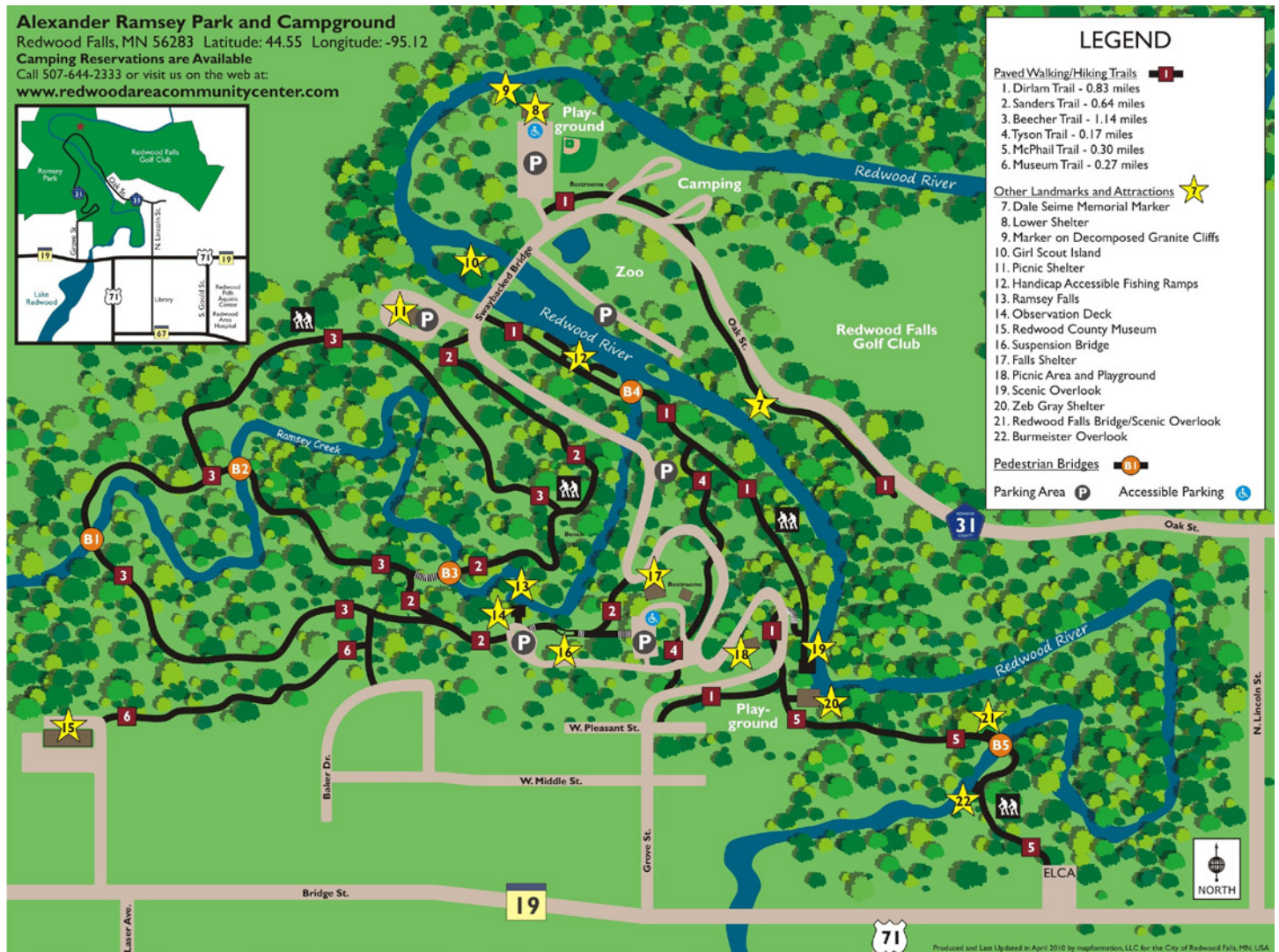


Existing City Park Map

## SITE INFORMATION & ACCESS

The two main vehicular access points are located at the intersection of Bridge Street and Grove Street, and at the intersection of North Lincoln Street and Oak Street.

At 256 acres total, the existing boundaries of the Park are able to meet the needs of the current recreational opportunities, as dictated by demand. However, if lands become available from willing sellers for the purpose of adding high-quality wildlife habitat and natural resources to the Park, it is recommended the City consider acquisition of the land. Preferable adjacent properties would be those that add habitat and natural resources and facilitate further recreational use of the river, and allow for expansion or relocation of the campground, forest and prairie restoration, as well as additional access points and hiking trails. It should be emphasized that the Redwood Falls Parks and Recreation Department is not actively seeking to purchase property.



