



# Cedar Valley

## 2019 Visioning Plan



# Cedar Valley 2019 Visioning Plan

The Cedar Valley is a community in northeast Iowa united by the Cedar River and a wealth of outdoor amenities including paved trails, wildlife areas, and shared natural resources. The Visioning Plan outlines several goals for building upon the Cedar Valley's past success and maximizing existing opportunities. This plan is part of an application to the Iowa Great Places program for re-designation as a Great Place.

## Great Places Background

The Cedar Valley was first designated as a Great Place in 2009. Back then, the Visioning Committee had originally intended on submitting a Great Places application one year prior, in 2008, but the record flooding of 2008 devastated the Cedar Valley. June of 2008 was a time to reflect, respect, and rebuild! The Visioning Committee reevaluated the projects identified that year and shifted the focus to the Cedar River.

In October of 2008, the Visioning Committee identified two focus areas in light of the floods: **flood recovery** and **river enhancements**. The following projects were prioritized by the committee in turn:

- Island Park Beach House, Cedar Falls
- Ice House Museum Restoration, Cedar Falls
- Washington Park Improvements, Cedar Falls
- Cedar River Boat House, Waterloo
- Downtown River Renaissance, Waterloo

While the five projects above were the main focus of the committee at the time, the original Great Places proposal also described a variety of projects throughout the Cedar Valley supported by the committee including the following:

- Cedar Valley paved trails network, including trail bridges and interpretive signage
- Cedar River water trail, including whitewater courses in Cedar Falls and Waterloo
- Recreation areas at Big Woods Lake and Harold Getty Lake
- Hartman Reserve Nature Center
- Cedar Valley Soccer Complex
- Waterloo RiverLoop Expo Plaza



Cedar Valley presentation and fur trader reenactment, September 2009



The original Visioning Committee was made up of a variety of community stakeholders including the City of Waterloo, City of Cedar Falls, Waterloo Convention and Visitors Bureau, Cedar Falls Tourism and Visitors Bureau, Waterloo Center for the Arts, Main Street Waterloo, Cedar Falls Community Main Street, Black Hawk County Board of Supervisors, the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa, the University of Northern Iowa, the Greater Cedar Valley Alliance and Chamber, and more. The destructive impact of the 2008 floods brought Cedar Valley organizations together in a unique and lasting way.

The original Great Places application also came on the heels of another major advancement within the Cedar Valley. In June of 2007, the Waterloo and Cedar Falls Chambers of Commerce merged into a single entity, the Greater Cedar Valley Chamber. Three years later, the Chamber completed the integration with the Greater Cedar Valley Alliance to form the renamed Greater Cedar Valley Alliance and Chamber (GCVAC). This unique role allowed GCVAC to follow through on the original Visioning Committee objectives, fulfill the obligations of the Great Places program, and facilitate grant funds awarded to projects in Waterloo and Cedar Falls.

Following designation in 2009, two projects were awarded Iowa Great Places grant funding in the Cedar Valley: the Downtown River Renaissance Trail in Waterloo, and the Ice House Museum Restoration project in Cedar Falls. Both projects have since been completed and are open to the public.

The original Great Places proposal included five priority projects and several other projects and activities throughout the community. Of the five priority projects, all five have been completed since the 2009 application. In addition, all other projects included in the proposal have either been completed, expanded, or advanced through planning and engineering phases. The following section will describe each project in greater detail.

## Building the Vision

The Cedar Valley has a proven track record of completing projects identified through its visioning process. Several projects areas are now enjoyed by Cedar Valley residents and visitors:

### Island Park Beach House, Cedar Falls



After the 2009 floods, the original beach house at Island Park was completely destroyed. Nonetheless, the spirit to rebuild was unsinkable. The North Shore Boat Club in Cedar Falls raised a considerable amount of money to fund the new facility's construction. In all, the new building cost \$650,000, of which approximately \$246,000 was raised from hundreds of individual contributions. Additional funding came from FEMA and the Black Hawk County Gaming Association.

The new Beach House is designed to be a “floodable” facility. While the previous structure was primarily made of wood, the new building is made of concrete. The new facility was completed and opened to the public in 2015.

### Ice House Museum Restoration, Cedar Falls



Due to the Ice House’s close proximity to the Cedar River, volunteers have wrapped and sandbagged the structure nearly every year to protect it from the rising water. However, in 2008, flood waters rushed over the sandbags, pushed open the doors, and rose to four feet inside the building. Mud coated everything, and displays and artifacts were thrown around and damaged beyond repair.

After the flood, volunteers began assisting the Historical Society with cleanup and fundraising to restore the structure. The Cedar Falls Historical Society has since completed the repairs successfully, raised the existing floor above the 2008 flood levels, and installed new exhibits using rescued artifacts. The repairs were put to the test in the 2016 flood, and the raised exhibition floor worked as planned and the artifacts remain secure. The total cost of all repairs was estimated at \$728,000, and the project was awarded a \$40,000 grant through the Iowa Great Places program in 2010.

### Washington Park, Cedar Falls



Prior to the floods of 2008, Washington Park had featured a nine-hole golf course next to the Cedar River. The floods permanently destroyed the park. The decision was made to repurpose the park as a 40-acre open area with a baseball diamond, restrooms, boat ramp, playground equipment, several shelters, and a paved trail loop.

The park was completely rebuilt in 2013, and the City secured a Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) grant through the Iowa DNR to complete the trail loop in 2014. The new boat ramp at Washington Park was also funded through the DNR, and it has become a popular entry point for canoeing and kayaking. Altogether, the total cost of repairs was approximately \$700,000.

