

RIVER FALLS CITY COUNCIL ▶

(from left to right)

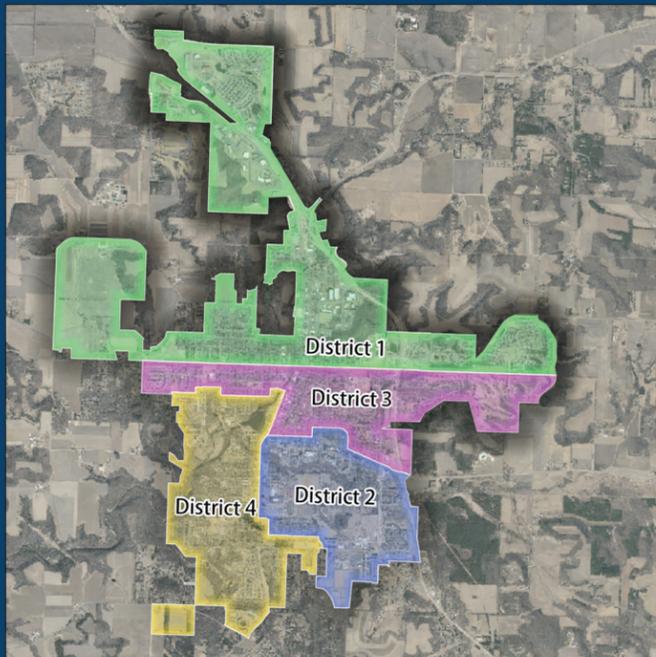
- SEAN DOWNING | District 1
- NICK CAROW | District 2
- DIANE ODEEN | Alderperson at Large
- DAN TOLAND | Mayor
- SCOTT MORRISSETTE | Alderperson at Large
- JEFF BJORK | Alderperson at Large
- MICHAEL PAGE | District 3
- TODD BJERSTEDT | District 4

Reach out to your councilmember any time!
mayorandcouncil@rcity.org



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RFCITY.ORG

**CITY OF RIVER FALLS
ALDERMANIC DISTRICTS**



Your City team has a commitment to stay focused on what matters, adapting when needed, and delivering results that make a difference.



Dear Friends of River Falls,

The future of River Falls is shaped by your input, your expectations, and your willingness to engage. Every decision the City Council makes—every investment, every improvement, every partnership—is built around listening to you and remaining grounded in the City’s mission: to coordinate and deliver essential services and ensure a sustainable future. But missions don’t work in isolation. They come alive through a culture of connection, accountability, and trust.

This 2025 Year in Review highlights our progress and introduces the City’s updated 2025–2027 Strategic Initiatives. These initiatives reflect what we’ve heard from you through surveys, conversations, and public meetings. They focus on four key priorities:

CONNECTED COMMUNITY:

Advancing safe streets, greenway access, and parks that enhance quality of life

ECONOMIC VITALITY:

Supporting local business, downtown, and job-ready development sites to attract private investment and create new employment opportunities

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY:

Reviewing financial tools and practices to support responsible growth

QUALITY MUNICIPAL SERVICES:

Investing in facilities, emergency systems, and utilities that support a livable community

These priorities build on the foundation of our Comprehensive and Strategic Plans. But they are more than plans. They are active commitments to move forward with clarity, flexibility, and integrity.

As you read this report, you will see your City Council’s decisions in action, and I hope you will recognize your collective voice reflected in the work. Your City team has a commitment to stay focused on what matters, adapting when needed, and delivering results that make a difference.

With appreciation,
Scott Simpson | City Administrator | City of River Falls



SCAN HERE FOR 2025-2027 STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

PHASE 1

January-September 2026

Partial demolition of existing facility to build new apparatus bay, hose tower, and additional health and safety improvements

PHASE 2

Targeted for completion in early 2027

Updated multipurpose training room, new offices, a conference room, and enhanced lobby area



River Falls Rural Fire Association Chair Joe Rohl (left) and River Falls Mayor Dan Toland



City of River Falls Extends Contract with River Falls Rural Fire Association

In June, the City of River Falls and the River Falls Rural Fire Association signed a historic 20-year contract that will extend the City's fire services to the Association's service territory through the end of 2046.

With the new contract, the City will continue to furnish fire protection services – which includes fire suppression, accident response, rescue, public education, and hazardous material release/spill response – to the Rural Fire Association's territory.

The River Falls Fire Department has proudly provided service to neighboring rural communities for more than 50 years. Territories included in the agreement are the Town of River Falls, Town of Kinnickinnic, and portions of the Towns of Troy, Clifton, and Pleasant Valley.