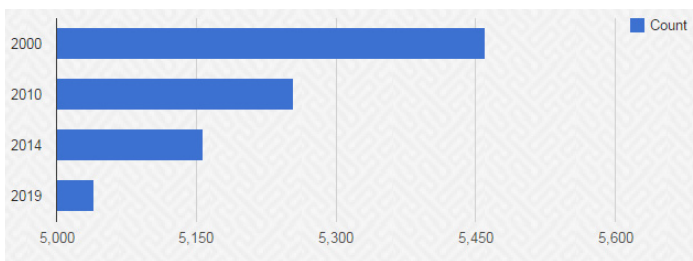
Existing Park and Trail Map



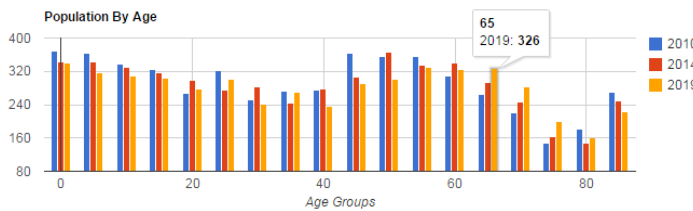
## VISION, TRENDS, + PUBLIC VALUES

### DEMOGRAPHICS

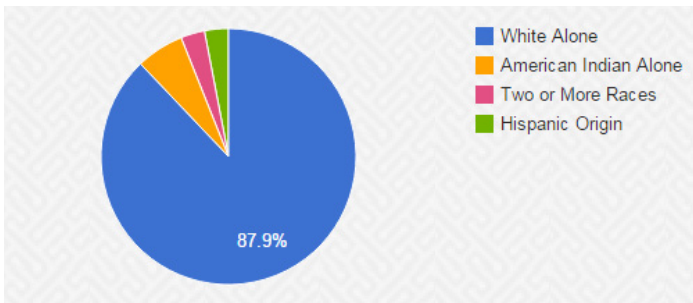
Below are several graphics highlighting the various Redwood Falls demographic statistics including population, age, race, and income. Statics for Redwood County follow similar patterns with the overall population just over 16,000 and is expected to decline slightly over the next few years. These statics were compiled from ESRI, 2014 8-24.



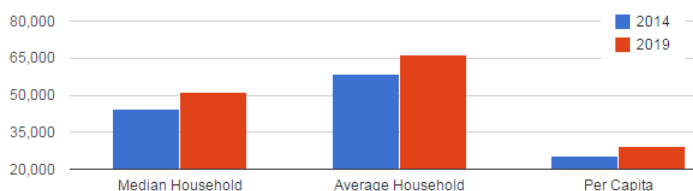
Population



Population by Age



Population by Race



Income

### RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY IN THE REGION

According to a 2015 study (Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report 2015), running, jogging, trail running, bicycling, camping, and fishing are the most common recreational activities performed. Participation in racing, such as adventure racing and triathlons, has increased significantly over the past three years. Participation in water sports, such as stand up paddling and kayak fishing, have also increased in the past several years.

These findings are consistent with what is occurring and provided at Alexander Ramsey Park. The majority of the users visit the park for the campground facilities. The trails and falls overlook rank second, the zoo third, and the picnic shelters fourth. Given this information, it is anticipated that visitors and demand will increase with additional and improved facilities and amenities.



Alexander Ramsey Park Campground

Alexander Ramsey Park averages 500 camping stays from Mothers Day weekend through September. Of these 500 overnight stays, assuming two persons per stay, the Campground averages 1,000 patrons during this time. An address review shows that 30% live less than 50 miles away, 60% are greater than 50 miles to 200 miles away, 10% live in excess of 200 miles from Alexander Ramsey Park. Of the 31 improved (level) electric service sites for RVs/campers, and 15 rustic non-electric services tent sites, the 500 reservations show that the park is primarily full 11 weekends out of the 20 available due to the high percentage use over the weekends. In 2015, all campsites have been full every weekend Memorial Day through July.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INPUT

During a span of years from 2005 through 2008, the Parks Department held a series of public meetings soliciting input for projects from the public and campers of what facilities and amenities the public would like to see improved, provided, or replaced. This coincided with a visit of the Governor's Design Team who created architectural visions of improving not only the aesthetics of the community, but also enhancing the quality of life and safety of the citizens.

Three years ago the City of Redwood Falls Park and Recreation Department implemented an online reservation system ([www.redwoodareacommunitycenter.com](http://www.redwoodareacommunitycenter.com)). Visitor feedback is also solicited through the database to allow visitors to provide feedback on how amiable their stay was and garner requests for future improvements. This list is also combined with the area community recreation participants for a comprehensive feedback.

In addition to the survey data, the online campground registration provides information needed to analyze camping numbers, distance of travel, in state vs. out of state visits, etc. MNDOTs 2009 traffic counts showed an average daily traffic count into and out of the park of 728. *Appendix A* highlights the public responses from the 2015 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Department Survey.

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Utilizing the feedback garnered during the 2005-2008 public open-houses, Governor's design team, and recent survey, the City of Redwood Falls Parks and Recreation Commission was able to list and prioritize needs. Prioritization by residents was also a part of the formal public input meetings and considered as part of the overall prioritization process.

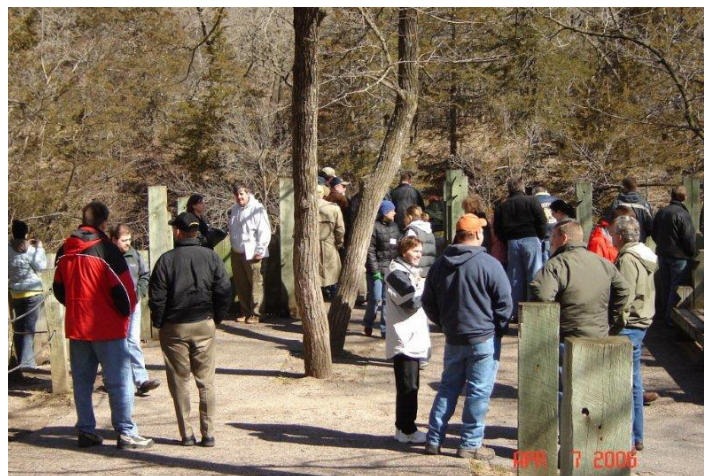
As a result of the prioritization process, the proposed renovations concerning safety and access were addressed first. Renovations that also ranked high were those that would provide immediate improvement to the quality of the park experience, along with those increasing visits and promoting longer stays.