## Cedar River Boat House, Waterloo



Originally constructed in the mid-1960s, the boathouse was used by the Waterloo Rowing Club and the general public for decades until it was ultimately destroyed in the 2008 floods. As a result of the flood, all of the Rowing Club's equipment was also washed away.

The Boat House was reconstructed in 2010 at a cost of approximately \$900,000, and it includes thick concrete walls and pressure relief valves to allow the main floor storage area to flood. The second floor features a nautical themed event space with seating, tables, a bar for serving, and restrooms. The reconstruction was funded through a combination of FEMA funds, the Black Hawk County Gaming Association, the City of Waterloo, and the Waterloo Rowing Club.

Additional funds have since been secured through the Iowa DNR REAP program and Black Hawk County Gaming Association to help resurface the parking areas, pave a trail connection to the Cedar Valley Lakes Trail, extend the patio area, add a sidewalk connection to the boat ramp, and install new docks, lighting, benches, bike racks, and tree plantings. The Boat House is used by the Rowing Club to this day, and it is a popular take-out location for those canoeing and kayaking from Cedar Falls.

## Downtown River Renaissance, Waterloo



Waterloo's Downtown River Renaissance was a complete transformation of the city's riverfront area. This multi-faceted project included a variety of infrastructure improvements: paved trails along the Cedar River, an amphitheater with seating area, the Art Block pedestrian mall, and the Mark's Park splash pad. The project also included improvements to the downtown dam and construction of new floodwalls to protect against future flood events.

Construction began in 2009 and continued in phases over the next few years. The completed riverfront project is anchored by the amphitheater, which hosts shows by local performers, celebrations of ethnic heritage, and several events each summer hosted by Main Street Waterloo.





Mark's Park is a popular attraction for families, providing a place to cool off and play outside. Situated near the amphitheater, Mark's Park is abuzz even when the stage is empty.

Altogether, the River Renaissance project totaled \$23 million using a variety of funding sources, and it received a 2013 Central State ASLA Merit Award. While the

public investments along the riverfront have been completed for years, the project is now giving rise to new private development in the area. Multiple new mixed-use housing developments have recently been constructed or are currently under construction near the riverfront. With the amphitheater, Mark's Park, the nearby Phelps Youth Pavilion, and other nearby attractions, downtown Waterloo is sure to attract new residents and families for years to come.

### RiverLoop Expo Plaza, Waterloo



Though not identified for potential Great Places funding, the RiverLoop Expo Plaza was included in the original Great Places application as an integral part of the overall vision for downtown Waterloo. Situated just two blocks from the amphitheater and River Renaissance improvements, the Expo Plaza now hosts small to medium sized events including the weekly Urban Farmer's Market, the Stem and Stein Fest featuring local chefs, the Fiesta de Mayo celebration, and the John Deere 100 Years of Tractor Innovation Showcase.

Recently, a portion of the Expo Plaza has also been used by the Waterloo Dek Hockey league. Dek hockey is a form of off-ice hockey played using a ball instead of a puck. Waterloo Dek Hockey offers divisions for junior players (ages 2 to 15), women, and men. The program has been such a success, that a new permanent location is being considered about five blocks away.

The RiverLoop Expo Plaza is inextricably linked to the amphitheater and Art Block pedestrian mall by a series of brick walkways and colored banners. The cost of developing the Expo Plaza is included in the total \$23 million River Renaissance investment described above.



## Hartman Reserve Nature Center, Cedar Falls



Hartman Reserve is a 300+ acre woodland area located between downtown Cedar Falls and downtown Waterloo. Managed by the Black Hawk County Conservation Board, the original interpretive center was constructed in the 1940s and later expanded in the 1980s. Unlike other projects identified in the original Great Places application, the Nature Center was not impacted by flooding as it is situated on a high bluff overlooking the Cedar River valley.

The renovated Nature Center is more energy-efficient and has additional space for large events. The construction cost for the project was \$2.8 million. Funds were raised by Friends of Hartman Reserve, and hundreds of individual donations were received. The project also received major donations from the Black Hawk Gaming Association, the Iowa Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) program, the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa, the R.J. McElroy Trust, and the city and county governments.

One of the biggest benefits of the Nature Center renovation is improved programming for the public. Over a dozen programs are available to elementary school students in four different age groups. Regular programs for adults are also hosted on a wide variety of topics, and the Nature Center features numerous events including the Maple Syrup Festival, the Second Sunday Speaker Series, Halloween Hikes, and the Iowa Games Snowshoe Championship.

## Visioning committee

After the flood recovery efforts were largely completed in the mid-2010s, members of the original Visioning Committee continued working on a number of new goals and visioning processes.

In early 2018, discussions about re-designating the Cedar Valley as a Great Place began between the City of Waterloo Leisure Services Department, the City of Cedar Falls Municipal Operations and Programs Department, INRCOG, and GCVAC. It was decided then that it would be best to wait until 2019 to submit an application for re-designation, so that the process could be more thoughtful and more stakeholders could be engaged. INRCOG staff attended the 2018 Iowa Great Places annual meeting to learn more about other Great Places and determine the best approach for the Cedar Valley moving forward.

Altogether, four meetings of the entire Visioning Committee took place between 2018 and 2019. In addition, several smaller meetings were also held among individual committee members to work out details related to the vision.