Justin Wilson Named New Fire Chief

In May of 2025, longtime volunteer firefighter Justin Wilson took over as the new chief of the River Falls Fire Department. Wilson had been a volunteer firefighter with the department since 2013 and held the position of captain since 2019. He was also named the Firefighter of the Year in 2018.

Wilson was part of a hiring process that included candidates from across the country. The River Falls Police and Fire Commission directed the hiring process and officially confirmed Wilson as the next fire chief on April 21.

As fire chief, Wilson is tasked with overseeing a department comprised of over 50 volunteer firefighters. He will be instrumental in helping navigate the department through the \$10 million fire station renovations.



FIRE STATION RENOVATIONS

Several key decisions were made in 2025 that set the renovation of the River Falls fire station in motion. Those decisions will help usher in a new era for the River Falls Fire Department and its members.

During a City Council meeting on Sept. 23, the Council unanimously awarded the contract for the renovation to BCI Construction. BCI submitted the lowest bid at \$8.3 million for the base project. The total for the contract is \$10,513,998, which includes three alternative options that were also approved by the Council at that September meeting.

The three proposed alternates consist of the addition of a fifth apparatus bay, construction of a new roof for the remodeled building, and inclusion of a health and wellness room within the new portion of the fire station.

"That's really going to allow us to step into some of the modernized things that we're doing," Fire Chief Justin Wilson

said of the renovations. "But really, a lot of it is around health and safety."

According to Wilson, the addition of the fifth apparatus bay was a significant part of the approval process. He noted that the cost to add that additional bay later would only increase as time went on.

City staff and the fire department worked with Wold Architects & Engineers on the designs for the renovations.

"While City Hall and the police department have moved into upgraded buildings in the past 15 years, the River Falls Fire Department has remained in the same building since 1955," said Mayor Dan Toland. "These updates to the fire station are long overdue and will be a major benefit to our current and future firefighters, who volunteer their time to help keep our community safe."

Phase I of the fire station renovation, which was scheduled to begin in January of 2026, will include a partial demolition of the existing facility that at one time housed the River Falls Police Department and City Hall. That demolition will make room for a new apparatus bay, hose tower, and additional health and safety improvements that support firefighter readiness and community response. It is expected to be completed by quarter four of 2026.

Phase II will focus on transforming the existing apparatus bays into functional, modern spaces that better support training, operations, and community interaction. This will include an updated multipurpose training room, new offices, a conference room, and enhanced lobby area. The second phase is targeted for completion in early 2027.



SCAN HERE FOR MORE DETAILS ON THE FIRE STATION RENOVATIONS

"This is a place where people come to learn, to connect, and to feel supported. It truly makes life better for the people of River Falls..."

- Tanya Misselt,
Library Director



FINANCIAL REPORT

WHERE DID YOUR 2025 PROPERTY TAXES GO?



SCHOOL DISTRICT
41%

CITY
37%

COUNTY
18%

CVTC
4%

Percentage of Average Monthly Tax Bill*

PROPERTY TAX ALLOCATIONS FOR CITY SERVICES



Public Safety	29%
General Government	16%
Capital Investment & Debt Services	15%
Public Works	15%
Library	11%
Community Development	8%
Parks & Rec	6%

*Based on tax bill for average home value in RF (\$334K)

LIBRARY REVITALIZATION

After the excitement of receiving a state-sponsored \$4.1 million grant in 2024 from Wisconsin's Flexible Facilities Program (FFP) to be used for library renovations, the work began in 2025 to transform the River Falls Public Library.

Library staff worked with ISG Inc., a design and engineering firm, on the architectural plans for the renovations. Starting in September, crews from Market & Johnson began the construction to renovate the interior of the library.

The first phase of the work saw an overhaul to the staff area and main atrium of the library. This included new paint, new carpeting, the addition of a new meeting room, enhanced and expanded office space for staff, and upgrades to the circulation desk and coffee station.

In addition to the \$4.1 million grant, the library has been raising additional money for the renovation through its Renew and Inspire capital campaign. The

Library received numerous donations from local organizations in 2025 and also received additional grants, helping close the gap of the campaign's \$7.5 million goal.

The capital campaign is raising funds for more than just the renovation of the building. The aim is to offer four new initiatives: artist-in-residence, naturalist-in-residence, technology support/AI education, and early childhood outreach to economically vulnerable families.

