

DAKOTA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Dakota County Western Service Center – Room 106  
14955 Galaxie Avenue  
Apple Valley, MN 55124  
Thursday, January 22, 2026  
7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Agenda

- I.

Call to Order
- II.

Pledge of Allegiance
- III.

Election of 2026 Planning Commission Officers – Action (Kurt Chatfield – Planning)
- IV.

Public Comments:

Anyone wishing to address the Planning Commission on an item not on the agenda may address the Planning Commission at this time (comments are limited to 5 minutes).
- V.

Approval of the Agenda
- VI.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes of Meeting Held on November 20, 2025
- VII.

Welcome New Planning Commissioner Andrea Vaubel (Barry Graham - 2025 Vice Chair)
- VIII.

Planning Commission Administrative Forms – Information (Liz Hansen – Administration)
- IX.

Establishment of 2026 Meeting Dates - Action (Kurt Chatfield – Planning)
- X.

2026 Planning Commission Work Plan – Information (Kurt Chatfield – Planning)
- XI.

Mississippi River Greenway Long-Range Plan – Information (John Mertens, Planning)
- XII.

Planning Manager Update and County Board Actions

•

Authorized joint powers agreement with Rosemount for an alignment study for the Vermillion Highlands Greenway

•

Approved the Planning Commission’s Work Plan for 2026

•

Authorized appeal of the Environmental Impact Statement for the Nelson Mine project in the Mississippi River at Spring Lake Park Reserve
- XIII.

Upcoming Public Meetings – Community Outreach

Natural System Plan – Revised Objectives	Pop-ups, various County Park events
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- XIV.

Topics for Next Meeting (Thursday, March 26, 2026 – 7 p.m., Western Service Center, L139)

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Draft Parks Natural Systems Plan – Implementation Chapter
- XV.

Planning Commissioner Announcements/Updates
- XVI.

Adjourn



# Meeting Minutes: Dakota County Planning Commission Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes-DRAFT

Date: 11/20/2025

Minutes prepared by Liz Hansen

Location: Western Service Center, Apple Valley, L139

## Attendance

### Members Present

- Amy Hunting
- James Guttman
- Tony Nelson
- Barry Graham
- Ibrahim Abdinasir
- Kelly Kausel
- Steve Shurts
- Jerry Rich
- Dennis Peine
- Paul Nasvik

### Dakota County staff members attending:

- Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager
- Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator
- Tom Lewanski, Manager Parks - Natural Resources
- Lil Leatham, Planner Principal
- Mary Jackson, Planner Sr
- Niki Geisler, Parks Director

### Member(s) Absent:

- Andrea Vaubel
- Lori Hansen
- Jill Smith

## Meeting Called to Order

- Time: 7:00 p.m.
- By Chair, Jim Guttman

## Pledge of Allegiance

- The Planning Commission opened the meeting by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

## Public Comments

- Comments/Notes: No audience member wished to address an item not on the agenda.

## Approval of Agenda

Chair Guttman asked if there were any changes to the agenda.

The Planning Commission advised no changes, additions, or deletions.

**MOTION: Commissioner Hunting moved, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, approving the agenda. Voice vote: Ayes – 10 Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved**

## Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (from September 25, 2025)

Chair Guttman asked if there were any changes to the previous meeting's minutes.

The Planning Commission advised no changes, additions, or deletions.

**MOTION: Commissioner Shurts moved, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, approving the previous meeting's minutes. Voice vote: Ayes – 10– Nays – 0 - Unanimously Approved**

## County Natural System Plan Update Kickoff – Information (Tom Lewanski – Parks, and Mary Jackson- Planning)

The Planning Commission received an update on the County Natural System Plan Update Kickoff.

