Develop a resilient legacy district that captures the cultural history of the space, while protecting and reclaiming what makes it unique, to provide an enduring public space that will serve generations to come.

Falls Park

Falls Park is uniquely Sioux Falls. Long before any humans inhabited the area, The Falls were here. This opportunity to dream, vision, and execute improvements is not lost on us.

Context Matters

We understand that context involves everything. It is inward, it is surrounding, but it is more than that. Context is also dynamic, including community and visitor interaction and feeling. And lastly, context is timeless. The Falls have meant different things to different people over time and will continue to do so now and in the future.

We will work tirelessly to have Falls Park and the surrounding area be the true focal point of this incredible community. The future decisions should not be short-sighted, nor should they be small.
1700s

NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY
The Park boasts a rich history and culture dating back to Sioux Tribes, who used the falls as a gathering place on the Big Sioux River.

1868

EUROPEAN SETTLER HISTORY
- In 1868, Sioux Falls was established as the Minnehaha County seat.
- By 1890, Sioux Falls became the largest city in South Dakota due to population growth, in part from the arrival of the first railway in 1878.
- Innovation and determination from the City, companies, and residents continue to diversify and grow Sioux Falls.

1881

QUEEN BEE MILL
- 25 years after the founding of Sioux Falls, the Queen Bee Mill opened.
- In 1937, the Mill was purchased and converted into a storage warehouse, but was destroyed in a fire 19 years later.
- Marking a significant piece of the Park’s history, the Mill’s ruins were listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places in 1984 and can be explored by visitors today.

1907

SENEY ISLAND
- Seney Island, popularly called ‘The Island’ when the City was founded, was located upstream from the falls.
- The 10-acre island was overtaken by the Big Sioux River after a channel was backfilled and water was diverted in 1907 to increase flow to the hydroelectric plant.

1908

POWER + ELECTRIC STATION BUILT
- Sioux Falls Light & Power Company began using the river for hydroelectric power in 1908.
- After more than 60 years of use, the facility was abandoned and eventually donated to the City in 1977.
- In 2005, in another innovative move from the Park’s history, the building was renovated by the City into a café where visitors today continue to enjoy food, beverages, and the view.

Without water there would be no river, more important,
**JOHN MORRELL (SMITHFIELD)**
- As the largest USDA-approved meat facility, Smithfield’s history dates back to 1909 when the John Morrell Meat Packing Company began operations in Sioux Falls.
- Located just north of Falls Park, the plant remains one of the top employers in Sioux Falls.
- In the 1930s, Morrell played a significant role in the City’s economy, employing over 1,700 of the 35,000 Sioux Falls residents.

**THE FUTURE OF SIOUX FALLS**
The City of Sioux Falls honors Falls Park’s historical relevance, respects its present status as a top tourist attraction, and partners with ISG to establish a future that reimagines the Park in a way that retains its status as a top destination for years to come.

**VISITOR CENTER**
- A renovated visitor center opened in 2000, establishing a destination for residents and tourists alike to learn about the Park’s history and its significance in Sioux Falls.

**FLOOD MITIGATION**
- In 1961, the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers completed an extensive system to mitigate flooding within Sioux Falls.
- To protect the city during a 100-year flood event, the system includes levees, a floodwall, diversion channel, spillway, and dam.
- Keeping water in its natural channel and on a greenway in the floodplain, the mitigation system reduces the potential for property damage.

**THE RIVER IMPROVEMENT SOCIETY (RISE)**
The River Improvement Society (RISE) is established to spearhead the clean-up and recreational use of the Big Sioux River.

**FALLS PARK REDEVELOPMENT**
The City begins a redevelopment of Falls Park East, which included new roads, sidewalks, and lights. This kicks off what would eventually become a renaissance leading to the Falls Park we enjoy today.

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Understanding + Opportunity

120 ACRES

Sioux Falls Parks
City Owned Parcels
Parcels

ZONING

NORTH

Industrial
Commercial
Institutional
Residential
Recreational
Opportunities for Improvement

**ACCESSIBILITY + CIRCULATION**
- Narrow roads make it difficult for buses and other large vehicles to access the park
- Lack of benches make it difficult for people to find resting spots
- No pedestrian crossings to the park’s south
- The addition of a sculpture walk would provide connectivity from the park to downtown
- Narrow sidewalks and bridges restrict circulation within the park

**PARKING**
- Not enough parking during events such as the weekly farmer’s market or Sioux Falls Marathon
- Congestion during Winter Wonderland event due to lack of a roundabout to streamline traffic flow
- No parking available between Stockyards Ag Experience and Falls Park Visitor Information Center

**WATER QUALITY**
- Water quality limits recreational use of river and wildlife habitat
- Falls Park should include education on water quality and how to improve it
- Riverfront landscape can be improved to reduce unstabilized stream beds and native plants
- Park has limited areas for wildlife habitat