To highlight the success of the citizen-based prioritization for example, the highest prioritized amenities were those that have received Legacy Grant funding to date, which included the zoo renovation, upgrades to Zeb Gray shelter, the addition of concrete steps along the trails, and new fire pits.

The priorities included a trail connection from Redwood Falls to the planned Casey Jones Trail alignment, the Ramsey Falls Scenic Overlook, wayfinding and park identification signs, and the roadway renovation and parking area that improves safety and reduces overland erosion.



*Community open house announcement*



*The Governor's design team evaluating the existing site conditions*

## DEVELOPMENT PLAN

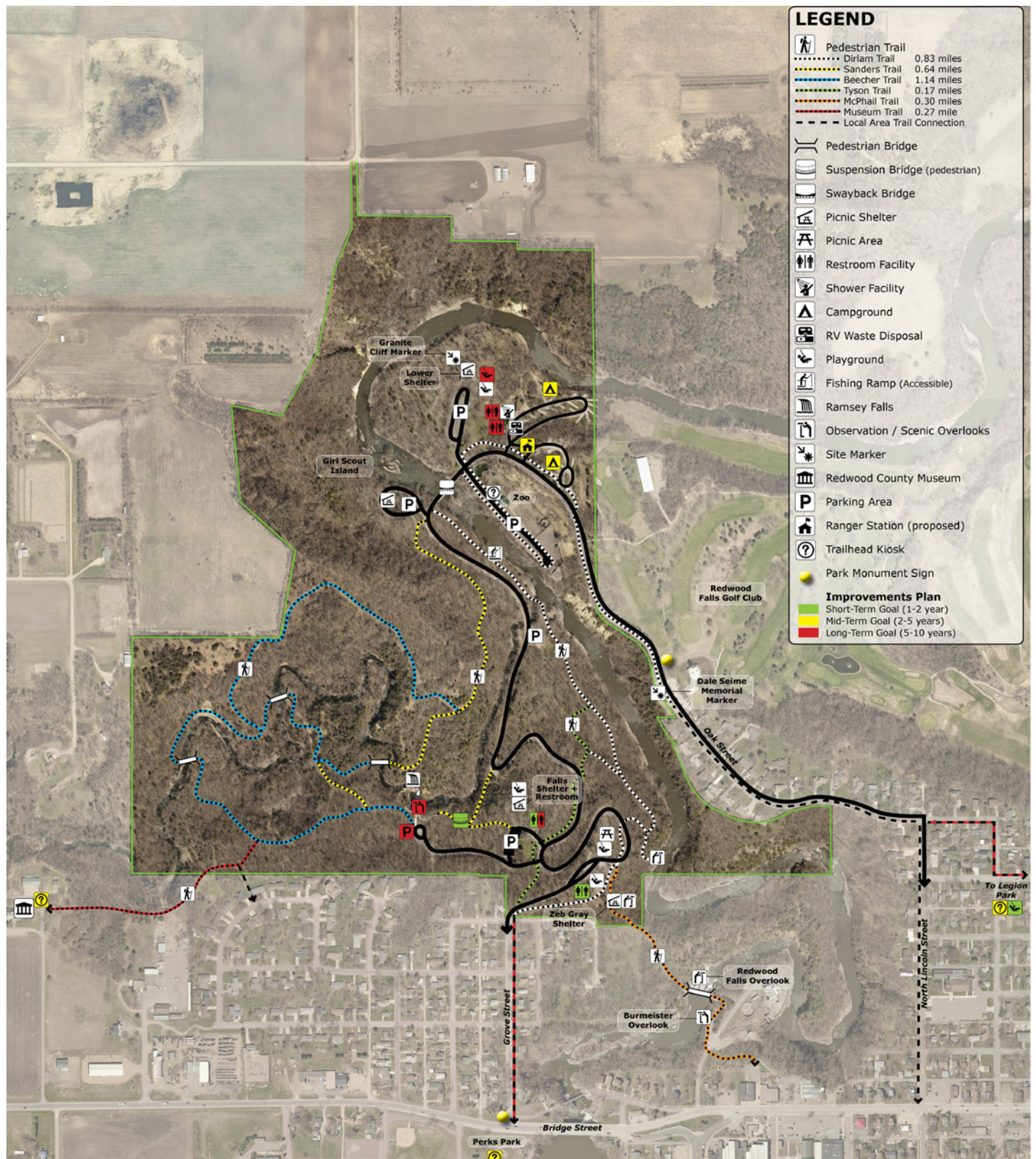
The following pages detail lists of short-term goals (to be accomplished in 1-2 years), mid-term goals (to be accomplished within 2-5 years), and long-term goals (to be accomplished within 5-10 years). All of the goals outlined within the Development Plan are in alignment with the Parks and Recreation Departments Vision Statement and outcomes of the public input process. A corresponding illustrative site plan demonstrates the short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals as they would appear physically throughout the Park. This plan is meant to serve as an overall schematic plan only and further detailed designs and construction drawings will be needed for implementation of ideas. It is the intention, as well, that a more detailed park map will better communicate the vision for the future and the existing opportunities at Alexander Ramsey Park. It is recommended that the overall master plan graphic be continually updated as the following goals are further considered and detailed. This will ensure the broader park vision remains in alignment. It is also recommended that as these goals are implemented, the various stakeholders and public user groups are kept informed of the process.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