Questions and comments by the Commissioners, along with responses from staff (italics):

Planning Commissioners asked a question about whether funding sources for natural resource protection and restoration have been reduced, especially at the Federal level. *Staff responded that funding sources exist at the Federal, State, Metropolitan, and County level. For private land easements, funding is sourced from the Outdoor Heritage Fund. In many instances Dakota County does not acquire fee title but acquires a conservation easement. Most of the funding for natural resource protection and restoration is not from the Federal level, so it is not having a major impact on this program.*

What are some of the eligible activities allowed on land protected by easements? *Staff responded that easements are individually prepared. Easements prohibit development, but the underlying landowner maintains control of the property and manages the natural resources on that property. It is important that Dakota County and the landowner have a common understanding of Dakota County's expectations for natural resource management when the easement is prepared. Dakota County has also valued some level of public access either on the protected land or adjacent land (e.g. a shore-fishing location) so that others can benefit from the easement over private land.*

The Planning Commission discussed the plan objective to build capacity in the natural systems management workforce. A statement was made that the main problem may be the number of career opportunities available, and not that there were not enough people entering the field. It would also be nice to see more people from diverse backgrounds have an opportunity to work in the natural systems management field. *Staff agreed with the comments.*

How does Dakota County work with the School of Environmental Studies to cultivate interest in natural systems management careers? *Staff responded that they regularly work with students from the School of Environmental Studies and engage classrooms on natural resource projects. Students work with County staff in the park, and County experts periodically visit classrooms.*

Planning Commissioners made positive comments about the organization of the plan. A point was made that the plan should set priorities along with estimated completion targets along quarterly timeframes.

A comment was made in support of language that addresses the need to plan for and adapt to climate change and the stresses that it places on natural systems.

Several comments were made about strengthening the “strategy” level of the plan and perhaps use terms such as “actions” that are more specific and measurable.

A recommendation was made to keep a prioritized cue of projects in the implementation chapter that can be accomplished when funding becomes available.

Staff thanked the Planning Commission for their comments and then discussed the next steps in the planning process.

## **County Public Art Plan – Information (Lil Leatham - Planning)**

The Planning Commission received an update on the County Public Art Plan.

Questions and comments by the Commissioners, along with responses from staff (*italics*):

Planning Commissioners were asked a question regarding future public art programs: What is one word you would use to describe public art in Dakota County? Their responses are noted below.

- Unambiguous – A lot of art is beautiful but is difficult to understand. Concepts should not be too abstract. They should be clear.
- Intriguing – Whether it's because you can interpret it or you can't, it makes you want to look at it.
- Inclusive – appealing to more than just one group
- Organic – Content fits the site and may change, may address the roots of Dakota County
- Unexpected – lightens the mood, makes you curious about what you might see next
- Blends in – Fits in its surroundings
- Accessible – easily found, easily approached
- Engaging – makes you think, it is interesting
- Enriching – makes the place better
- Celebrates the seasons – May be temporary or seasonal celebrating harvest for example



- Pop Up Art – May also be seasonal and can be moved to different locations for others to experience
- Representative of the place – connected to what is going on around it
- Properly sited – in places where people want to be, want to gather
- Transformative – helps make the place somewhere you would like to be

The Planning Commission was asked to respond to the following vision questions:

1. What impact can public art have in Dakota County?
2. What kinds of projects do you think would be most successful? Why?
3. What are the places or types of places where you think public art would be successful?

Their responses are noted below.

Planning Commission members discussed how using public funds on public art can be difficult to justify. It may be easier to do when the art is integrated into the function of a structure (e.g. mural in a tunnel, railing on a bridge, building design)

A comment was made that a good architect may be able to integrate art into design, as opposed to art that is “tacked on”.

A comment was made that even the structural features of a bridge can be designed to resemble the surrounding trees in a forest context, as is the case at Spring Lake Park Reserve. Several other related comments were made about the using the technique of incorporating features that relate to the surrounding environment.

A comment was made that community participation in art projects can create powerful results, such as group participation in a community mural.

The Planning Commission discussed temporary art, such as music. People have a wide variety of musical tastes which may be a challenge to program in some circumstances. Many cities host orchestras or more contemporary forms of music on public stages.

Art may provide an opportunity to incorporate education. Similarly, art can incorporate culture, such as Native American poems and imagery.

Parks and libraries serve important functions as community spaces. At the state level, a key location is the state capital, while at the county level, courthouses and boardrooms play a significant role. Enhancing the business conducted in these settings and the atriums of administrative buildings is essential.

Art may also be designed to address the needs of people at a certain location. If it is a stressful setting such as a courtroom, art can be incorporated into the lobby areas to help people feel more comfortable and relaxed.