**AMENITIES + FACILITIES**
- No restrooms at the visitor center due to seasonal closing of cafe on the east bank
- Limited water fountains for visitors and staff
- Bike racks are not visible
- Opportunity to add an outdoor ecological center providing water quality and sustainability education
- Opportunity to add art and local business along Weber Avenue or near the farmer’s market

**SECURITY + SAFETY**
- Insufficient lighting, especially near the water and along walking paths
- Cameras have limited coverage and does not extend beyond the building exterior
- Limited signage directing visitors to refrain from swimming and use caution around water

**TOP PRIORITY**
- Riverfest 2021 Public comment on Falls Park area of improvement and focus

*Per Visitor Information Center Manager and Park Employee Interviews*
Community Outreach

During the 2021 annual Riverfest, the Sioux Falls community was asked to share what makes Falls Park “special.”
The Big Sioux River is the central attraction at Falls Park in Sioux Falls. Water quality is essential to the economic and environmental success of Sioux Falls. Falls Park has the opportunity to be an example of best management practices and education platform to improve water quality for the entire watershed!

**KEY ITEMS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

**Bacteria (E.Coli)**
- Indicator for other pathogens
- Big Sioux River currently exceeds these standards, limiting recreational use of the river

**Contribution**
- Surface runoff from agricultural activities like livestock in streams, confined-animal operations, and field drainage contributes to bacteria levels in the Big Sioux River
- Urban stormwater, including pet and geese waste, are contributors to E.Coli levels in metro area

**Solutions**
- Stabilizing river banks using ecological-based design
- Establishment of grassy swales or riparian buffer zones of native plant material filtering incoming stormwater and runoff

**Total Suspended Solids (Sediment)**
- Contributes to unsuitable fish habitat
- Decreases clarity and appeal
- Big Sioux River currently exceeds these standards limiting healthy and established fish habitat

**Contribution**
- Surface runoff from agricultural activities like field drainage and erosion contributes to sediment levels in Big Sioux River
- Urban stormwater, including construction activities do contribute to sediment levels, but to a lesser extent with good management practices
- Erosion of sediment from unstabilized banks is a significant contributor

**Solutions**
- Stabilizing river banks using ecological-based design
- Establishment of grassy swales or riparian buffer zones of native plant material filtering incoming stormwater

**Open Space**
Focus on open space preservation, limiting impervious surfaces (surfaces that do not allow water to penetrate, and replacing with native plants designed to benefit water quality by reducing erosion and increasing infiltration.

**Education**
Falls Park is a central point for water quality and environmental education, becoming a tradition and go-to destination for schools in the region. The education area includes signage, dock for observation and sampling, and outdoor classroom.

**Restoration**
Designed with a focus on restoring bank stabilization and natural water treatment by the addition of buffers and bioswales. A riparian and wetland buffer is an area of trees, shrubs and other vegetation planted adjacent to the river that filters sediment and reduces pollutants from entering the river. A bioswales are vegetated, shallow landscaped depressions designed to capture, treat and filter stormwater.
Falls Park holds a special place in the community psyche. It is a place for reflection and quiet contemplation. It is a place to connect and engage with nature. It is a place for the community to gather and celebrate special occasions. This is the overwhelming feedback our team has received from many in the community and surrounding region that visit Falls Park on a regular basis. Our plan conserves the serenity of this special place, but overcomes several of the obstacles that currently limit accessibility, create traffic congestion, or restrict select activities.

Creating an enhanced entry experience, the parkway design of North Phillips Avenue is proposed to extend and connect to East Falls Park Drive. This realignment serves not only to create a welcoming entrance into the park, but also alleviates traffic congestion. The connecting bridge also serves as an iconic piece of architecture synonymous with the park. Visitor parking for the site has been consolidated to the either side of the new parkway road. Eliminating and combining existing surface lots throughout the park into one, central location, creates a pedestrian focused experience by eliminating conflicts between visitors and vehicles.

To further augment the pedestrian experience, existing and proposed paths continue to connect the park’s information centers, cafes, historic ruins, and picnic shelters. But in an effort to provide a new and unique vantage point of the falls, the existing railroad bridge is to be retrofitted to safely accommodate foot traffic and make an intuitive connection between points of interest.

#2 Priority: Enhancing Visitor Experiences

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EXPLORING IDEAS

LEGEND

1. Existing Visitor Center
2. Existing Falls Overlook Cafe
3. Relocated Visitor Parking
4. Pedestrian Bridge
5. East Falls Park Drive Parkway
6. Winter Wonderland Walking Loop
7. Farmers Market Improvements
8. Weber Street Expansion
9. Winter Wonderland Driving Loop
LEGEND
1. Existing Pavilion
2. Artist Loft
3. Art Plaza
4. Dining Patio + Boardwalk Connections
5. Water Quality Education Area with Bioretention Ponds
6. Enhanced Buffer Strip
7. Iconic East West Bridge
8. Falls Park Gateway Bridge
## Budgeted Cost

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMPROVEMENT SERVICES</th>
<th>BUDGETED COST</th>
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<tr>
<td>Roadway Realignments (Philips Avenue to East Falls Park Drive)</td>
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