As additional funding becomes available, it will be important that each of the improvements noted above are reviewed at a detailed level and the appropriate design consultants are engaged. It is recommended that the following steps be taken:

1. A design effort should be undertaken to evaluate current signage and needs as well as development a cohesive signage plan for the Park.
2. A design effort should be undertaken to ensure that all future buildings will have a similar and / or complementary style to what is found within the park today. Material and color choices will play an important part in weaving the new and existing together.
3. A design effort should be undertaken to understand circulation patterns around future improvements as well as how circulation relates to the greater park area.
4. As each built feature is incorporated, it is of utmost importance that the overall natural resource impacts be evaluated. The natural resources are what makes the park special and unique. It is critical to protect and enhance these features as time goes on.





Master Plan Graphic



## SHORT-TERM GOALS

Short-term goals are those that are of highest interest and desire and are intended to occur within the next 1-2 years. All of the short-term improvement goal are listed in order of priority.

### 1 RENOVATE FALLS RESTROOM

- Design the interior space to improve user experience and safety.
- Clean the exterior of the building, including painting where necessary.
- Design accessible trail alignment and connections to the building and other complementary amenities such as seating, trash receptacles, drinking fountains, landscaping, etc.



*Existing Ramsey Falls restroom facility*

### 2 CONSTRUCT A NEW RESTROOM FACILITY AT THE SOUTHERN PARK ENTRANCE

- Design the overall site including siting the building location, providing an accessible trail alignment and connections, and other complementary amenities, such as seating, trash receptacles, drinking fountains, landscaping, etc.
- Restroom facility is proposed to be a pre-fabricated restroom structures such as the CXT Denali (shown on the right) or similar.
- It is recommended the overall building style complement the existing park buildings and match materials and colors where possible.



*CXT Denali*

### 3 REFURBISH PEDESTRIAN WALKING TRAILS

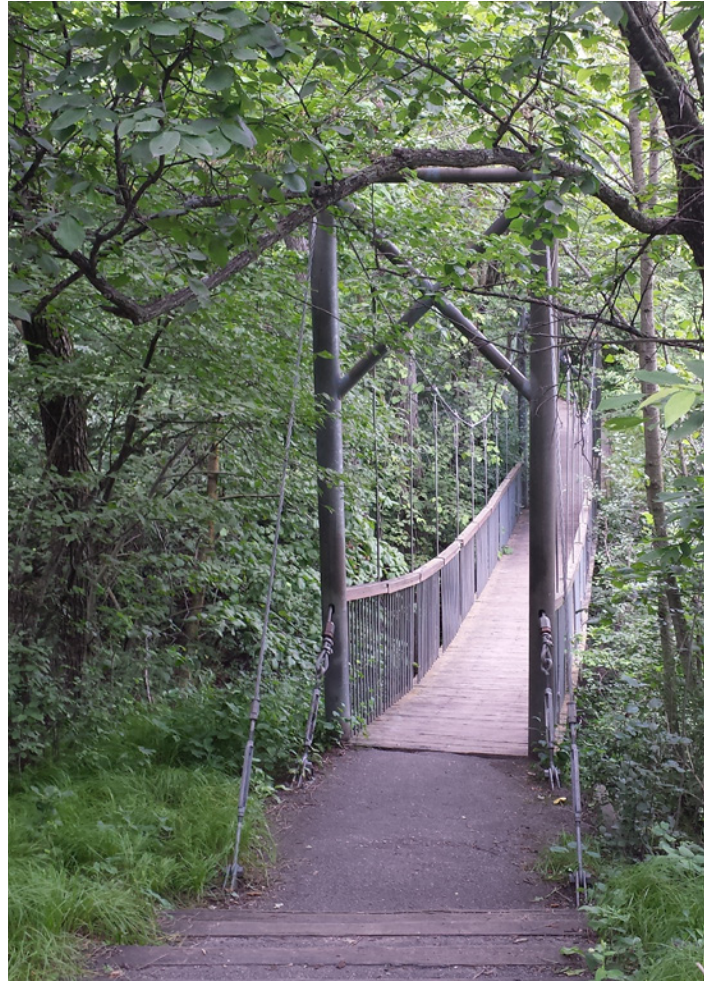
- Refurbish 3.52 miles of paved trails (concrete). Concrete is the recommended material choice given the longevity and site constraints.
- Remove tripping hazards, re-align and improve intersections and crossing points to improve the overall safety and experience.
- Maintain connections to the planned MN River Valley State Trail and planned Casey Jones State Trail.



*Existing paved park trails*

## 4 IMPROVE THE SWING BRIDGE

- Engage a structural engineer to review and analyze the structure to ensure support system is sound and safe for reuse.
- Replace the decking boards with an approved material that will support the necessary loads and be a safe and sustainable product.
- Paint steel supports and railing.
- Improve trail surfacing and steps up to the bridge on both sides is slated for 2015.