## Planning Manager Update and County Board Actions

Comments/Notes: Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager, provided the Planning Commission with an update on the following County Board Actions:

- Adopted Solid Waste Management Plan
- Adopted Mississippi River Greenway Natural Resources Management Plan
- Authorized funding request to State Park Road Account to pave west Spring Lake Park Reserve entrance roads

## Upcoming Public Meetings – Community Outreach

<b>County 42 Project in Hastings</b> (Trail and safety Improvements)  Open House	December 3, 5pm-7pm Hastings YMCA, 85 Pleasant Drive
<b>West Lake Byllesby Park Improvements</b> (from the master plan)  Open house	December, TBD

## Planning Commissioner Updates

A Planning Commissioner asked about the County's role in approving data centers. *Staff responded that Dakota County has a very limited role. The County can comment on proposed data centers in the environmental review process, but generally lacks authority in the permitting and approval process.*

Staff and Planning Commissioners discussed the status of the potential future Nelson aggregate mining operation in the Mississippi River near Spring Lake Park.

## Adjournment

**MOTION:** Commissioner Graham moved, seconded by Commissioner Kausel, to adjourn the meeting at 9:07 p.m. Voice Vote: Ayes – 10 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved.

## Next Meeting: Thursday, January 22, 2026, at 7 p.m., Western Service Center, Conference Room L139

- No topics are scheduled for this meeting at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager

## 2026 Planning Commission Meeting Schedule

Planning Commission Dates	Event
January 22, 2026	Meeting
March 26, 2026	Meeting
May 28, 2026	Meeting
July 23, 2026	Meeting
September 24, 2026	Meeting
November 19, 2026 (3 <sup>rd</sup> Thurs)*	Meeting

\* Meetings moved from the 4th Thursday to the 3rd Thursday to avoid conflicting with holidays

Additional dates to be added as needed.

## Draft Planning Commission 2026 Work Plan

Board Goal	Committee's Goal for 2026	Project/Activity	Outcome Measure	Timeline
A Healthy Environment with Quality Natural Areas  Thriving People	Mississippi River Greenway Long Range Plan	Update plan in coordination with "Mississippi River Interpretive Plan" and "Connecting People to the River Plan"	Recommendation to PDC	Q1-Q2
A Healthy Environment with Quality Natural Areas	Park Natural System Plan Update	Monitor progress on natural resource restoration and modify as needed	Recommendation to PDC	Q1-Q4
Excellence in Public Service  Thriving People	Park Visitor Services Plan Update	Monitor progress on visitor services programs and modify as needed	Recommendation to PDC	Q1-Q4
Excellence in Public Service  Thriving People  A Healthy Environment with Quality Natural Resources	Park Greenway System Plan Update	Monitor progress on greenways and modify as needed	Recommendation to PDC	Q1-Q4
A Healthy Environment with Quality Natural Areas  Thriving People	Spring Lake Park Reserve Cultural Landscape Management Plan	Review plan to protect and manage cultural resources	Recommendation to PDC	Q1-Q4
Excellence in Public Service  Thriving People  A Successful Place for Business and Jobs  A Healthy Environment with Quality Natural Resources	2050 Comprehensive Plan Update	Begin research and public engagement phase of plan update	Recommendation to PDC	Q1-Q4*

\* Indicates that project will extend into 2027 work plan.

# DAKOTA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

**DATE: 01/22/2026**

**AGENDA ITEM: Mississippi River Greenway – Long Range Plan**

**PREPARED BY: JOHN MERTENS**

## **PURPOSE**

Provide Planning Commission:

1. *Update to the Mississippi River Greenway – Long Range Plan*
2. *Receive input and comments that improve the greenway.*

## **Plan Background**

*The overall goal of the Mississippi River Greenway – Long Range Plan is to develop a contemporary plan that reflects the County's current greenway vision. The plan will provide a foundation for both internal and external funding requests and establish a framework for ongoing partnerships with communities along the Mississippi River. In addition, the plan will guide the long-term development, operations, and maintenance of the County's keystone greenway.*

## **Progress Towards Plan**

*The Mississippi River Greenway – Long Range Plan is currently at the midpoint of the planning process. Since initiating the project this past summer, the project team has conducted site tours, completed inventory and mapping efforts, and gathered initial input from both agency partners and the public. A major focus to date has been engaging key County staff and departments responsible for the development, operations, and maintenance of the Mississippi River Greenway.*