The following list outlines each organization directly involved with the Great Places application:

- Grow Cedar Valley
- City of Waterloo, Leisure Services
- City of Waterloo, Planning and Development
- City of Cedar Falls, Municipal Operations and Programs
- Experience Waterloo
- Cedar Falls Tourism and Visitors Bureau
- Waterloo Community TV
- Cedar Falls Cable Television
- INRCOG



The Visioning Committee also partnered with the following entities on specific areas of the Visioning Plan and Great Places application:

- Amy Wienands Real Estate
- Black Hawk County Conservation Board
- Cedar Falls Community Main Street
- Eagle View Partners
- Main Street Waterloo





## Plan area

The name “Cedar Valley” is inherently inclusive as it encompasses the entire region, not just a single city. There is no strict definition for the term “Cedar Valley”. However, for this visioning process, the Cedar Valley consists specifically of two communities: the City of Waterloo and City of Cedar Falls.

The City of Waterloo had a population of 68,406 in 2010 and is bordered by Cedar Falls to the west, Black Hawk County to the north and south, and Evansdale to the east.

The City of Cedar Falls had a population of 39,260 in 2010 and is bordered by Waterloo to the east, Black hawk County to the north and west, and Hudson to the south.




Combined, the two cities are home to over 100,000 Iowans, and Black Hawk County is the 5th largest county in the state by population. The Cedar Valley is also home to the University of Northern Iowa, the 3rd largest institution of higher education offering Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programs in Iowa.

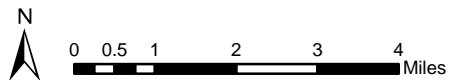
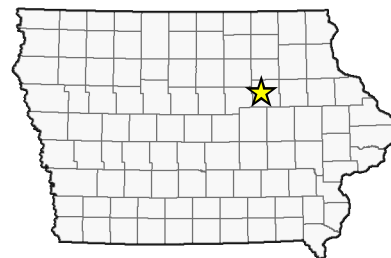
The map on the following page shows the geographical boundary of Waterloo and Cedar Falls within the State of Iowa:



## Cedar Valley Boundaries

Cedar Falls and Waterloo, Iowa municipal boundaries

-  City Boundaries
-  Water
-  Roads



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## Socioeconomic information

In addition to being among the top 5 counties in Iowa by population, Black Hawk County is also among the most diverse counties in the state in terms of race and ethnicity. The county has the highest share of Black and African American residents (8.9 percent) of any county in the state. There are also significant shares of the population from Mexico, Central America, the former Yugoslavia, Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, the Marshall Islands, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and others. More information about diversity in the Cedar Valley is included later in this document.

Black Hawk County has a somewhat higher share of renter-occupied households compared to the state overall (34 vs. 29 percent), and a slightly higher share of households with no vehicle available (7.0 vs. 5.7 percent). The median household income in Black Hawk County is \$50,916, which is slightly lower than the state average. However, according to IowaPolicyProject.org, the Waterloo-Cedar Falls metro area also has one of the lowest costs of living in the state, characterized by lower than average health care and transportation costs and moderate rents and child care costs.

## Plan goals

The Cedar Valley is inherently geared toward sharing resources and information. While each entity involved in the visioning process has their own priorities and goals, Visioning Committee members came together to identify shared goals for the Visioning Plan update. Three overarching goals have been identified by the Visioning Committee. These goals tie directly to the Vision Areas described in the next section.

### 1. Improving quality of life

Above all, the Visioning Committee recognizes that improving the community's quality of life translates directly to improving economic development, public safety, and local leadership in turn. Quality of life in this context refers to personal enrichment as part of the Cedar Valley community.

#### **Waterloo Leisure Services Commission**

Mission: The City of Waterloo Leisure Services Commission is dedicated to **improving the quality of life** for all citizens by providing the best possible recreational activities, special events, facilities, and services that encourage lifelong learning, fitness and fun.

#### **Future Forward Cedar Falls 2025**

Cornerstone value, a safe and healthy environment: A safe and healthy environment assures the mental, physical, and spiritual well-being and an overall **higher quality of life** for all of our citizens.

#### **Black Hawk County Water Trails Master Plan**

Goal Nine: **Improved quality of life** and economic development

### 2. Developing recreational facilities

Recreational facilities provide opportunities for physical activity and a connection to the natural environment. Both of these human needs seem more important these days than ever before, and are an integral part of creating a great place to live.

### **Waterloo Leisure Services Commission**

Mission: The City of Waterloo Leisure Services Commission is dedicated to improving the quality of life for all citizens by **providing the best possible recreational activities**, special events, facilities, and services that encourage lifelong learning, fitness and fun.

### **Future Forward Cedar Falls 2025**

Goal 3a: Create a regionally recognized Cedar River Whitewater District complete with river assets, shops, restaurants, trails, events and activities capable of enhancing community and economic development, **expanding recreational offerings** and mitigating flood related concerns

Goal 6b: Develop inclusive parks and public venues featuring innovative design and **features for individuals with special needs**

### **Black Hawk County 2016 Health Improvement Plan**

Goal: Strengthen the health infrastructure. Priority Two: **Promote policy and environmental change strategies** in support of a pedestrian master plan and complete streets.

### **Black Hawk County Water Trails Master Plan**

Goal One: Increased public appreciation and awareness of the rivers

Goal Six: Ease of access to the rivers and **new recreational opportunities**

Goal Eight: Water recreation as a rapidly growing activity is addressed

## **3. Create spaces that support living, working, and playing**

Creating livable spaces includes addressing all aspects of life, not just leisure time. A truly great community also includes environments suitable for studying and working as well as visiting family and friends.

