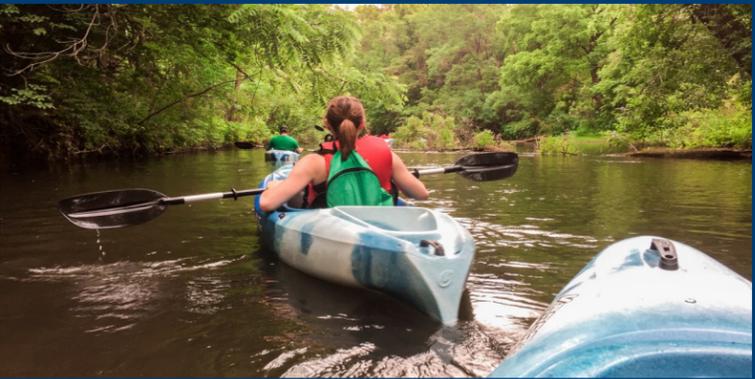


City of River Falls 2025-2026 Legislative Priorities



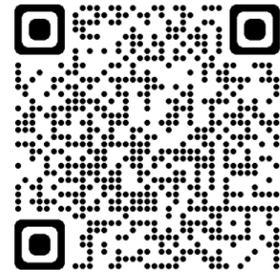
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City of River Falls
City Council
2025-2026
Legislative Priorities



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/cityofriverfalls



City of River Falls, Wisconsin
2025-2026 Legislative Priorities



River Falls City Council (l-r): Sean Downing, Nick Carow, Alyssa Mueller, Diane Odeen, Mayor Dan Toland, Todd Bjerstedt, Scott Morrissette, and Jeff Bjork

The City of River Falls City Council supports the following legislative priorities for fiscal year 2025-2026:

- Pursuit of federal funding in partnership with Merchant McIntyre Associates, LLC; and
- Implementing inflation mitigation strategies; and
- Advocating for infrastructure projects; and
- Improving mental health crisis supports.



Incorporated
1885

Counties
Pierce and St. Croix

Size
7.52 square miles

Population
17,445

Median household income
\$72,247

Median home sale price
\$395,000

Total housing units
5,930

Higher education
UW-River Falls
Chippewa Valley Technical College

District schools
8 schools/3,430 students

Parks
23 parks on 276 acres

Locally owned utilities
Electric, water/sewer, wastewater

Annual budget
\$58 million

Legislative Priorities

Vision

A distinct, vibrant, and safe community with an abundance of nature and easy access to metropolitan amenities. A place where families, students, and businesses flourish.

Mission

To coordinate and deliver essential services and ensure a sustainable future.

Values

Put people first
Pursue excellence
Act with integrity
Embrace change
Serve our community
Consider future generations



Potential Opportunities for Federal Funding

Renovations of St. Croix Valley Business Innovation Center

Over \$2,000,000 requested to expand the current square footage of the SCVBIC to support additional entrepreneurs and small businesses. By adding an additional 18,190 sq ft to the existing 31,150 sq ft of space, the SCVBIC will be able to dramatically increase the number of businesses housed in the center.

Support from the US Army Corp of Engineers for Kinni Corridor Plan

On February 28, 2023, USACE and the City of River Falls signed a cost-share agreement under Continuing Authorities Program (CAP) 206 for a feasibility study to assess the removal of the Powell and Junction Falls Dams on the Kinni River. This feasibility study evaluated 7 project alternatives, including options to proceed with no further action, the removal of only the Junction Falls Dam, the removal of only the Powell Dam, or the removal of both dams. Thorough evaluation of these alternatives resulted in the Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP), which includes the removal of both the Junction Falls and Powell Falls Dams, as well as the restoration of the Lake George, Lake Louise, and Spring Ponds sub-areas along the Kinni River. The TSP is anticipated to have a total cost of \$19,767,000 in 2023 dollars and result in the restoration of 13 acres of cold-water stream, 30 acres of riparian forest, and 3 acres of emergent wetland, as well as water quality benefits in the lower Kinni River. Additionally, the TSP is expected to result in additional opportunities for the removal of invasive species, an expansion of native wildlife, improved stormwater runoff, and increased recreation and education.

Enhanced Communication and Public Assurance Project

Requesting \$431,000 for the deployment of a new, 3-site fixed radio system to more reliably cover emergency communication in River Falls. Additionally, investment through the community project funding process would enable the procurement of upgraded portable radio equipment for the River Falls Police and Fire Departments, enhancing interoperability both locally and with other first responder partners in the region.

Water Utility Infrastructure Projects

The City is in pursuit of federal funding for water utility projects. Some examples include construction of a new well in the North Zone, 2 small booster pumps in the East Zone Booster Station, and a future water tower in the East Zone.

Surface transportation and infrastructure projects through the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development Grant Program (BUILD) (Formerly RAISE)

The City of River Falls previously applied for RAISE planning funding for the Connect River Falls Initiative (CRFI). Based on direction provided by the City Council and Merchant McIntyre, the plans are to pursue an implementation application in 2026 focused on Main Street redevelopment.



Legislative Priorities



Inflation Mitigation

- Advocating for a statewide base levy limit increase or changes to the formula to empower cities to have more localized control and removal of the incentive for cities to borrow; and
- Advocating for a revision of the state TID 12% test to allow cities to exceed the 12% limitation; and
- Developing a strategy to retain municipal bond tax-exempt status – this is estimated to save cities \$12 trillion; and
- Hydropower licensing reform – relicensing a hydropower facility can take nearly eight years. FERC regulations require relicensing applicants to submit environmental information that are lengthy, costly, and that largely lack relevance to smaller operations. Reform would create parity between municipalities with small hydropower operations compared to large infrastructure that current laws are geared toward.

Advocating for Infrastructure Projects

- Seeking a state transportation plan to continue HWY 35 as four lanes south of Cemetery Road; and
- Seeking support from the state for the Kinni Corridor Plan by increasing available funding in the Municipal Dam Grant Program to \$2,000,000 per dam for removal, or alternatively through other funding sources; and
- Advocating for flexibility in TID law for efforts towards increasing housing and affordability

Improving Mental Health Crisis Supports

- Advocating for hospital beds in Western Wisconsin that are dedicated to those recovering from a mental health crisis.

Economic development partners

U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)
Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation
Wisconsin EDA
Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority
West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
Momentum West Wisconsin
St. Croix Valley Business Innovation Center
St. Croix Economic Development Corporation
Pierce County Economic Development Corporation
River Falls Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Bureau
Small Business Development Center – UW-River Falls
River Falls Economic Development Corporation

Largest employers in the city

UW-River Falls: 850
River Falls School District: 516
Rise Bakery Company: 377
River Falls Area Hospital: 250
City of River Falls: 175
Trelleborg: 130
Family Fresh Market: 130
Turnkey Corrections: 125
Eurofins.: 120
M Health Fairview: 100
TW Equities: 100