



**Community Development | 2024 Annual Report**

# Strategic Initiatives

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The Administration's 2023-2025 Strategic Initiatives were adopted by the City Council on September 26, 2023. The projects identified through the work plan process are aligned with the Strategic Plan and directly support the strategic initiatives adopted by the City Council.

- Connected Community
- Economic Vitality
- Financial Sustainability
- Quality Municipal Services

## Connected Community

- Conduct 2025 National Community Survey
- Obtain Hydroelectric Re-License from the Federal Electric Regulatory Commission
- Kinnickinnic River Corridor Plan: USACE Feasibility\*
- Assist UWRF with Science & Technology Center\*

## Economic Vitality

- Complete Phase 1 Mann Valley Corporate Park\*
- Cooperative Boundary Agreement: Town of Clifton\*
- Preliminary analysis and preparation for the Main Street Corridor Plan\*

## Financial Sustainability

- Construct and Begin Operation of Bio Solids Processing Facility\*
- 2024-2028 Fiscal Plan\*

## Quality Municipal Services

- Complete Powell Avenue Bridge Construction\*
- Complete Wasson Lane Urbanization\*
- Fire Station Initial Design and Engineering\*

\*Community Development Department lead or assisting in project.

# City Vision, Mission, & Values

## Our 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.

## Our Mission

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

## Our Values

- Put People First
- Pursue excellence
- Act with integrity
- Embrace change
- Serve our community
- Consider future generation



# Message from our Director

Dear Community Members and Partners,

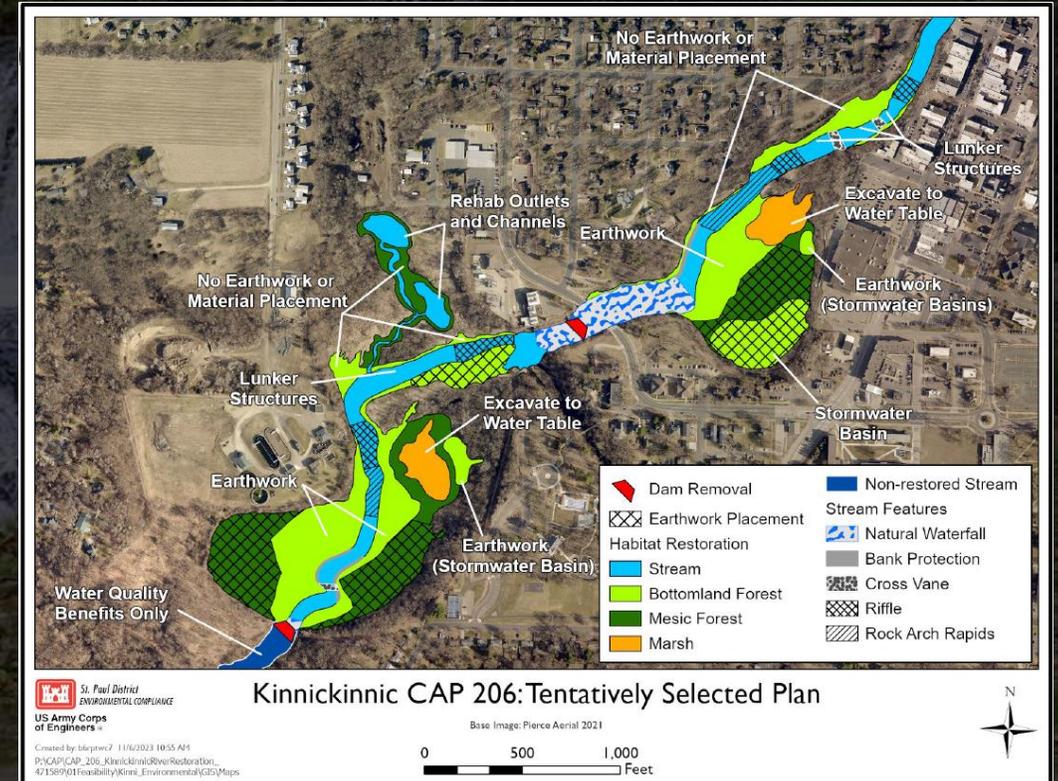
2024 is marked with the strides we have made in building a more connected and resilient community through both development and infrastructure projects. These projects provide a better-connected community, future economic resilience and safer living and travel within the City. And they fill our mission to guide future growth and development of the City while preserving and enhancing current city assets and promoting a sustainable future.