### **Waterloo Strategic Plan 2017-2022**

Strategy 1.7: Seek ways to create a **“live, learn, work, and play” environment** with amenities that attract and retain population in Waterloo.

### **Future Forward Cedar Falls 2025**

Outcome Six: Cedar Falls is ranked in the top ten nationally for **quality of place** driven by lifestyle amenities in all Cedar Falls’ neighborhoods



## Vision areas

While there is much to celebrate since the 2008 floods and the original Great Places designation, there is much to look forward to as well. There are dozens of ongoing projects and initiatives underway throughout the Cedar Valley, but only a handful were identified as vision areas. These are areas of focus tied directly to the Vision Goals described above. These vision areas have some of the greatest potential for positive community-wide transformation.

### 1. Building a Connection to the Rivers

The original Great Places application focused primarily on post-flood improvements along the Cedar River. While much of that work is completed, a connection to the rivers is still a top priority for the community. Recently, several entities throughout Black Hawk County have been involved in developing the Water Trails Master Plan for the Cedar River and Black Hawk Creek. The Master Plan outlines specific improvements for over two dozen river access areas throughout the County, embracing best practices and creating a uniform approach for development. Roughly half of the river access areas are in either Waterloo or Cedar Falls including two accesses to Black Hawk Creek, a tributary of the Cedar River. The Iowa DNR is leading the development of the Master Plan, and it is anticipated that the two water trails will receive official State designation in 2020. Only water trails that have undergone an extensive existing conditions assessment, site planning process, and formal agreement procedure are eligible for State designation.



### Water Trails Master Plan Access Areas:

#### Cedar Falls

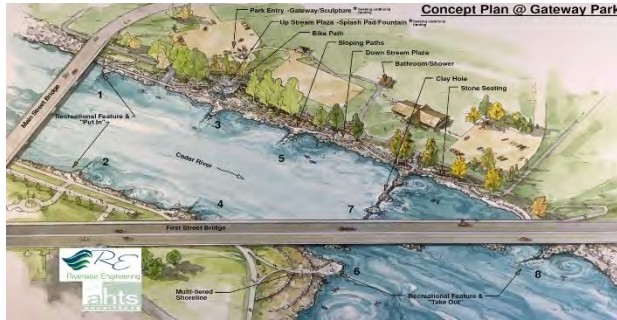
- Black Hawk Park\*
- Island Park
- Olsen's Riverside Park
- Tourist Park
- Gateway Park, Riverbank Improvements
- Washington Park

#### Waterloo

- Sherwood Park\*
- Cedar Bend Park
- Waterloo Boathouse
- Waterloo Marina
- Downtown Whitewater Improvements
- Riverview Recreational Area
- Cedar Terrace Park
- Hope Martin Park
- Rancho Road Access

\* - County river access

A core philosophy of developing water trails is the idea of opening up the riverfront as a public space where people can physically touch the water. These spaces are great for relaxing, picnicking, and simply sitting by the water. Two large-scale projects currently underway have tremendous potential for shoreline recreation: the Cedar Falls Recreational and Riverbank Improvement project and the Downtown Waterloo Marina. These two projects will have a transformative impact on the downtown business districts in both communities.



In Cedar Falls, multiple river accesses and whitewater features are planned along both sides of the river, and dam safety improvements are planned as a separate phase. These improvements will be situated near Main Street businesses and easily accessible to people shopping and dining downtown. Residents at the newly developed River Place will be treated to a backyard view of the improved shoreline.

In Waterloo, the planned marina is geared primarily for kayaks, canoes, and flat-bottom boats. A mixed-use development is envisioned overlooking the river with an equipment outfitter for paddlers and a possible restaurant. Situated near Young Arena, the Marina area is envisioned as a future sports and events district including potential for additional athletic venues. Both projects in Waterloo and Cedar Falls are situated in an area with a variety of attractions and destinations within a short walking distance for residents to live, work, and play.



## 2. A Diverse, Welcoming Community

The Cedar Valley prides itself as a welcoming place for people from all backgrounds and all ethnicities. Thousands of immigrants and refugees now call the Cedar Valley home. Community leaders recognize that creating a culture of inclusion is critical for community development, which is essential for workforce and economic development in turn. The Iowa Legislative Services Agency estimates that, between 2010 and 2017, Black Hawk County lost an estimated 4,071 residents to domestic migration but gained 1,935 residents from international migration. This trend is expected to continue with an increase of over 3,000 new non-white and Hispanic residents forecasted from 2015 to 2025, according to data from Grow Cedar Valley. It is clear that people from other countries will be a fundamental part in growing the Cedar Valley for years to come.

A number of organizations have come to the forefront of serving these new populations. EMBARC (Ethnic Minorities of Burma Advocacy and Resource Center) was founded in 2011 and started primarily to help new refugees from Burma successfully settle in Iowa. More recently the organization has expanded its scope to also focus on helping refugees from the Congo, Syria, and Eritrea. The Waterloo office is the only EMBARC office outside of Des Moines.





Another vital program is the English Language Learner (ELL) curriculum through Hawkeye Community College. In 2019, the college opened the new Adult Learning Center in downtown Waterloo which provides ELL classes to hundreds of non-English speaking residents from about 40 different countries around the world. The Adult Learning Center also offers college and career counselling services and family literacy classes to ELL students at no cost.



