



CITY OF SIOUX FALLS

PROFESSIONAL DESIGN SERVICES FOR FALLS PARK

SEPTEMBER 2, 2021



ISG



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.

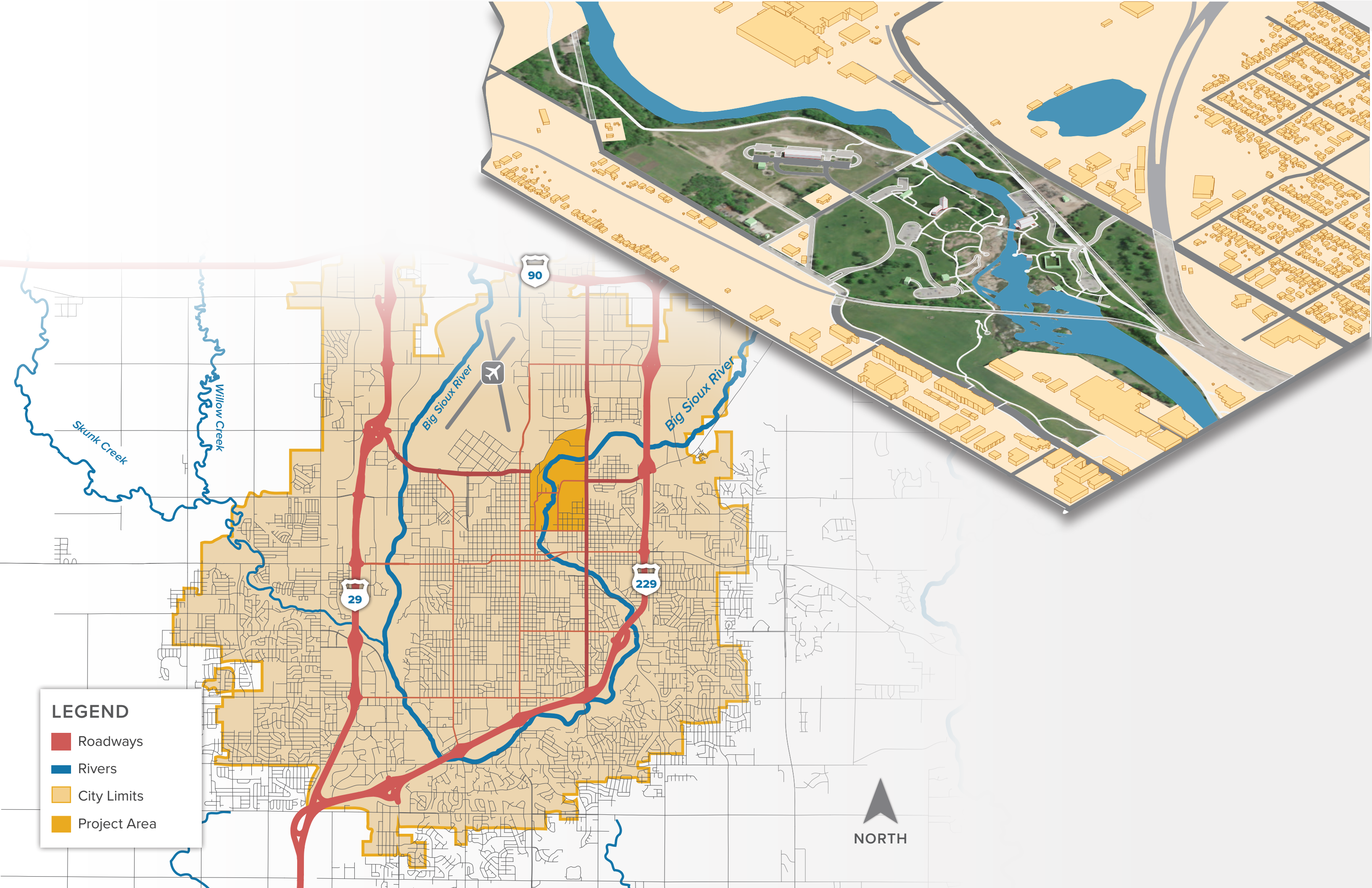
Context Matters

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.

ISG

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.



LEGEND

-  Roadways
-  Rivers
-  City Limits
-  Project Area





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.



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.



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.

1700s

1881

1907

the Nation of Progress

granite walls which have stood for years, rugged and wildly picturesque, a great and inspiring example of God, are being smoothed away by the kiss of the hammer and the marvellous power of the explosion.



You are standing near what was once the Lower Falls. Look at the photograph to the left to imagine your view if the falls were still there.