"I want the library to continue to thrive and remain at the heart of our community," said Library Director Tanya Misselt. "This is a place where people come to learn, to connect, and to feel supported. It truly makes life better for the people of River Falls, and it even draws people who are considering making this community their home. I believe I speak for our entire staff—and for the City—when I say how deeply we care about the people we serve and about ensuring the library remains strong for generations to come."



PHASE 1

September - December 2025

Updated main area of library, added additional meeting space, renovated staff offices



PHASE 2

Started January 2026

Overhaul of the children's area and teen space



PHASE 3

May - September 2026

Renovation of the library basement



SCAN HERE FOR DETAILS ON THE LIBRARY UPDATES



SCAN HERE TO VIEW THE FULL FINANCIAL REPORT

HOUSING & DEVELOPMENT

Like many other cities throughout the country, River Falls is facing the challenge of needing more housing. In 2025, several projects helped bring additional housing to the city. These options will benefit both current residents requiring additional housing choices for different stages of life, as well as new residents looking to relocate to River Falls.

In 2025, two 100-plus unit apartment buildings opened in town: The Upland (105 apartment units) and The Current (106 units). Two new additions to the Highview Meadows neighborhood added a total of 63 single-family houses, while Dawes Place was completed in the spring of 2025 with 112 townhomes for rent.

Current development will add more units of a variety of types. One hundred units of multi-family housing are being built at Brookgreen on the north side of the city. Sycamore II, currently under

construction, will provide 24 memory care units and eight duplexes for much-needed senior housing. The Preserve, also under construction, will add 24 twin home units.

The River Falls City Council approved two new residential developments in the last quarter of 2025. One development, Valley View, is proposed in Mann Valley and will include a 233-unit multifamily development. The first phase of that plan will include 50 units of income-based housing. That development was approved during the Oct. 28, 2025 council meeting.

At the Nov. 11 City Council meeting, the Council approved the planned unit development (PUD) for Wildflower Meadows, located north of Powell Avenue. That development will add 92 new units: 60 single-family homes and 32 twin homes, plus a neighborhood park.

As River Falls continues to grow, new neighborhoods will bring new residents and new energy to the city. It will also allow long-time residents to remain in the community even if they desire or require a different type of housing. Finding a balance between the need for housing and maintaining and enhancing what already exists will be a priority of the City staff to keep shaping the future of River Falls.

“Figuring out how much growth we can handle, and what kind of housing we need, is a sign of a healthy community. The real problem would be if no one wanted to build here,” said Mayor Dan Toland. “People choose River Falls because it’s a great place to be. Making thoughtful decisions about housing helps keep it that way.”

Construction began on Sycamore Two senior housing (below) in 2025. At right, The Upland apartment building celebrates its grand opening.



KINNI CORRIDOR UPDATES

In June of 2025, the City of River Falls held an open house with staff from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the National Park Service (NPS) to allow residents the opportunity to learn more about the Kinni Corridor Plan implementation and the partnerships the City has built with the USACE and NPS. More than 100 attendees filled the City Council chambers to listen to each agency share their expertise and insights on the project.

The City of River Falls signed a Federal Cost Share Agreement with the USACE in 2023 under the Continuing Authorities Program (CAP 206). The goal was to study both the cost and environmental benefits of removing one or both dams on the Kinnickinnic River and restoring the river to its natural setting.

The funding of the CAP 206 program changed at the beginning of 2025. Maximum project funding had previously been set at \$10 million but was increased to \$15 million in January.

The USACE continues to work on a feasibility study – a requirement of CAP 206 – for the removal of both the Powell and Junction Falls dams. This included a 30-day public comment period that concluded in June of 2025.

The team from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance program completed the Kinnickinnic River Greenway Recreation Plan in 2025 and will focus on communications for the Kinni Corridor Project in 2026. This program supports community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the nation.

“The outcomes of this project will be transformative for the River Falls community,” said Community Development Director Amy Peterson. “The Kinni Corridor is an amazing asset that the community has enjoyed for many decades, and I look forward to positive changes to ensure that the enjoyment expands and continues for decades to come.”

Phase I implementation of the Kinnickinnic River Corridor Plan is part of the 2025-2027 Strategic Initiatives of the City Council.



◀ SCAN HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE KINNI CORRIDOR

RECORD NET-NEW CONSTRUCTION

In August of 2025, the State of Wisconsin released numbers for net new construction, which is the total value from new building construction and improvements, minus any value lost from the demolition of buildings. The number shows the overall growth in tax base from construction each year.