## **Key Activities Completed to Date**

- *Plan kickoff with meeting with County staff/consultant team and Planning Commission tour (July)*
- *Collection and mapping of GIS data for all existing and programmed greenway elements*
- *Initial coordination meetings with partner cities (external stakeholders)*
- *Initial coordination meetings with key County staff and departments (internal stakeholders)*
- *Participation in multiple public events along to collect public input*
- *Development of a public website featuring an interactive comment map (see below)*

*Public Website and Interactive Comment Map: <https://us.maptionnaire.com/p/7om9kbp672k9>*

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- *Plan Purpose and Goals*
- *Public and Agency Comment Summary (to date)*

## **QUESTIONS/Discussion**

The following questions are intended to help guide discussion during Planning Commission Meeting.

1. Does the level of engagement to date seem appropriate? Is the interactive comment map an effective and useful engagement tool?
2. *Are there additional "big or small ideas" that could help improve the Mississippi River Greenway?*

# HELP US PLAN FOR THE FUTURE OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER GREENWAY

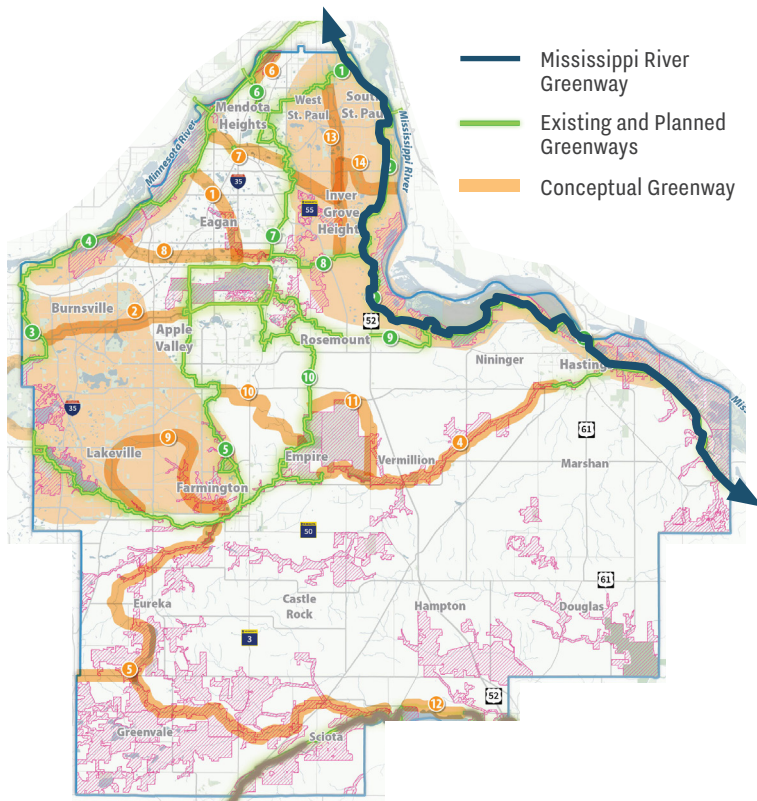
## PROJECT PURPOSE

Dakota County is launching a new long-range plan to guide investment in the greenway over the next 20 years. This planning effort will establish a modern vision for the corridor.

We are looking for creative approaches to activating the corridor—through interpretation, distinctive amenities, programming, events, and attractions. This plan will build on the numerous planning efforts already completed, while leaving room for new ideas and refining existing concepts.

## DAKOTA COUNTY GREENWAY MAP

*Excerpted from the Dakota County 2050 Vision Plan*



THE PROJECT PLANNING WINDOW  
IS THROUGH SUMMER OF 2026

SCAN THIS QR CODE TO LEAVE YOUR  
FEEDBACK ABOUT THE TRAIL!



Let us know what you like, dislike, or want to see on the Mississippi River Greenway. Your input will help guide the greenway's future improvements.  
Thank you for your participation!

## PLAN GOALS:

- Extend the greenway six miles to the Goodhue County line (with a future connection to Red Wing)
- Strengthen community connections to and along the greenway
- Document existing and planned investments in the corridor
- Activate the greenway with programming and events
- Enhance river access and recreational opportunities
- Position projects for external funding and investment



# MISSISSIPPI RIVER GREENWAY LONG-RANGE PLAN

## Feedback Summary

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**DRAFT JANUARY 2026**

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*Dakota*  
COUNTY

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## PROCESS

Because the Greenway serves a wide range of users, meaningful public input helped ensure the project reflects community needs and priorities. Engaging the public early and through multiple methods allowed the project team to better understand how people currently use the trail, identify opportunities and concerns, and build support for future improvements along the corridor.