*Existing Suspension Bridge Structure*

## 5 INSTALL PLAY EQUIPMENT AT LEGION PARK

- Design overall children's play area site and trailhead including accessible trail connections, seating locations, play container access points, and other complementary amenities such as trash receptacles and drinking fountains.
- Install new play equipment with accessible surfacing and access points.

*Legion Park serves as a trailhead for the local, regional, and state trail networks as well as Alexander Ramsey Park.*



*Proposed Play Equipment (or similar)*



## MID-TERM GOALS

Mid-term goals are those that are intended to occur within the next 2-5 years. All mid-term improvement goals are listed in order of priority.

### 1 IMPROVE CAMPGROUND FACILITIES

- Design and improve the existing campground area to better accommodate RVs and associated campsite spaces as well as roadway alignment requirements.
- Provide a more private location for tent camping.
- Provide accessible pedestrian connections from the designated accessible campsites to the support facilities.
- Provide water hook-up for all RV sites.
- Create vegetated buffers between camp sites for enhanced privacy.
- Provide a consistent style of site amenities and signage throughout the campground.
- Review and analyze the existing dump station area for potential improvement opportunities.



*Examples of appropriately sized RV campsites and vegetated buffers*

### 2 INSTALL PARK ENTRANCE MONUMENT SIGNS

- Design and install park entrance monuments.
- Potential locations for monument locations include Oak Street and the intersection of Grove Street and Bridge Street.
- It is recommended that a comprehensive design and plan for all park signage (entrance, wayfinding, and trailhead kiosks) is completed prior to any new installations. This will help to ensure a consistent theme and style between all signs providing a cohesive message.



*Examples of unique entrance monument signs that may work well with the character of Alexander Ramsey Park*

### 3 INSTALL WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

- Design the and install throughout the park to better direct visitors to key destinations.
- Potential wayfinding signage locations include Oak Street and the intersection of Grove Street and Bridge Street.
- It is recommended that a comprehensive design and plan for all park signage (entrance, wayfinding, and trailhead kiosks) is completed prior to any new installations. This will help to ensure a consistent theme and style between all signs providing a cohesive message.



Examples of wayfinding signage

### 4 INSTALL TRAILHEAD KIOSKS

- Design and install trailhead kiosks that include a mapping system featuring internal park destinations as well as those in the region.
- Potential locations for trailhead kiosks include near the Redwood County Museum and at Perks and Legion Parks.
- Additional support facilities should be considered for these areas including bike racks, drinking fountains, seating, etc.
- It is recommended that a comprehensive design and plan for all park signage (entrance, wayfinding, and trailhead kiosks) is completed prior to any new installations. This will help to ensure a consistent theme and style between all signs providing a cohesive message.



Existing trailhead kiosk near the zoo



Examples of trailhead and wayfinding kiosks



## 5 PROVIDE A PARK RANGER STATION

- Design and construct a park ranger station that would accommodate rentals such as canoes / kayaks, cross-country skis, snowshoes, etc.
- It is desired to have the ranger station staffed to provide assistance to all park users. It would also support the junior ranger program currently held at the park.
- It is recommended the overall building style complement the existing park buildings and match materials and colors where possible.
- It is also recommended that a detailed analysis of the building program and overall park building be completed prior to design and construction.



*Examples of ranger stations that may work well with the character of Alexander Ramsey Park*

## 6 REMOVE INVASIVE SPECIES

- Continue to implement invasive species removal throughout the park.
- It is recommended this maintenance activity be incorporated as part of the ongoing maintenance and operation fund for the park even though much of the effort in the past can be attributed to volunteers.
- It is also recommended that a plan be prepared that highlights areas of priority and is continually updated as time goes on.



*A volunteer helping remove buckthorn*

## 7 ADDRESS EROSION ISSUES

- Engage consultants to evaluate, address, and stabilize areas of existing erosion or highly susceptible areas with sustainable and ecological friendly best practices.
- It is also recommended that a plan be prepared to highlight areas of priority and continually updated as time goes on.



*This area of erosion is the bluff that provides the backdrop to the zoo. If additional land is acquired for park expansion relocating the zoo may be considered to help alleviate and control this highly susceptible erosion area.*