Major projects include strides toward implementation of the Kinnickinnic River Corridor Plan, construction of Phase 1 of the Mann Valley Corporate Park, ensuring private development and investment within the City, and the reconstruction of Wasson Lane to an urbanized road.

While we celebrate these accomplishments, we are also keenly aware that there is more work to be done. As we look to the year ahead, we remain committed to advancing initiatives that promote resiliency, better connection and thereby increased community well-being. Your partnership and support make all the difference, and together, we continue to make our community a place where everyone can thrive.

Here's to another year of progress, growth, and connection.

Amy Peterson, Community Development Director



# Mann Valley Corporate Park

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Thirteen years after purchasing the property, on October 16, 2024, the City held a ribbon cutting ceremony for the completion of Phase I of the Mann Valley Corporate Park. Joining City staff and councilmembers for the celebration included members of the River Falls Chamber of Commerce, the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, the River Falls Economic Development Corporation, and more.



# Mann Valley Corporate Park

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Located on the northwest side of the city, the park includes over 200 developable acres. At approximately 165 acres, the largest lot is one of the most sizable tracts of land in the Twin Cities metro area. The corporate park includes lots for light industrial, and manufacturing use and has 10 acres for multi-family housing and another 63 acres for conservancy.

Construction of Phase I of the Mann Valley Corporate Park was the largest infrastructure project the city has completed and included:

- 4.5 Miles of Watermain with Pressure Reducing Station
- 2.5 Miles of Sanitary Sewer with Wastewater Pumping Station
- Almost 1 Mile of Storm Sewer
- 35,000 CY of Earthwork
- 3,900 Feed of Roadway Construction
- 2 Miles of Utility Maintenance/Multi-Use Path Construction

# Kinni Corridor

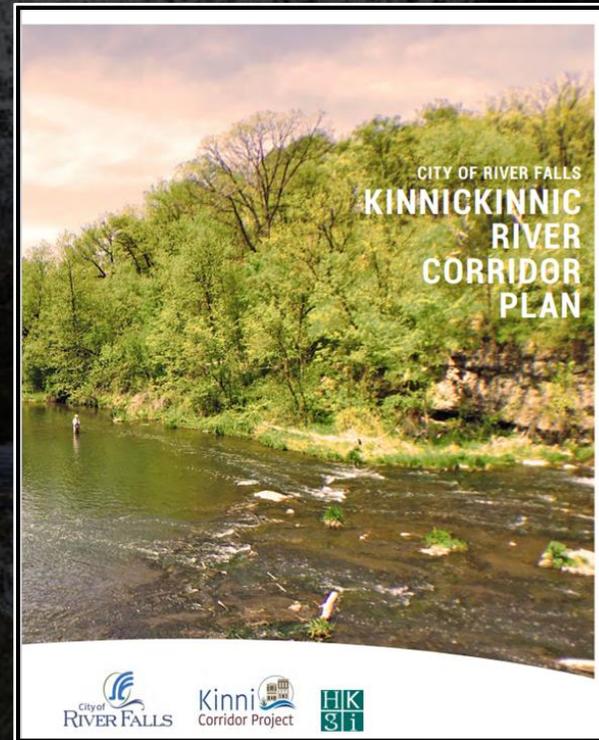
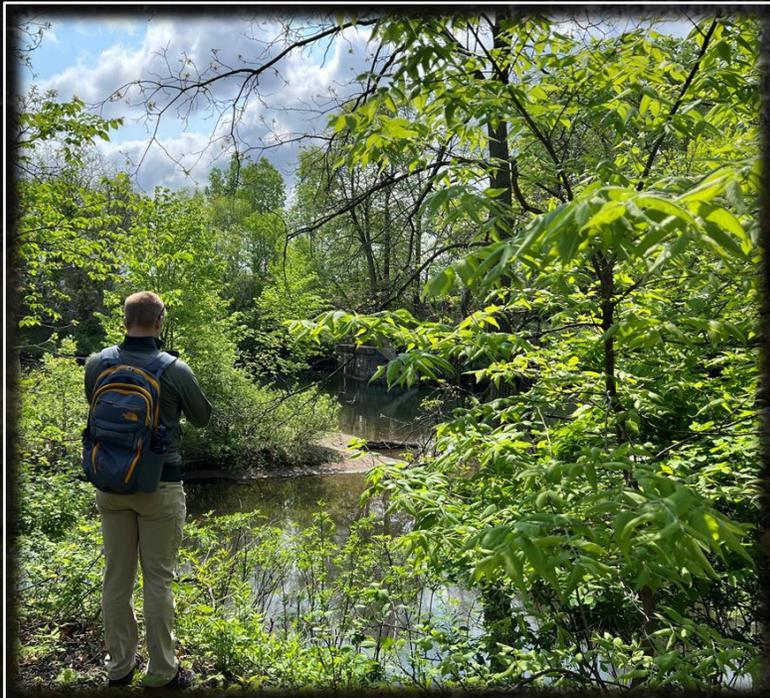
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Early in 2023 the City of River Falls signed a Federal Cost Share Agreement with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) under the Continuing Authorities Program (CAP 206) to study both the cost and environmental benefits of restoring the Kinnickinnic River to its natural setting by removing one or both hydroelectric dams. Upon signing this agreement, the City and the USACE entered into a Feasibility Study process. The anticipated timeline was for the Study to be completed in 2024. However, due to the high-cost estimate for the project, internal USACE waivers were required, and the Feasibility Study work was paused. The final of three waivers was received in November and the USACE once again began work on the Feasibility Study. Today the estimated timeline is for the Study to be completed by November 2025.