To reach a broad audience, three primary engagement methods were used:

- **Yard Signs Along the Trail**
  - Yard signs were placed directly along the Greenway to engage current trail users within the project area. The signs included project information and a QR code linking to the online engagement platform. Signs were installed during the month of October 2025, to increase visibility of the project and encourage participation from people actively using the corridor.
- **An Online Interactive Map**
  - An online interactive mapping survey allowed community members to provide location-specific feedback along the Mississippi River Greenway. Participants could identify areas they enjoy, note safety concerns or challenges, and suggest improvements directly on the map. This method offered flexible, anytime participation and generated valuable spatial data to inform planning and design decisions.
- **In-Person Pop-up Events**
  - In-person pop-up engagement occurred at two community events: Día de los Muertos at South St. Paul High School on October 30, 2025, and the ROCC Resource Fair at Dakota Lodge on November 16, 2025. These events allowed for direct conversation with community members, relationship-building, and engagement with individuals who may not otherwise participate through online or self-guided methods.

Together, these engagement methods provided multiple ways for community members to learn about the project and share input. The feedback gathered through online, on-site, and in-person outreach will help guide future improvements along the Mississippi River Greenway and ensure the corridor meets the needs of its users.

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The following pages provide a summary of what we heard from the community.

### ONLINE INTERACTIVE MAP (MAPTIONNAIRE)

This interactive online map was open from October 2025 to December 2025. During that time, we received **256 total visitors**, **44 submitted respondents**, and **206 bounce visitors** (see chart below). Figure 4.1 shows a break down of the types of responses we received.