For high school students, a variety of new educational programs are available at the new Waterloo Career Center. The Career Center currently offers technical programs on Advanced Manufacturing and Early Childhood Education to juniors and seniors at both Waterloo and Cedar Falls school districts, with plans to add ten new programs over the next three years. The Career Center gives students the opportunity to gain a hands-on education geared toward technical skills highly sought after by Cedar Valley employers. The result is a boost to workforce for businesses, and a boost in income and employment for residents. The school district's efforts are paying off, with a graduation rate up from 74.2 percent in 2014 to 84.2 percent in 2018. Waterloo Schools serve families speaking over 30 different languages, and concerted efforts have been underway to bring diversity into leadership positions within the district.

A sport that has been gaining popularity in recent years, particularly among newer Cedar Valley residents, is soccer. The Cedar Valley Soccer Complex is an expansive area with several soccer fields situated near the Waterloo-Cedar Falls city limits. The complex is well-attended with room for growth including the potential for a grandstand, shaded viewing areas, and improved concessionaire and restroom facilities. The Cedar Valley Soccer Club offers opportunities for kids and adults and features several annual tournaments including the Cedar Valley Cup for kids and the Cup of Nations for adults.



Acknowledging the diversity of the Cedar Valley doesn't come without challenges, however. There has been notable press attention in recent months about racial economic disparities in the Waterloo-Cedar Falls metropolitan area. This is an issue that can only be addressed as a whole community. Over the past few months, KWWL, the NBC television affiliate stationed in Waterloo, has run a series called Closing the Gap – perhaps the first televised call to action of its kind in the area. Further initiatives that support, uplift, and bring attention to communities of color are critical to growing the Cedar Valley. One of these initiatives currently underway is the African American Museum, where volunteers are working to clean and inventory an old exhibit that describes the history and living conditions of the first Black residents in Waterloo.

### 3. Outdoor Opportunities for All Abilities and All Seasons

Multiple efforts are now underway to create park spaces for people of all abilities. Place to Play Park in Cedar Falls will be the first inclusive park in the Cedar Valley. The play area is designed to provide



children and families of all physical, mental, and social abilities and ages and opportunity to play together in an integrated, sensory-rich environment without barriers that traditionally exist on a playground. This effort was spearheaded by two mothers with special needs children, but the entire community made it come to life. Over \$1 million was raised for the park in three years.

In addition, the Husome Strong Foundation is working to provide adaptive golf carts at golf courses in Waterloo and Cedar Falls for people with amputated limbs and other physical disabilities. The Foundation was formed by Steve Husome who had both legs amputated following a severe traffic accident. The Husome Strong Foundation's mission is to assist people who have experienced the loss of a limb and are seeking assistance to realize their full potential, and live their lives to the fullest. This program is a way for those with disabilities to become actively engaged in the social fabric of the community.



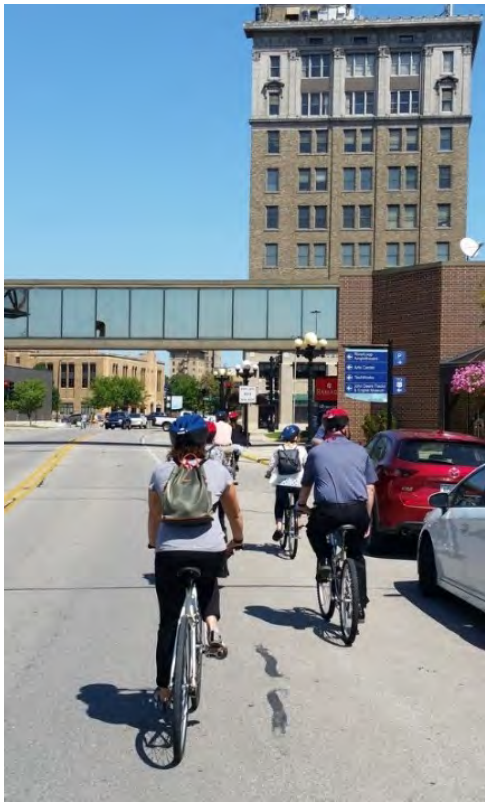


Lack of recreational opportunities during the cold months can lead to the winter blues. This is why embracing winter recreation is also a priority for the Cedar Valley. The City of Waterloo and local trails organizations groom cross-country ski trails after heavy snowfalls, creating a new opportunity for outdoor aerobic activity. Ski trails are regularly groomed at Irv Warren Golf Course, Sunnyside Golf Course, Katoski Greenbelt Park, and Hartman Reserve. The Hartman Reserve Nature Center operated by the Black Hawk County Conservation Board offers snowshoe rentals for all-day and all-weekend use. Hartman Reserve also hosts the Frosty Buns Race Series comprised of three races: The Iowa Games Championship Snowshoe Race, Winter Warrior Duathlon, and the Sticky Stride foot race.



#### 4. Cedar Valley Trails, Bikeways, and Complete Streets

With over 110 miles of paved trails, and growing, the Cedar Valley Trails system is among the most extensive and well-connected trails networks in Iowa. New trails are currently being constructed alongside major roadways including University Avenue and U.S. Highway 63. In 2016, new wayfinding signs were introduced throughout the Cedar Valley to help navigate trail users through not just one city, but the entire region.



Much attention in recent years has been given complete streets and on-road bikeways to create a safer transportation system for all. The city councils of both Waterloo and Cedar Falls adopted complete streets resolutions and have active advisory committees dedicated to addressing all modes of transportation. New bike lanes have been developed along Clay Street and Center Street in Cedar Falls and Park Avenue in Waterloo. While these are the first of their kind in the area, a region-wide bicycle network is envisioned to connect all Cedar Valley neighborhoods, giving residents and visitors the option to safely bike to visit friends and family, commute to school and work, and run errands. Bicycling is not only good for the environment and health; it also promotes a sense of place and community.