During 2024 staff continued to work with our legislators to keep the project on the priority list and to look for additional project funding. One opportunity arose with proposed changes to the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) that controls the USACE CAP 206 Program. For many years, the maximum funding for the program was set at \$10M, but with the January 4, 2025 WRDA Bill approval the maximum project funding was increased to \$15M. This is a win for our community, realistically providing increased funding to the Kinni dam removal and restoration project.

# Kinni Corridor

The City received a National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program grant in 2024. This program provides NPS staff to assist communities in developing and restoring parks, conservation areas, rivers, and wildlife habitats, as well as creating outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that engage future generations in the outdoors. Staff engaged NPS to further efforts of the Kinni Corridor Plan via a river access planning effort to provide greater detailed plans for river access and recreation, based on the USACE dam removal and restoration work. This work has the potential to continue through 2025.



# South Wasson Lane

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In 2019 the City of River Falls submitted a successful grant application to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation utilizing the Surface Transportation Program (STP) to reconstruct South Wasson Lane. STP allocates federal funds to eligible roadways within urban areas. The City subsequently entered into an agreement with the Wisconsin DOT to design and reconstruct S. Wasson Lane from Cemetery Road to Cascade Avenue. The total project cost was approximately \$5 million dollars. The STP grant funded approximately \$4 million with local funds contributing the remaining balance.

Construction began in July 2025, and the highlight of the project is the new roundabout at the intersection of South Wasson Lane and Cascade Avenue. Prior to construction the skewed angle between the two roadways reduced intersection safety, and the heavy traffic on Cascade Avenue resulted in excessive wait times for vehicles attempting to access Cascade from South Wasson Lane.

# South Wasson Lane

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In addition to the new round about, the South Wasson Lane was completely reconstructed within the project limits, aside from the bridge. Reconstruction included new concrete curb and gutter, new asphaltic pavement on the roadway and the trail, new street lighting throughout, and major stormwater improvements. The major stormwater work included a six-foot wide by four-foot tall concrete storm sewer to carry large volumes of stormwater runoff from the extensive watershed draining through South Wasson Lane. Stormwater work also included the installation of two stormwater management facilities to improve water quality prior to discharge to the South Fork.