Originally, there were three series of falls within Falls Park. The Upper Falls and Main Falls still exist. However, by 1907, the Lower Falls had been eliminated. First, quarrying companies mined the Sioux Quartzite rocks and boulders for building stone and street paving. Then, the rock was removed to improve the flow of water for the hydroelectric plant.

Elimination of the Lower Falls was just one of many changes that altered the river's course by reducing its flow. The Queen Bee Mill and Sioux Falls Light & Power.

lar place to pose for photographs. In the background, you can see the roof of the hydroelectric plant. *Sioux Falls Heritage Museum photo*

s shows the steps of the Upper Falls for the first time. The high retaining wall and the high retaining wall widened today's channel. The hydroelectric plant is at the top of the falls.



Beginning of demolition of the Lower Falls, July 6, 1907.

1868

1881

1908



“Without water there would be no river, more important, no city.”



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.



STATE PENITENTIARY

- In **1881**, a bill was passed to develop a penitentiary in Sioux Falls that could house at least 125 people.
- Less than two years after the bill passed, the facility was fully constructed and began housing prisoners.
- By **1889**, with the warden's residence and several additional buildings on-site, the penitentiary became a state prison.



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.



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 RIVER IMPROVEMENT SOCIETY (RISE)

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



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.

1909

1969

2000

without water there will be no life.” - Hazel O’Connor, 1977

1961

1994

2021 >



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.



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.



THE FUTURE OF SIOUX FALLS

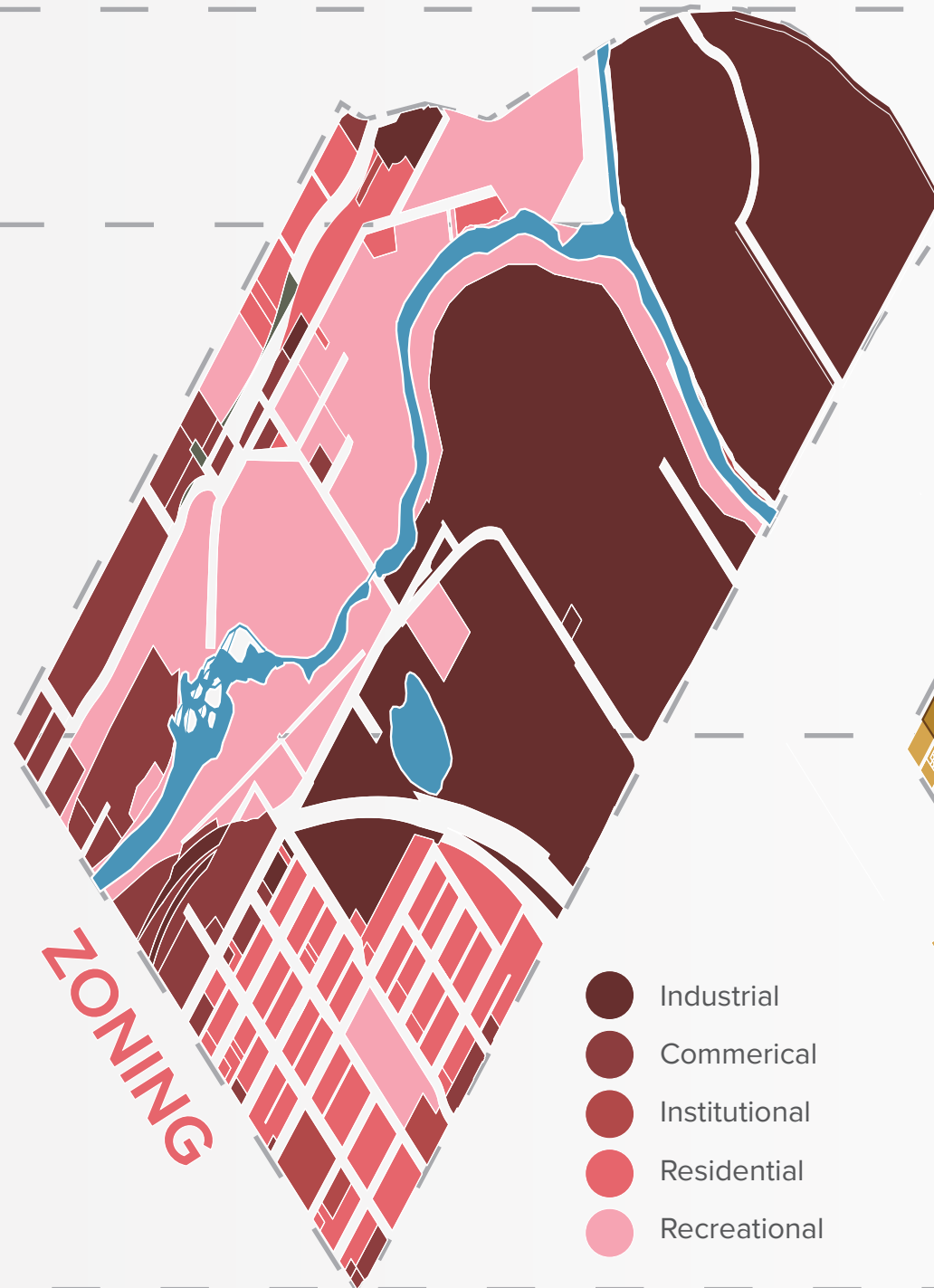
The City of Sioux Falls honors Falls Park's historical relevance, respects its present status as a top tourist attraction, and partners with ISG to establish a future that reimagines the Park in a way that retains its status as a top destination for years to come.