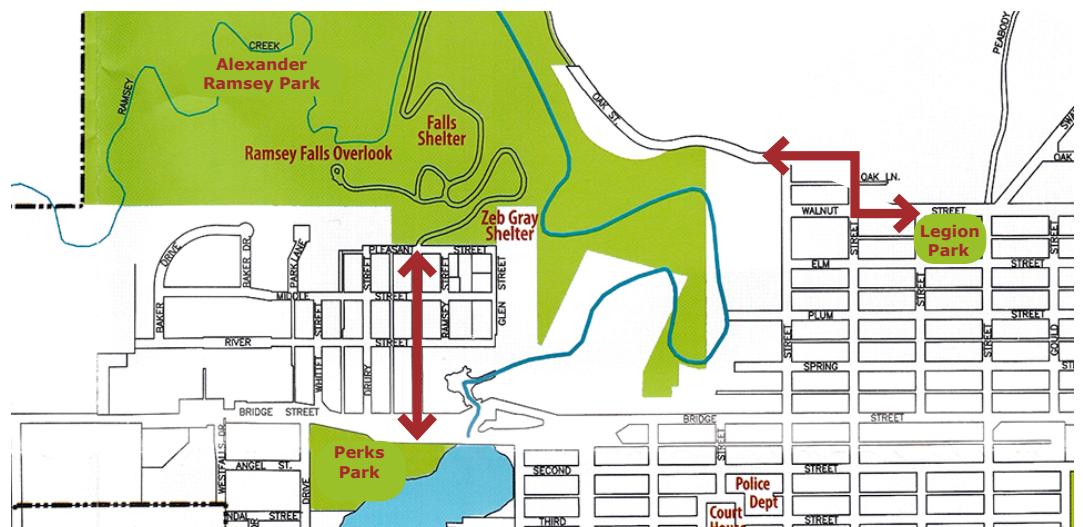
## LONG-TERM GOALS

Long-term goals are those that are intended to occur within the next 5-10 years. All long-term improvement goals are listed in order of priority.

### 1 IMPROVE TRAIL CONNECTIONS FROM ALEXANDER RAMSEY PARK TO LEGION AND PERKS PARKS

- Improve pedestrian and bicycle trail connection from Alexander Ramsey Park to Perks Park ~ 0.25 miles
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle trail connection from Alexander Ramsey Park to Legion Park ~ 0.25 miles
- Install trailhead kiosks at Legion and Perks Parks

*Legion + Perks Parks serve as trailheads for the local, regional, and state trail networks as well as Alexander Ramsey Park.*



*Trail connections map*



## 2 PROVIDE A MINI SPLASH PAD

- Design and install a mini splash pad for daily park users and campers.
- This could be positioned near the existing play area by the Lower Shelter in an open area that receives full sun.
- It will be important to analyze parking needs as these types of features tend to draw large crowds.



*Example of a splash pad with themed specialty surfacing*

## 3 IMPROVE 'THE FALLS' AREA LIGHTING

- Add safety lighting around the falls overlook parking lot and roadway connection.
- The lighting style should be a decorative type that matches the overall style of other lighting and site amenities found within the park.

## 4 UPGRADE RESTROOMS UTILITIES

- Upgrade restroom utilities that currently utilize a drainfield system to a full sewer system.
- These facilities include the current campground, zoo, and overlook restroom facilities.



*Existing campground restroom facilities*

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## ECOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP PLAN

### GEOLOGY

The Park has a rich geologic history. There is a monument, which was placed by the Minnesota Geological Survey, referencing a kaolin clay bank along the Redwood River which is some of the oldest decayed granite material in the world. Numerous academic institutions come to Alexander Ramsey Park to study geology. The following is a brief geologic description of the park provided by Dale R. Setterholm, Geologist and Associate Director, Minnesota Geological Survey:

- Morton Gneiss- the park has exposures of the Morton Gneiss which is regarded as the oldest rock in North America (3.6 billion years). It represents the core of the North American continent. In places, the Morton has been intruded by the younger Sacred Heart Granite (2.6 billion years old). I still have to confirm this, but I believe the falls on Ramsey Creek run over Sacred Heart granite.
- Weathering Profiles - the park has particularly well-exposed deposits of kaolin-rich residuum created by chemical weathering of the Morton Gneiss, and probably also the Sacred Heart Granite. Under tropical conditions, at least 100 million years ago, acids created by rotting vegetation seeped down into fractures in these hard igneous and metamorphic rocks and broke down their mineral components. Beginning with his Ph.D thesis in 1938, Samuel Goldich studied these deposits in the Minnesota River Valley and recognized that the minerals break down in a particular order, beginning with feldspar, and ending with quartz. This is now taught to every geology student as the Goldich Mineral Stability Sequence in Weathering. In some places the kaolin-rich weathering products have been eroded and redeposit during the Cretaceous Period, and these rocks represent the youngest rocks in Minnesota. So, both the oldest and youngest rocks in Minnesota are found near each other in this neighborhood.
- The valley now occupied by the Minnesota River was created by the River Warren, which drained glacial Lake Agassiz about 11,000 years ago. Lake Agassiz covered more area than all the Great Lakes combined, so the enormous volume of water draining from it created this large valley

now occupied by the much smaller Minnesota River. That large flow volume cut down through glacial sediments and exposed the bedrock and weathering deposits in places.



*Rock outcropping at The Falls*

### VEGETATION

Current plant species prevalent within the park are consistent with the big woods ecosystem and include Burr Oak, Maple, Basswood, Cottonwood, and Willow trees. Invasive species such as Buckthorn are also present. However, through existing maintenance programs and volunteer efforts, these invasive species are continually being removed.

Alexander Ramsey Park is currently protected by a covenant that is listed in the property transfer documentation from the State of Minnesota. The City of Redwood employs a full-time Park and Recreation Department to manage and maintain the City's park system, including Alexander Ramsey Park.



*View of the Redwood River from the Zeb Gray shelter*

## FISH AND WILDLIFE

The Redwood River has numerous fish species including walleye, northern pike, black crappie, channel catfish, flathead catfish, black bull head, pumpkin seed sunfish, red horse sucker species, carp species, and numerous other fish on record with Hutchinson Fisheries. There are no known endangered or threatened fish or wildlife species within the park.



*Programmed fishing outing on the Redwood River*

A dam forming Redwood Lake in Redwood Falls has been in place since 1926, and has continually been used to produce hydroelectricity. In 2012, the City invested \$3.2 million to replace the 1926 turbine. The new generator now produces around 1.5 million kilowatt hours annually, which is enough to power 125 homes each year.