The data received in 2025 reflects the growth from the previous year. In 2024, River Falls experienced 4.33% net new construction, a record for the city.

Though the data is reflective of the growth that occurred in 2024, it is represented in residents’ taxes.

“It means that your tax bill – the City portion of your tax bill – can stay flat or actually go down if the percent increase in the City’s overall assessed value is higher than the percent increase in the tax levy, because this results in a lower mill rate,” said Finance Director Josh Solinger.



125 YEARS OF PUBLIC POWER

In late 1900, River Falls generated electricity for the first time in the city's history. Streetlamps were the first use of power in town when they were electrified on Nov. 29, 1900.

The 125th anniversary of public power in River Falls was celebrated throughout 2025 by River Falls Municipal Utilities. The occasion was highlighted in the River Falls Days parade in July, including youth art submissions celebrating the anniversary, and was also celebrated during Public Power Week in October.

When electricity was first delivered to River Falls in 1900 via the power generated by the Junction Flour Mill, the city's population was just over 2,000 people. River Falls has since grown to more than 17,000 residents, plus thousands of students attending UW-River Falls each year. That means a greater demand for electricity than ever before.

As demand has increased, River Falls has kept the municipal model of power since the town was first electrified. River Falls Municipal Utilities (RFMU) is one of about 2,000 municipal models in the country, which differ from investor-owned utilities or rural electric cooperatives. RFMU is governed by the City Council and the Utility Advisory Board, which is made up of six appointed members and one City Council liaison.

"It's local people making local decisions that reflect local community values," said Utility Director Kevin Westhuis. "River Falls can make decisions about how we use electricity and how we use renewable energy in ways that maybe other communities can't. We're able to nimbly make decisions locally because we're governed locally."



GOLF VIEW WATER TOWER

The Golf View water tower, which services the east side of River Falls, received some upgrades in 2025. Crews completed reconditioning the tower, which included sandblasting the inside and outside and repainting the exterior to include City branding to match the new North water tower. These are regulated and required activities to ensure the integrity of our structures and the safety of our water.



BIOSOLIDS DRYER BUILDING

Work that began in 2024 on the biosolids building at the City's wastewater treatment plant continued throughout 2025. The majority of the work done over the past year was internal, including filling the building with all components needed to install the dryer, screw press, hopper, boiler, and monorail system. Historically, the City's solid waste has been hauled daily by trucks to Ellsworth for treatment. This new building will allow the City to dry the product on site — improving cost efficiency and eliminating carbon emissions from the semis while also producing an all-natural fertilizer.



UPCOMING EVENTS

▲ **SUMMER STARTS IN THE PARKS**
 May 21, 2026
 5-7 p.m.
 at Glen Park

COOKOUT CONVERSATIONS
 June 18, 2026
 6-7:30 p.m.
 at DeSanctis Park
 July 16, 2026
 5-7:30 p.m.
 at Hoffman Park
 September 17, 2026
 6-7:30 p.m.
 at Glen Park



STAY CONNECTED



COMMUNITY APPRECIATION PICNIC

Tuesday, Aug. 4, 2026 • 4-6 p.m. • City Hall Plaza



715-425-0900

www.rfcity.org

FOLLOW US ON



KINNI CAST

Real people. Real purpose.



In July of 2025, the City of River Falls launched a new podcast called the Kinni Cast. This podcast features City employees and partners sharing about the work they do to make River Falls a better place. If you're curious about what's next for River Falls and want a peek behind the scenes of City Hall, take a listen to the Kinni Cast. Find it wherever you get your podcasts or scan the QR code to view all episodes.



In 2025, the City once again partnered with Polco to conduct the National Community Survey. Participants were invited to complete and send back a paper survey or take the survey online. A total of 2,911 randomly selected River Falls households received mailings. The overall response rate was 16%.

The community survey results provide important insights for the River Falls City Council, helping to inform the development of the Capital Improvement Plan, biennial budget, strategic initiatives, housing strategy, and more.

The City has conducted the National Community Survey every two years since 2013. Over 500 communities across the nation participate in the survey, which allows the City of River Falls to compare itself with peer cities.

*** ECRWSS ***
Residential Customer



◀ SCAN THE QR CODE TO SEE THE FULL REPORT

2025 National Community Survey



The following numbers indicate ratings of "excellent" or "good"



87% OVERALL SAFETY



85% NEIGHBORHOOD LIVABILITY



90% ELECTRIC UTILITIES



92% NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



93% PUBLIC LIBRARY



84% PATHS AND WALKING TRAILS