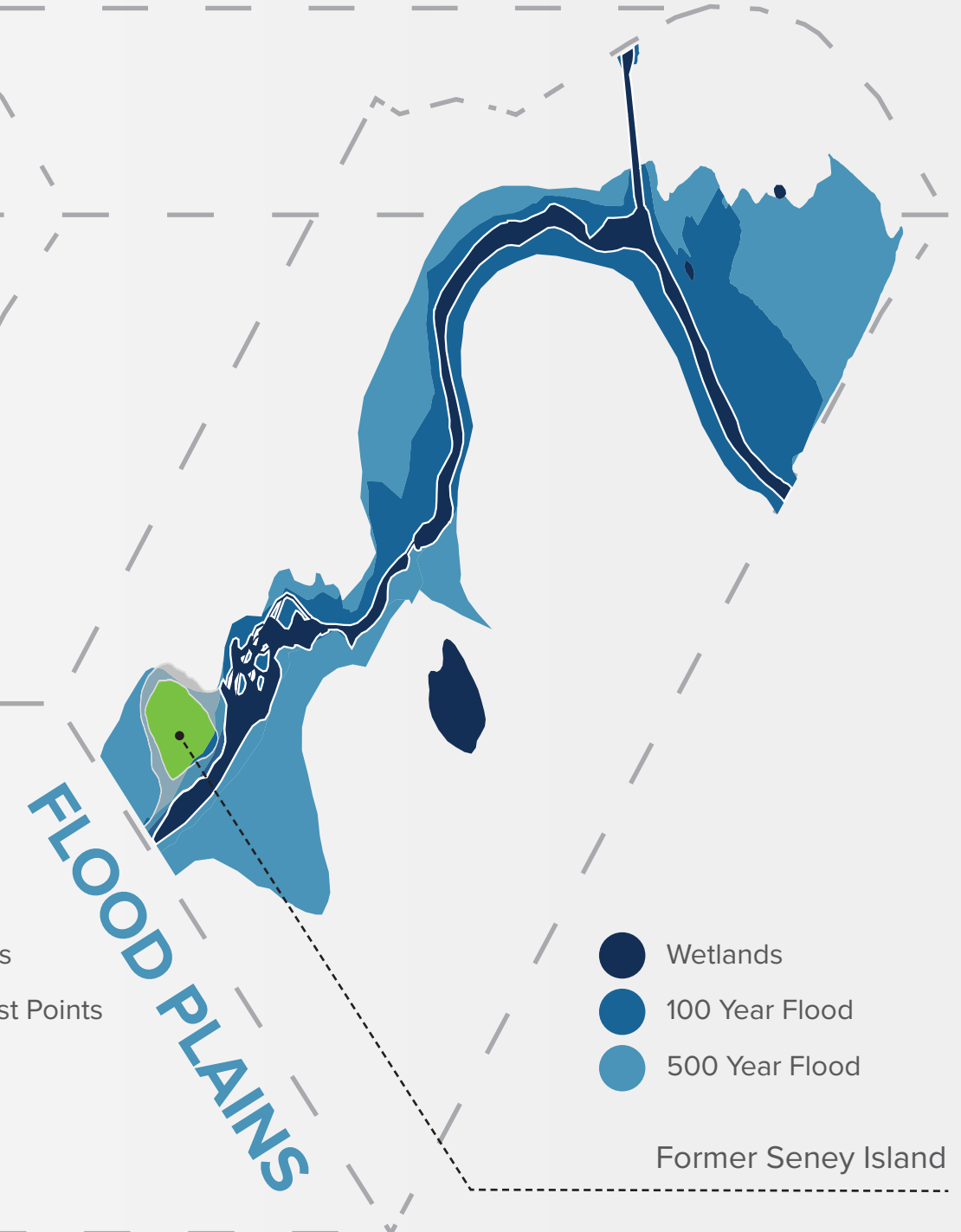