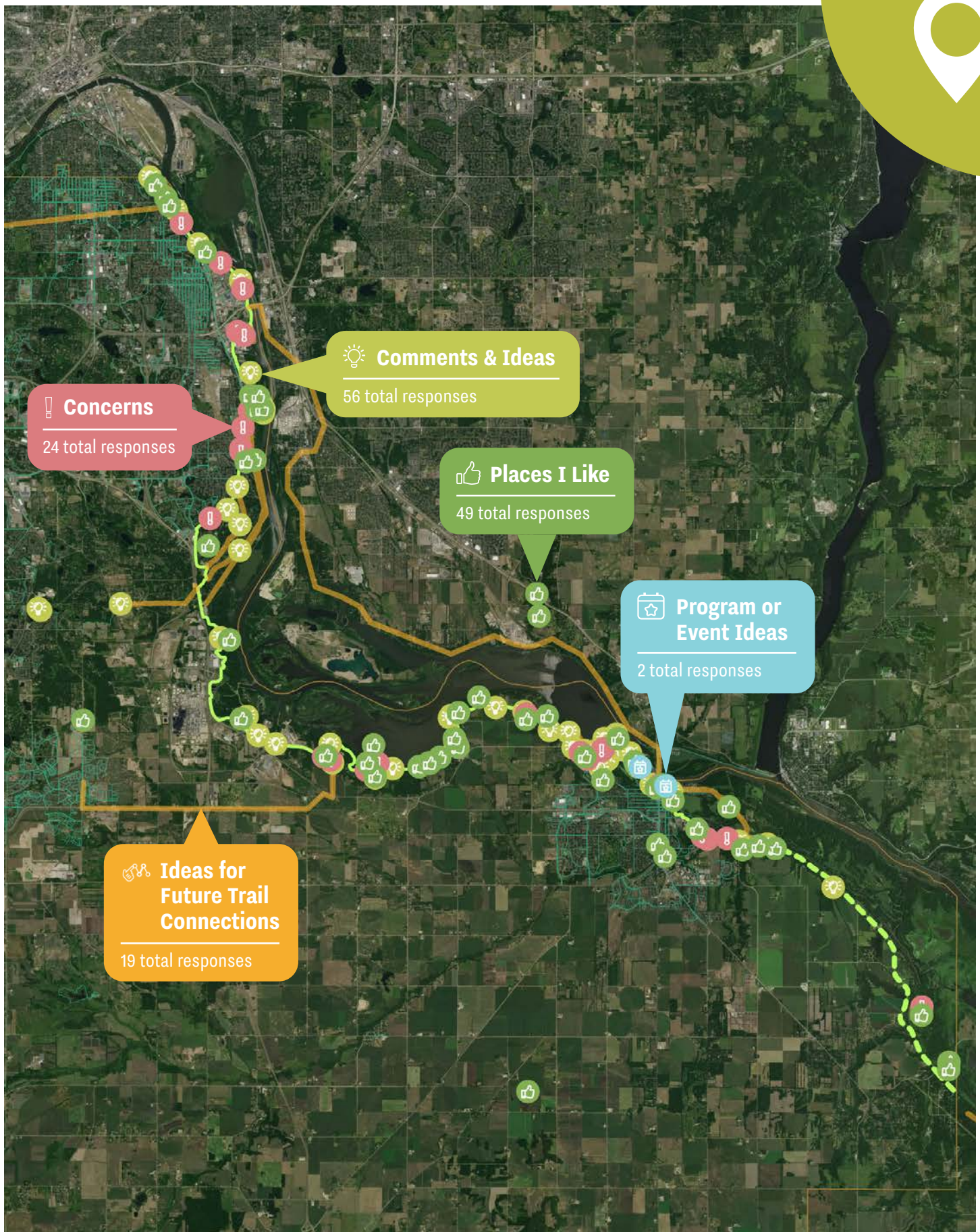


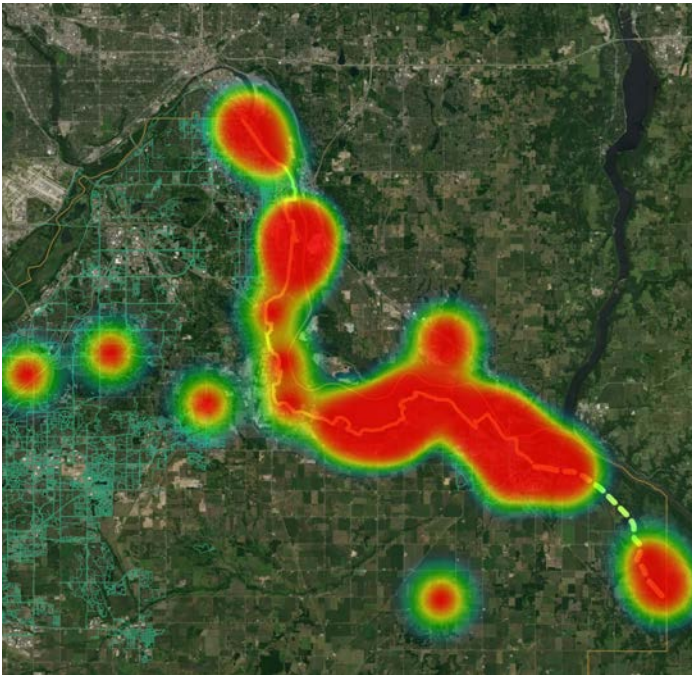
Figure 8.1 Online Interactive Map with All Submitted Responses