Approximately 82% of the land in the Redwood River watershed is used for agriculture - primarily for the cultivation of corn and soybeans. Hundreds of miles of streams in the watershed have been converted to agricultural ditches.



*Redwood River*

## WATER RESOURCES

The Redwood River, which is a tributary of the Minnesota River, is 127 miles (205 km) long and is located in southwestern Minnesota. Via the Minnesota River, it is part of the watershed of the Mississippi River, draining an area of 705 square miles (1,826 km<sup>2</sup>) in an agricultural region. The river's name is believed to refer to the reddish bark of dogwood growing along streams in the region.

In Redwood Falls, the river enters the wooded valley of the Minnesota River, falling 100 feet in one mile over granite ledges in Alexander Ramsey City Park; it flows into the Minnesota shortly downstream of the City.

## BALANCING HUMAN USES WITH ECOLOGICAL PROTECTION

Finding the right balance between human use of the park, and its ecological preservation and protection, was an important and consistent public concern throughout the planning process. Since regional parks place significant emphasis on preserving natural values, the planning process included extensive lengths to ensure that the natural qualities present within the park would be preserved. In addition to its intrinsic values, stewardship of the park's natural landscape will also enrich the human, or cultural, experience for those visiting the park.

The City of Redwood Falls is a MS4 community and any future improvement projects will adhere to strict stormwater and natural resource protection plans.



## IMPLEMENTATION, MANAGEMENT + SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

### OVERVIEW

Implementing the master plan for Alexander Ramsey Park will require significant initial and long-term capital investments for development, ecological stewardship, operations, and maintenance.

Realistically, implementation will occur over a number of years as funding and other resources are made available. This section considers an overall strategy for implementing the plan that takes these factors into consideration.

### SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE

The majority of the goals identified in this plan are replacing facilities that have been in service over 20 years, which are well beyond life expectancy and product safety insurances. The proposed renovations should have the same life expectancy and maintenance performance expectations as the equipment it is replacing.

In order for Alexander Ramsey Park to continue as a natural resource-based park with valuable recreational amenities and high-quality wildlife habitat, stewardship of the park is key. Without the hard work and dedication of the Redwood Falls Parks and Recreation Department, the Friends of the Park, and countless volunteers, the landscape and programs which exist today would not be possible, and would likely not be able to sustain itself in the future.

This will be somewhat achieved by maintaining a level of rustic quality, which exists today and that will remain in the future, no matter what structural, infrastructural, or ecological developments occur. All future designs to be implemented within the park shall include a public engagement process. Additionally, the highest quality aesthetic designs shall be proposed, within the means of reasonable finances. Strict aesthetic design guidelines are not to be established through this document. However, all future buildings, structures, and developments within and related to Alexander Ramsey Park should demonstrate the vision of this master plan.

### ENERGY EFFICIENT, EASY TO MAINTAIN AND RECYCLED/RECYCLABLE MATERIALS

All building improvements should consider energy efficient lighting, recyclable and local materials, and other means of reducing long-term maintenance and operation costs.

### CONSERVATION OF WATER USE AND THE DESIGN OF FACILITIES TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGE STORM WATER ON SITE

All proposed renovations should be designed to drain to green areas for natural infiltration during 10-year storm events. All building improvements should consider automatic shut-off and low-flow systems for water use. Previous paving and water re-use should also be considered where feasible.

### ACCESSIBILITY

Finally, the City and supporters of the park are committed to creating a place that people of all ages and abilities can enjoy and appreciate. This means that all future developments within the park will be as accessible as possible. People of all capabilities will continue to be considered and consulted for all future design implementations.

### PROGRAMMING

In order for a sustainable level of stewardship to occur, regular and well-received programming needs to be implemented within the park and throughout the community and region, in conjunction with Alexander Ramsey Park. Educational opportunities should continue to be provided and expanded where possible through partnerships with the Friends of the Park, the local schools, and with children's extra-curricular activity groups (such as 4-H, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts).

### OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

Currently, operations and maintenance are the responsibility of Redwood Falls Parks and Recreation Department.

As park amenities increase in quality, such as the construction of permanent-style restrooms and specialty attractions such as a splash pad, additional funding will be sought to cover the cost of additional labor involved to maintain and clean these facilities. This additional funding will need to be secured through future Legacy Funding and other grant opportunities.

ECOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP

The long-term ecological stewardship of Alexander Ramsey Park is currently dependent on the commitment of the Redwood Falls Parks and Recreation Department, the on-going support of the Friends of the Park group, and the growing enthusiasm of park users who take advantage of the wide range of nature-based outdoor activities, such as hiking, camping, wildlife viewing, and photography.

Some of the ecological challenges that the Park currently faces and will increasingly face in the future involve water quality. Phosphate and nitrite levels, which affect the habitat for fish and wildlife, are influenced by adjacent and nearby agricultural lands. By securing additional areas dedicated to natural resource-based parkland, water and habitat quality will improve. By maintaining high-quality prairie and wetlands, and ensuring runoff is treated before entering the water-bodies, will allow pollutants to be filtered through the soil.

The ecological function of the park serves as it's greatest asset. The continuation of natural resource management through active maintenance and best practices is imperative.