# New Trails

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The City of River Falls added 2.39 miles of new paved trails in 2024. The biggest addition was 2.05 miles of paved trail that was built as part of the Mann Valley Corporate Park project. Mann Valley trails are surrounded by nature and feature brand-new lighting and benches along the path.

A much-needed 0.21 – mile connection was made thanks to the Oak Hill housing development. That paved trail segment starts at the Rolling Hills Park parking lot and runs along Edgewater Drive/879<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Bobwhite Street.

The Thompson Heights development off Radio Road added 0.13 miles of trail starting at the Thompson Heights entrance by building No. 3 to the roundabout on Paulson Road.

In addition to those new trails, the city also replaced half a mile of paved trail along Powell Avenue from Apollo Road through Collins Park, which connects to Patrick Court.

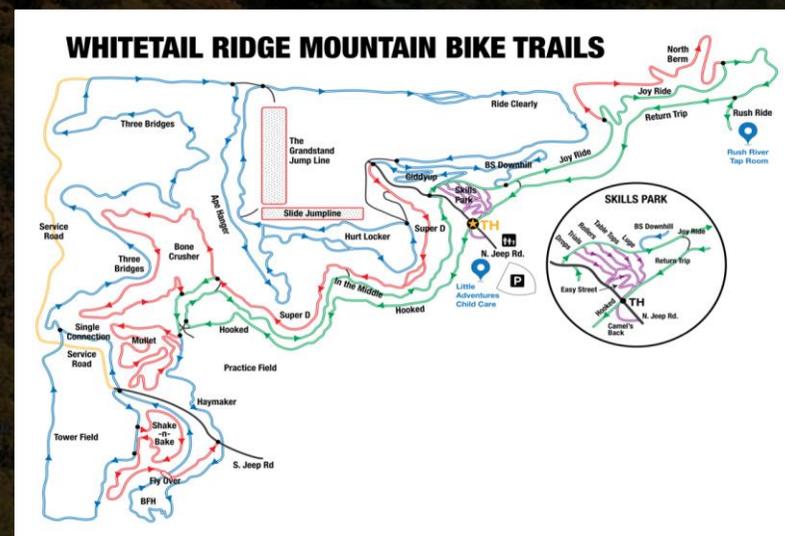
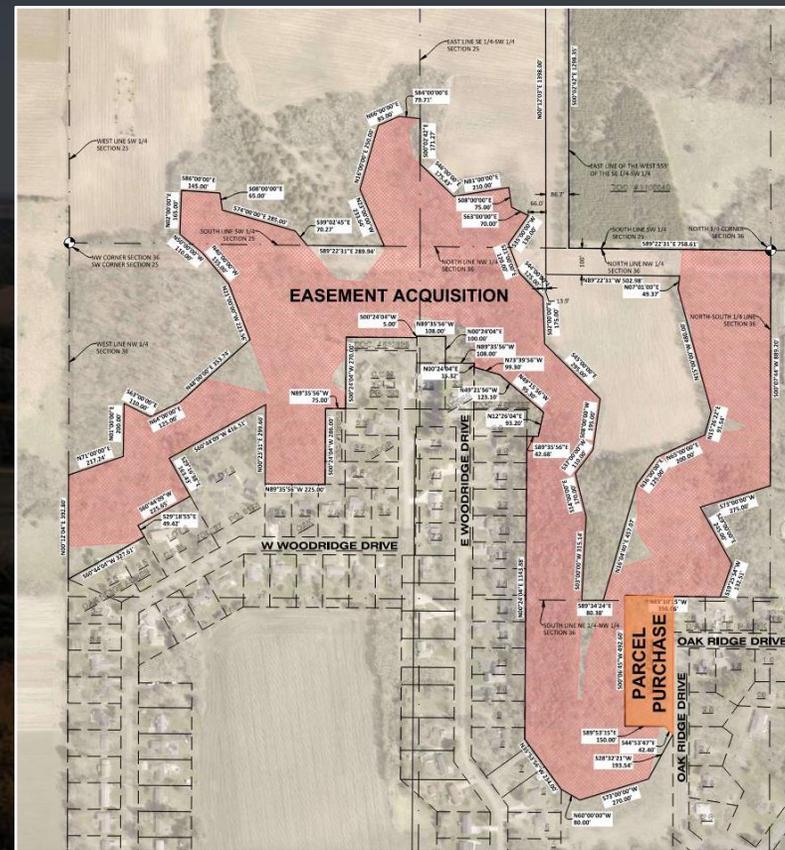