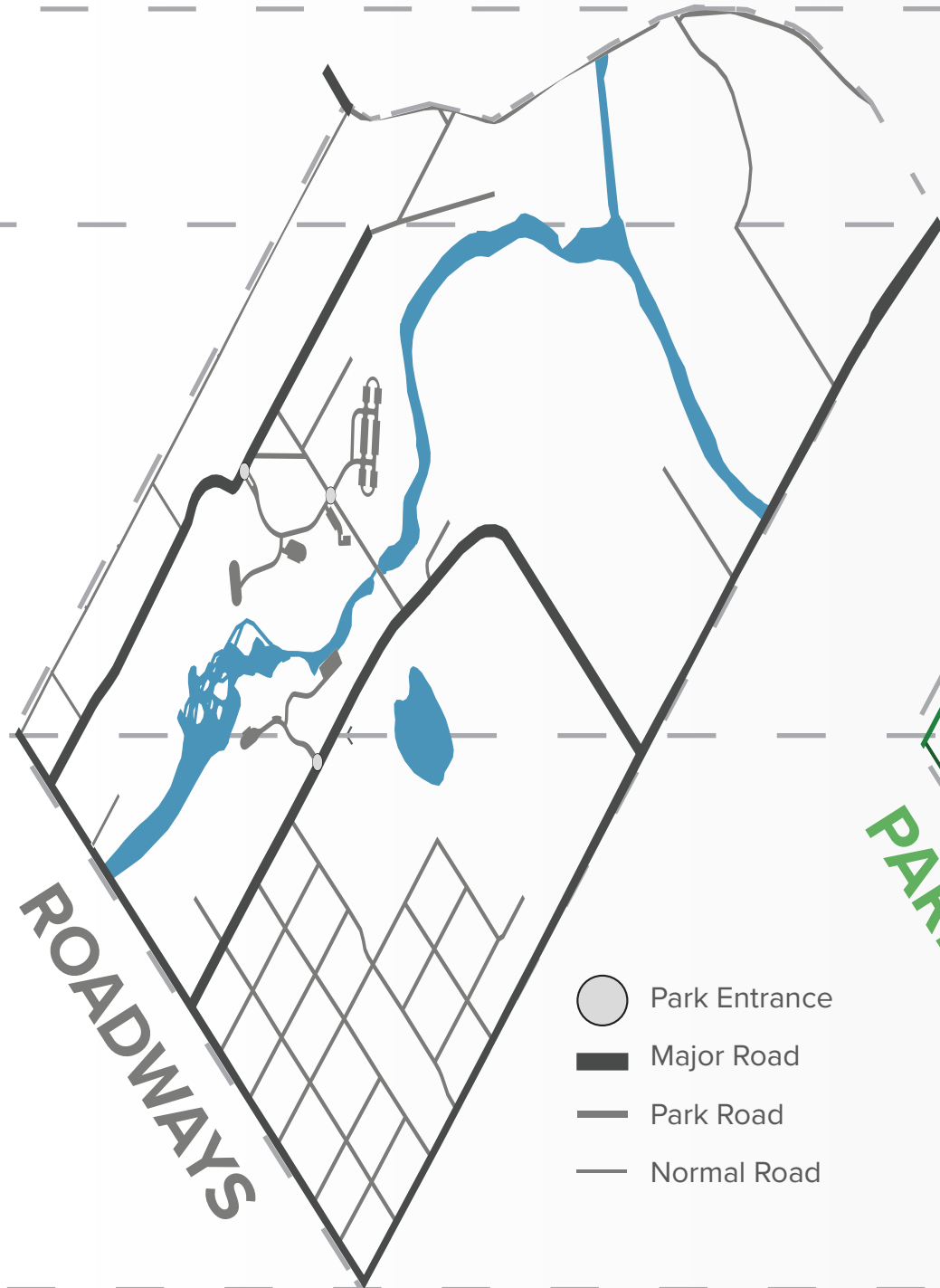
Understanding + Opportunity