## 5. Downtown Urban Living Options



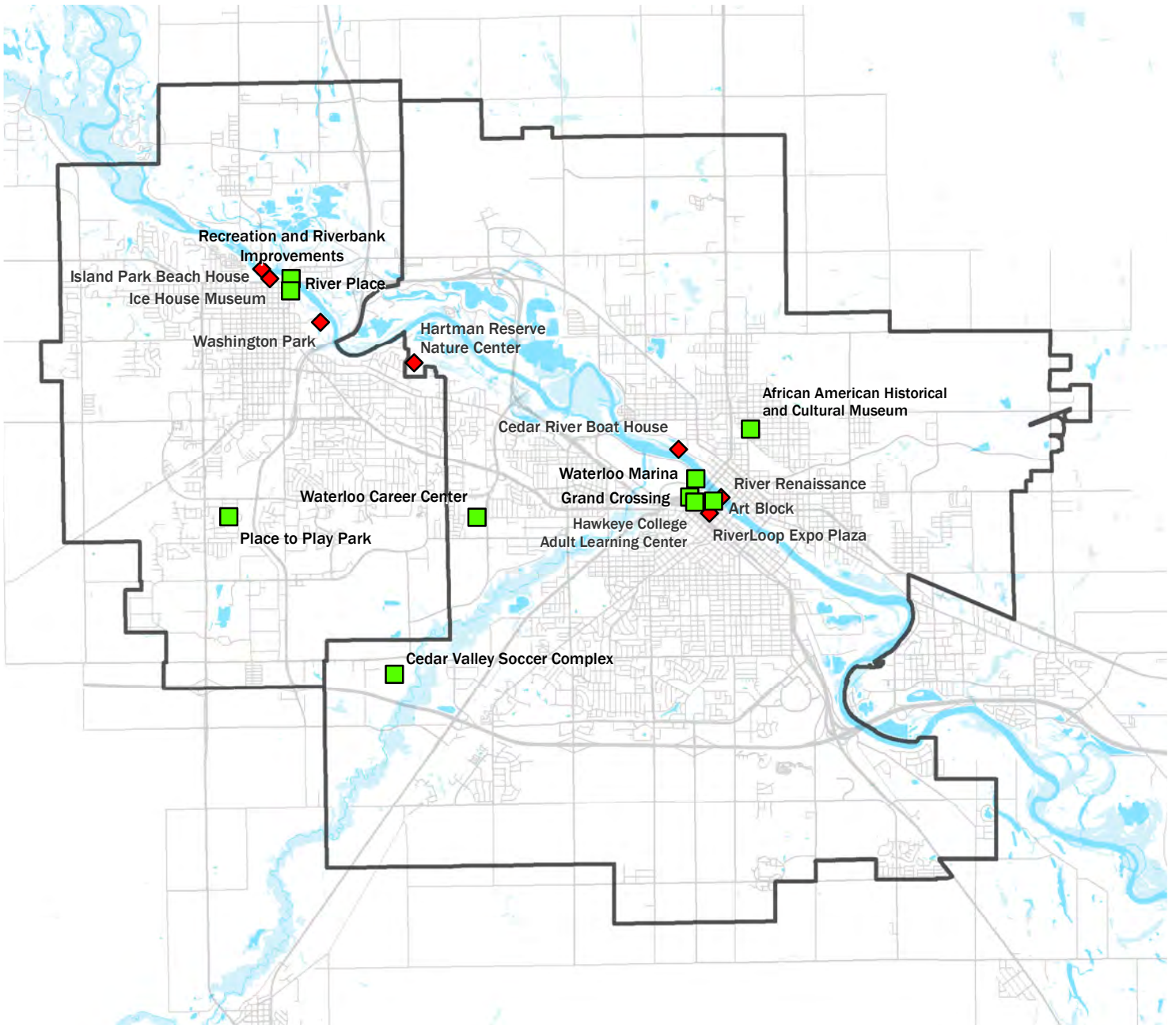
Most communities in Iowa are defined by their downtown business district. Throughout history, these areas were the central hub for retail, employment, and housing. However, in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, urban sprawl saw much of these elements leave downtown. New resurgence in downtown investment is underway in both Cedar Falls and Waterloo that could see these trends reverse again.

Urban living has several benefits including access to services, transit, employment, and entertainment. For many, the lower

maintenance of an apartment or condo is more appealing than owning a single-family home. Investing in downtown housing not only makes sense for residents who choose this lifestyle, it also makes sense for urban growth overall. Higher-density development incurs less overall maintenance cost for infrastructure and lower operating costs for services like police and fire.






Recent mixed-use housing developments include Grand Crossing in downtown Waterloo and River Place in downtown Cedar Falls. The newest addition to the downtown areas is the Art Block in Waterloo, currently under construction, which piggybacks on the downtown River Renaissance identified in the original 2008-2009 visioning process. The Iowa Great Places program awarded \$90,000 for the RiverLoop trails situated next to this development. The Art Block has long been envisioned as a showcase apartment building overlooking the amphitheater and Cedar River, with shops lining the elevated pedestrian mall along the second floor. A unique aspect of this project is that the diagonal walls inside will create a “gallery” for tenants to display their own art in an intentional way. The Art Block is a prime example of public investment leveraging private development. At 85 feet tall, these new apartments will undoubtedly add visual interest downtown and redefine the city’s skyline.