# Fox Property Easement

The City has been working closely with the Fox family, who owns several large parcels of land south of the Whitetail Ridge Corporate Park and north of Powell Avenue. The Fox family offered to create a larger easement that includes the steep slope areas of their property which are not suitable for development. This expanded easement will allow for a significant expansion of the Whitetail Ridge Mountain Bike Trail, located near Tattersall Distilling and the retail area at Paulson Road and North Main Street.

The approximately 50-acre easement will allow for development of recreational trails in partnership with Kinni Off-Road Cyclists (KORC).

The generosity of the Fox family and their willingness to partner with the City provides a significant opportunity to expand recreational access to residents and visitors to River Falls and accomplish community goals as outlined in adopted plans and in accordance with the City's Mission, Vision, and Values and the Council's Strategic Initiatives.



# Housing Development

In 2024, 102 new homes were permitted in neighborhoods including Highview Meadows, Sterling Ponds, Thompson Heights, Oak Hill, and Eco Village. Construction continued on two apartment projects – the Uplands (105 units) and The Current (106 units).

Two new neighborhoods and a new apartment building received partial approvals in 2024 and are expected to complete their approval process in 2025.

- Brookgreen: A 100-unit townhome neighborhood located across from Thompson Heights on Paulson Road at Radio Road
- Red's Place Supportive Housing and Single-Family Neighborhood: Located on the east side of Hwy 29 south of Larson Park, Danielson Development is planning to construct a 75-unit supportive housing development for adults with autism and their family members along with 30 new single-family townhomes
- Sisu River Falls: A 66-unit apartment building with an additional self-storage building located on Sunshine Avenue near the River Falls High School.

In May and October, staff presented information on the status of the housing development nationally and locally and provided an overview of the next steps for implementing the Housing Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.



The Current Housing Development



The Uplands Housing Development

# Commercial and Industrial Developments

In addition to the major public projects completed in 2024, these private-sector projects began or were completed in 2024 with the support of the Community Development Team.

## Starbucks

Opened on a redevelopment site on N Main Street



## Little Adventures

Started construction on a new childcare facility in the Sterling Ponds Corporate Park



## Sterling Ponds I Industrial Building

Completed construction on a 108,000 sq/ft multi-tenant industrial building in the Sterling Ponds Corporate Park



# Permits & Code Enforcement

The Building Inspection, Code Compliance, and Planning and Zoning staff worked with developers, contractors, residents, and business owners to ensure that new construction, renovations, and existing properties are safe and well maintained.

Planning and Building Permits 2024	
Building Permits	321
New Home Permits	100
Home Occupation Permits	1
Special Use Permits	3
Special Sign Permits	2
Variance	0
Rezoning	0
Annexation Requests	2
Annexation Acres (total)	49.5
Certified Survey Maps	4
Preliminary/Final Plat	3
Planned Unit Development	1
Development Review	3

Code Compliance 2024	
Building and Rental Complaints	44
Building and Code Compliance Inspections and Consults	2,126
Sediment and Erosion Control Inspections	78
Erosion Control Compliance Reports	15
Sediment and Erosion Control Citations	1
Zoning Code Compliance Letters	56
Nuisance Code Compliance Letters	30
Temporary Signs in the Right-of-Way	300+

# Alternative Funding Sources

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Funding major projects can sometimes be difficult to fund through standard revenue streams. To ensure fiscal responsibility, our team strives to find outside funding sources for infrastructure planning and improvements. In 2024 we were successful in obtaining over \$250,000 in grant awards.