NORTH

120
ACRES





Opportunities for Improvement



ACCESSIBILITY + CIRCULATION*

- Narrow roads make it difficult for busses 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

*Per Visitor Information Center Manager and Park Employee Interviews



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



LOCAL INPUT

Community Outreach

During the 2021 annual Riverfest, the Sioux Falls community was asked to share what makes Falls Park “special.”

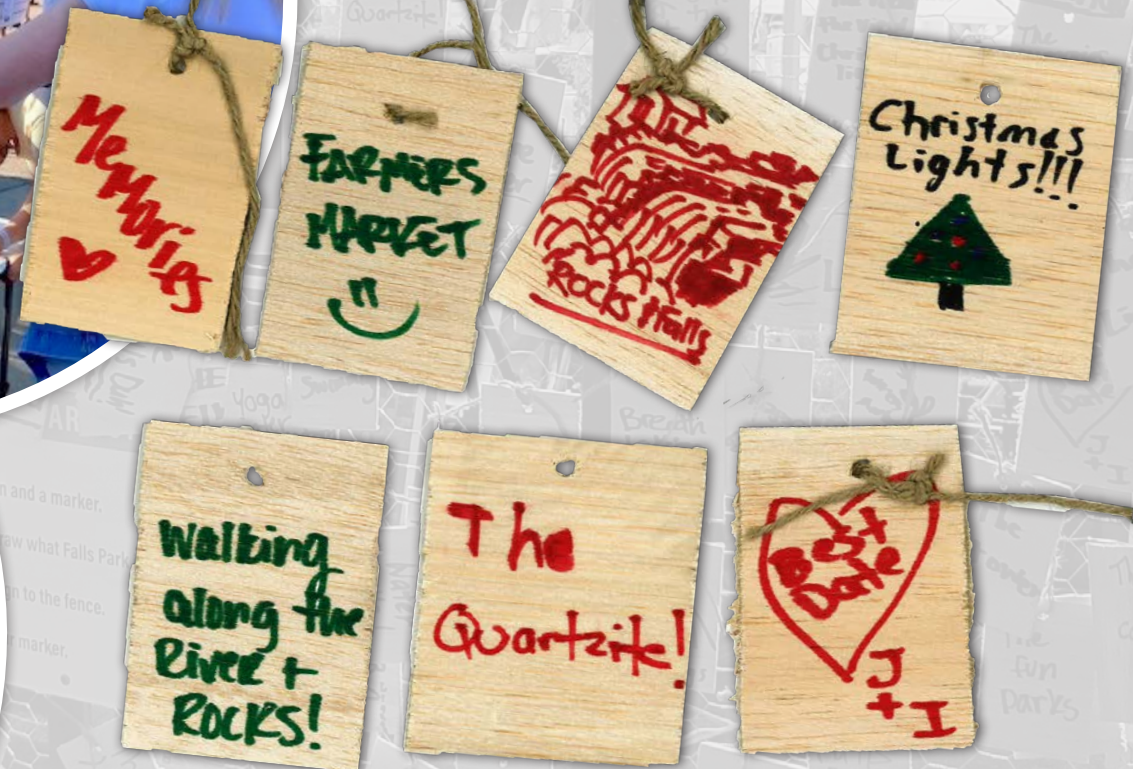
ROADS + WALKWAYS

WATER QUALITY

PUBLIC ART

PARK AMENITIES

HOW SHOULD FALLS PARK PRIORITIZE IMPROVEMENTS?
Please place your stickers next to your preferred priority.



#1 Priority: Big Sioux River Water Quality

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

FALLS PARK WATER

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.



#2 Priority: Enhancing Visitor Experiences

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.



OPEN SPACE PARK EXPANSION

The adjacency of the existing farmer's market site creates a logical connection between the North and South. The proposed closing of North First Avenue and segments of North Phillips Avenue allows for the park to expand. With the roadway improvements planned for East Falls Park Drive and green infrastructure enhancements, pedestrian movement between the two parcels becomes safer for pedestrians.

Other proposed enhancements for the farmers market area includes an artist loft with studio space. The addition of the art plaza amphitheater will create new opportunities for artists to showcase their work and engage with the unique landscape and river trail.

Additional amenities include an outdoor dining patio next to the existing pavilion with unique perspectives and an immersive experience.



- 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

EXPLORING IDEAS



LEGEND

- 1 Existing Pavillion
- 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

IMPROVEMENT SERVICES	BUDGETED COST
Roadway Realignments (Philips Avenue to East Falls Park Drive)	\$1,975,500
Bridge Connections (2 Pedestrian, 2 Vehicular)	\$46,850,500
Parking Lot Relocation	\$2,550,000
Park Trail Reorganization	\$3,400,000
Park Expansion + Property Acquisition	\$26,124,000
Park Amenity Improvements	\$1,600,000
Budgeted Overall Project Cost	\$82,500,000



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