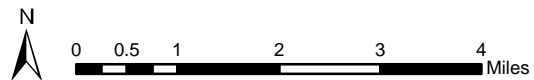




# Cedar Valley Vision Areas

Cedar Falls and Waterloo, Iowa municipal boundaries

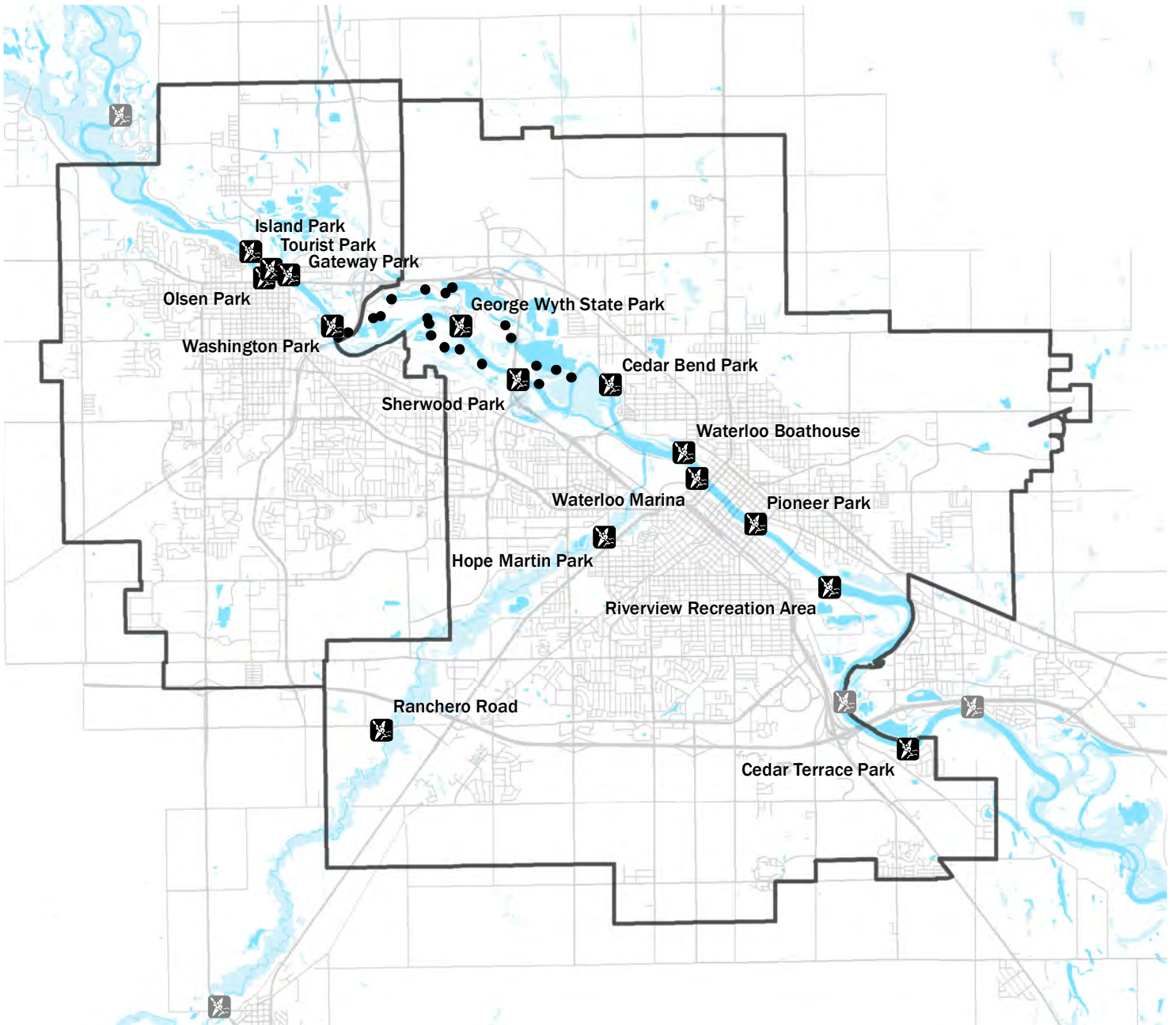
-  City Boundaries
-  Water
-  Roads
-  Ongoing and Future Vision Areas
-  Completed Vision Areas