- National Park Service River, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program – estimated at \$50,000
- Safe Streets for All grant - \$200,000
- Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities - \$9,175
- Bodhi Studios – (WEDC Grant) - \$35,000

# Boards and Commissions Highlights

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Community Development Staff oversees eight citizen-led Boards/Commissions for the City of River Falls. These opportunities for residents to get involved with planning, beautification, and the preservation of River Falls. Boards include City Board of Appeals, Downtown Design Review Committee, Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), Business Improvement District (BID), Plan Commission, Extra Territorial Zoning Committee (ETZ), Extra Territorial Board of Appeals, and River Falls Economic Development Corporation.

## RF serves!

Are you a city resident who has an interest in local government and serving your community? Then you are in the right place! The City of River Falls has several boards, commissions, and committees on which City residents can serve. Serving is a great way to learn about the City and how it is run. Time commitments vary but generally include monthly meetings and participation in other activities for which the committee is responsible.

You can explore board/commission/committee responsibilities, current members, and meeting times/days by clicking the navigation links provided.

If you have any questions or are interested in serving, please email the Mayor. Thanks for your interest in serving your community!

# Plan Commission Highlights

- Recommended approval of two annexations totaling 49.5 acres
- Approved two Special Use Permits and two Special Sign Permits
- Recommended approval of the final plat for Oak Hill 1<sup>st</sup> Addition (65 units) and a modification of the Mann Valley Corporate Park plat (300 acres)



Concept Drawing for Red's Place



Concept Drawing for Sisu

# Business Improvement District Board Highlights

- Approved 3 sign/awning grants (\$3,000); one façade grant (\$6,000); support for events downtown (\$11,500); beautification of the downtown area with hanging baskets and gardens (\$5,285); and a cost share for the painting of the second bridge abutment on the Kinnickinnic Trail (\$900).
- Provided a letter of support for Bodhi Studio's Regional Business Fund loan application (\$107,535)
- Approved the 2025 BID budget and assessment (\$44,500)



Bodhi Yoga Studio



Updated Hanging Flower Baskets

# Historic Preservation Commission Highlights

- Prepared and presented the Library exhibit “Spirit of Adventure”
- Continued work on the narrative of River Falls’ early history; interpretive elements at the Glover Station School in DeSanctis Park; updating the walking tour pamphlet; identifying upcoming historic anniversaries; designing new interpretive signage; printing postcards for the UWRF 150-year anniversary; and outlining key dates in River Falls History
- Worked with the Wisconsin Historical Society on a grant to submit two properties to the National Register of Historic Places: Jay and Bernice Grimm House, 108 South Sixth Street, and the Roscius and Ingebor Freeman House, 220 South Fourth Street



Glover Station School



Library Exhibit “Spirit of Adventure”

# Community Partners

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We know that there are many groups who are simultaneously working to improve the community here in River Falls and the Community Development Department is happy to partner with them on various projects.

- ❖ Chippewa Valley Technical College
- ❖ Grow to Share
- ❖ Kinni Corridor Collaborative
- ❖ KORC
- ❖ Membership in Rain to Rivers
- ❖ Momentum West
- ❖ National Park Service
- ❖ Pierce and St. Croix Counties
- ❖ Pierce County Economic Development Corporation
- ❖ Prairie Enthusiasts
- ❖ River Falls Economic Development Corporation
- ❖ River Falls School District
- ❖ St. Croix Economic Development Corporation
- ❖ St. Croix Valley Bird Club
- ❖ St. Croix Valley Innovation Center
- ❖ Towns of Clifton, River Falls, Troy and Kinnickinnic
- ❖ University of Wisconsin River Falls
- ❖ US Army Corps of Engineers
- ❖ WI DNR
- ❖ WI Historic Preservation Commission
- ❖ Wisconsin Department of Transportation

# The Team

The Community Development Department works to support and guides future growth and development through effective planning, zoning, permitting, enforcement, and maintain and promote sustainability by taking care of the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations.

We appreciate you taking the time to read about our successful 2024.

Thank you for your continued participation and support in the intentional growth of our River Falls!



Left to right: Angie Bond, David Hovel, Keri Schreiner, Becky Corson, Tyler Galde, Tamarra Jaworski, Emily Shively, Amy Peterson, Harley Mehlhorn, Todd Nickleski, Adam Martinson, Chris Buntjer