PROJECTED OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE COSTS

The 2015 annual budget for the Redwood Falls Park system including Alexander Ramsey Park is \$329,723. The project is for the continued renovation of existing facilities that are well beyond their life expectancy and are in urgent need of repair and development to reflect usage and accessibility compliance. Below is a cost breakdown using an inflationary rate of 1.6% through 2030 that includes the projected maintenance and repair of the short-term goal projects.

Time Period:

Year 2015 Projection	\$329,723.00
Year 2020 Projection	\$356,959.00
Year 2030 Projection	\$418,365.00

Life expectancy of the bituminous, structures, and concrete flatwork is anticipated to be 25 years, but should last longer with proper maintenance. At year 2036 the bituminous, structures, and concrete will be inspected to determine additional life expectancy. The selected materials to be used for the projects are expected to last beyond 25 years with proper maintenance.

COST FACTORS

Park System Annual Budget Includes:

Utility costs	\$18,000.00
Labor	\$170,001.00
Equipment	\$70,343.00
Insurance	\$21,622.00
Supplies/Repairs	\$31,925.00
Vandalism	\$2,500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$314,391.00</b>

*Inflation: 1.6% as stated above.*

SITE DEVELOPMENT-RELATED COST PROJECTIONS

The cost analysis defines the potential costs associated with each development component of the master plan. It is based on a combination of site-specific development requirements and projects of similar size and complexity. The costs are also based on having the work completed by private contractors and specialists. It does not take into consideration work that could be performed by City or County staff, volunteer groups, or by other means.

The cost figures are based on master plan level evaluation, which brings with it inherent limitations. The cost figures are provided for general budgeting purposes, project phasing, and comparing the relative cost of one item to that of another. The costs were calculated using anticipated cost in 2015. Although intended to be conservative, actual costs will vary depending on the year that each aspect of the master plan is implemented, implementation parameters, economic conditions affecting bidding, and the actual site conditions found in the field during construction.



## IMPROVEMENT COSTS

SHORT-TERM GOALS (1-2 YEARS)		
Goal #	Description	Cost Range
1	Renovate Ramsey Falls Restroom	\$50,000 - \$70,000
2	Construct a New Restroom Facility at the Southern Park Entrance	\$80,000 - \$90,000
3	Refurbish Pedestrian Walking Trails (3.5 miles x 6' wide)	\$670,000 - \$725,000
4	Improve the Swing Bridge (assuming structure is sound)	\$20,000 - \$30,000
5	Install Play Equipment at Legion Park	\$100,000 - \$150,000
	Subtotal:	\$920,000 - \$1,065,000
	10% Contingency:	\$92,000 - \$106,500
	<b>Short-Term Goal Total:</b>	<b>\$940,000 - \$1,171,500</b>
MID-TERM GOALS (2-5 YEARS)		
Goal #	Description	Cost Range
1	Improve Campground Facilities	\$150,000 - \$250,000
2	Install Park Entrance Monument Signs (2)	\$90,000 - \$120,000
3	Install Wayfinding Signage	\$50,000 - \$75,000
4	Install Trailhead Kiosks (3)	\$75,000 - \$90,000
5	Provide a Park Ranger Station	\$250,000 - \$350,000
6	Remove Invasive Plant Species (ongoing)	annual budget item
7	Address Erosion Issues (ongoing)	annual budget item
	Subtotal:	\$615,000 - \$885,000
	10% Contingency:	\$61,500 - \$88,500
	<b>Mid-Term Goal Total:</b>	<b>\$676,500 - \$973,500</b>
LONG-TERM GOALS (5-10 YEARS)		
Goal #	Description	Cost Range
1	Improve Trail Connections from Alexander Ramsey Park to Legion + Perks Park	\$70,000 - \$90,000
2	Install a Mini Splash Pad	\$150,000 - \$300,000
3	Improve 'The Falls' Area Lighting	\$25,000 - \$40,000
4	Upgrade Restroom Utilities	\$85,000 - \$115,000
	Subtotal:	\$330,000 - \$545,000
	10% Contingency:	\$33,000 - \$54,500
	<b>Long-Term Goal Total:</b>	<b>\$363,000 - \$599,500</b>
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$1,979,500 - \$2,744,500</b>

\* Note these costs do not reflect design, engineering, testing, or permitting fees.

## **MASTER PLAN REVISIONS AND UPDATES**

The master plan is a dynamic planning tool that will evolve and be fine-tuned as it moves through implementation steps. Over time, there may be justification for revisions and updates to the master plan in response to new information, trends, and general demands. Situations that could potentially prompt review of the master plan include:

- Recreation trend information uncovers a need that has not been adequately addressed by the master plan.
- Circumstances change pertaining to existing uses warrants review of the master plan
- Existing facilities have proven inadequate to meet demand or require design changes for improvement.
- The capacity to meet recreational needs or address maintenance and safety concerns.
- Requests from citizens and special interest groups to review a particular aspect of the plan, which would only be accepted if the Park Commission has determined that an issue has enough merit.
- Justification to warrant review prior to scheduled master plan updates.

If a review is found to be warranted, the City of Redwood Falls will undertake an appropriate public process that includes input from the Park Commission and groups that are directly impacted by a given concern, as well as other groups that have a general interest in the Park. This approach to reviewing a given situation ensures that the conclusions can be supported by the broader community. It also ensures that a balance between recreational uses and ecological preservation is maintained.