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






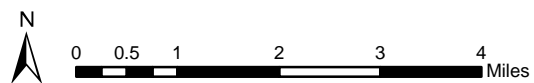




## Cedar Valley Water Trails Accesses

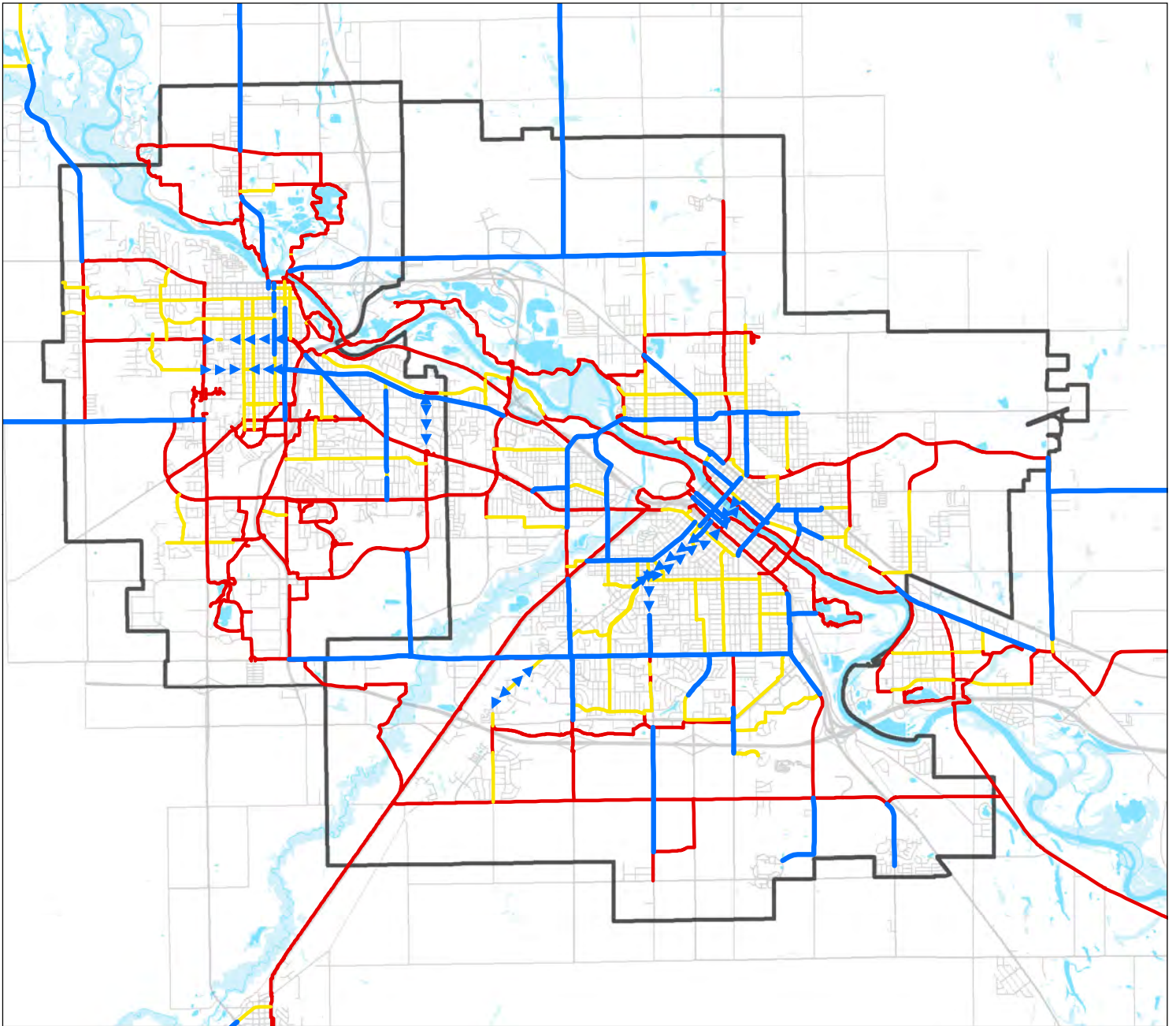
Cedar Falls and Waterloo, Iowa municipal boundaries

-  City Boundaries
-  Water
-  Roads
-  Water Trails Access
-  Water Trails Access (outside Waterloo and Cedar Falls)
-  Cedar Valley Paddlers Trail Access



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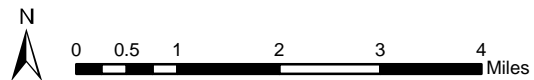




# Cedar Valley Trails and Bikeways Long-Range Plan

Cedar Falls and Waterloo, Iowa municipal boundaries

-  City Boundaries
-  Bike Lane or Paved Shoulder
-  Water
-  One-Way Bike Lanes
-  Roads
-  On-Road Shared Lanes
-  Paved Trails



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## Vision evaluation

All five vision areas have a direct tie to each of the three goals identified by the Visioning Committee. Since much of the original post-flood vision has been realized, the committee regrouped and developed completely new performance measurements with which to evaluate future success. Some performance measurements are easy to calculate using existing data and resources from INRCOG, Grow Cedar Valley, and the University of Northern Iowa. Other measurements are more creative in nature, specifically the measurements for Vision Areas 1 and 3, and will require the development and maintenance of new data sources. The Visioning Committee is currently in the process of compiling this new data and developing baseline measurements to track progress. The intent is to define measurements that can be tracked on an annual basis. Next year, the committee will have the ability to compare the 2020 measures to the 2019 baseline values to begin evaluating the progress toward each vision area.

Vision Area	Goal 1: Quality of Life	Goal 2: Recreation	Goal 3: Livable spaces	Measurements
1. Building a Connection to the Rivers	X	X	X	Distance of river's edge accessible to touch
2. A Diverse, Welcoming Community	X	X	X	Number and membership of minority-owned and operated organizations, athletic clubs, and businesses
3. Outdoor Opportunities for All Abilities and All Seasons	X	X	X	Quantity of inclusive park equipment, adaptive sports equipment, and maintained winter sports facilities
4. Cedar Valley Trails, Bikeways, and Complete Streets	X	X	X	Distance of paved trails, on-street bikeways, and complete streets
5. Downtown Urban Living Options	X	X	X	Number of housing units in the central business district

It was decided that the Visioning Plan should not include specific tasks or actions as a way to track progress. Doing so would have been similar to our original visioning process, where the next steps were unclear after each project was completed. Instead, this plan emphasizes broader goals and vision areas that are to be maintained even after individual projects are completed. The vision areas described in this plan are intended to evolve continuously over time, rather than being static items we check off the list. The next full Visioning Plan update process is planned for 2023-2024. The update is expected to tie into this plan document directly, and the progress of each performance measurement outlined above will help determine any future changes to the goals and vision areas of the Cedar Valley.