## HEAT MAPS



**Places I Like:** Respondents favorite places, features, or improvements along the greenway

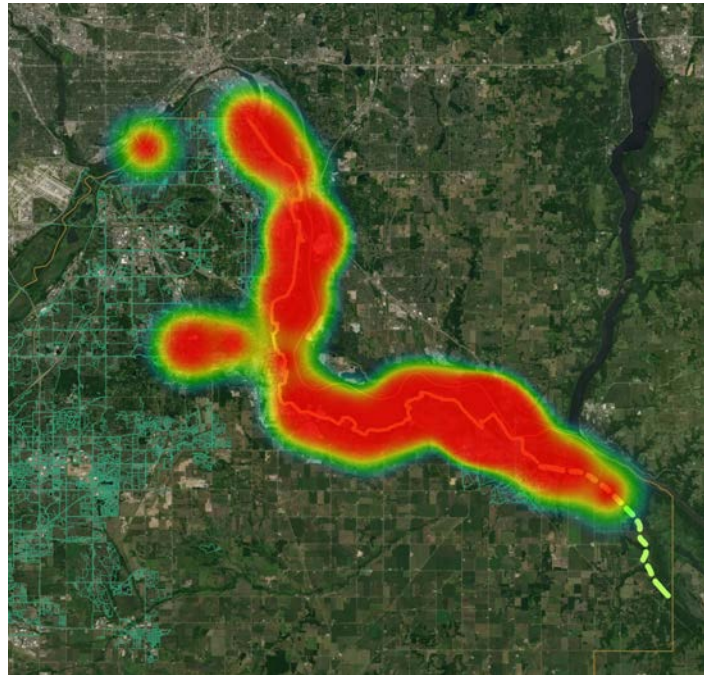


49

Comments



**Comments & Ideas:** Ideas for future improvements or something respondents would like to see change

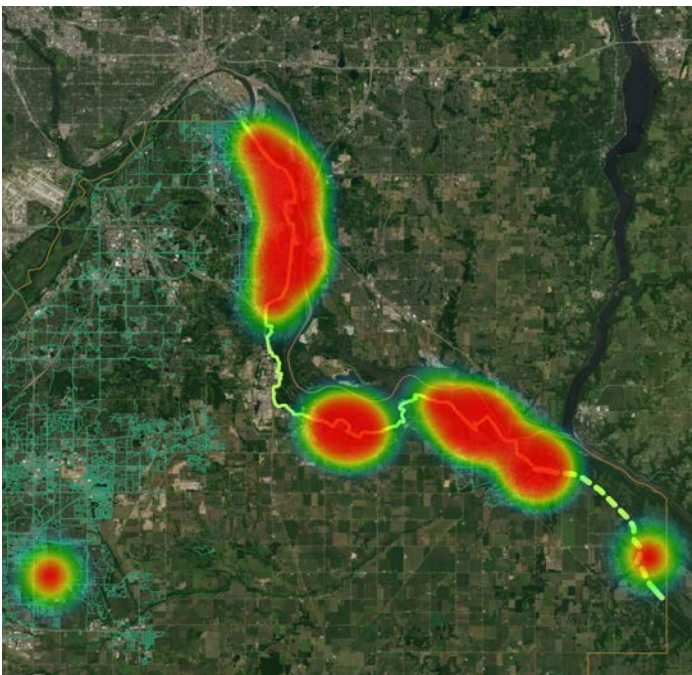


56

Comments



**Concerns:** Issues or standing concerns that respondents may have with particular features or areas

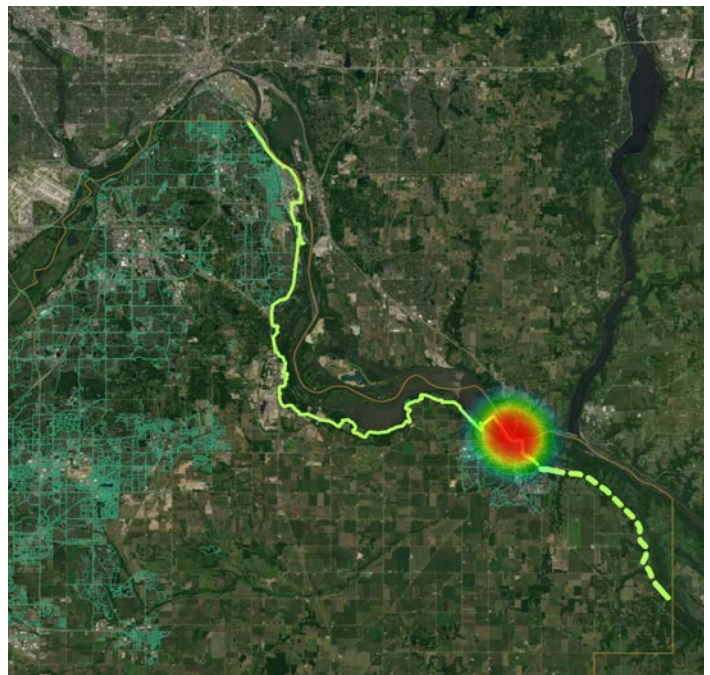


24

Comments



**Program or Event Ideas:** Ideas for future programming or event ideas along the greenway

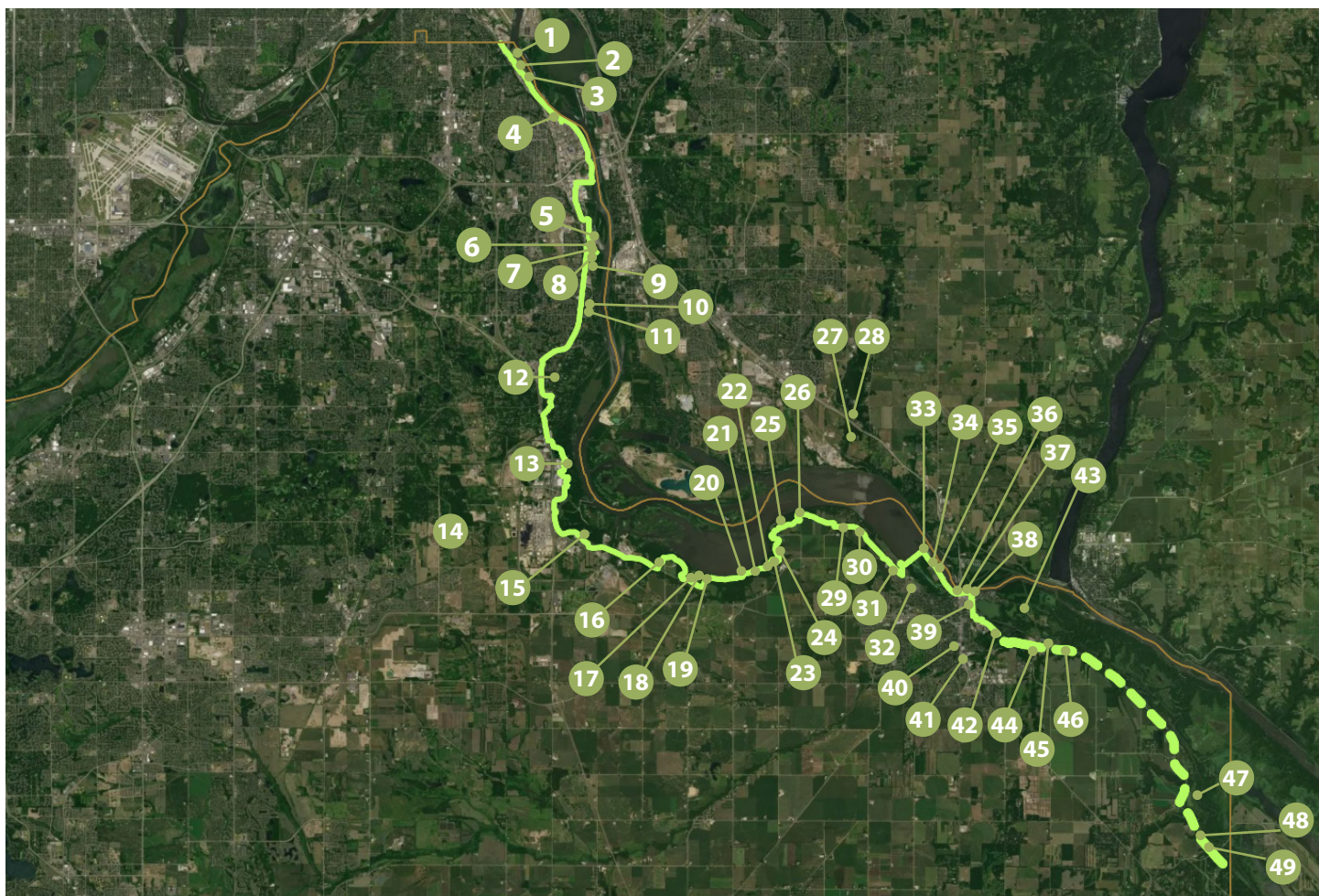


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Comments



## "PLACES I LIKE" DETAILED MAP



### Places I Like:

Key	Comment
1	I like being able to bike from Hastings to St Paul.
2	I really like the water bottle filling station at Kaposia - more options like this with the top fill option would be awesome.
3	Solid trail by the Mississippi that connects to other trails nearby. Well lit, interesting nature to observe throughout the year.
4	Great views of river.... a little ugly
5	New Splash Pad will bring more users to area
6	Cold Beer and great views
7	Winding trail through woods.
8	I like the old bridge & view of the river.
9	Rock Island swing bridge is a great stopping point when you're coming from the cities
10	Like route or alternative to avoid riding on concord.... Also avoids riding by King of Diamonds

## Places I Like:

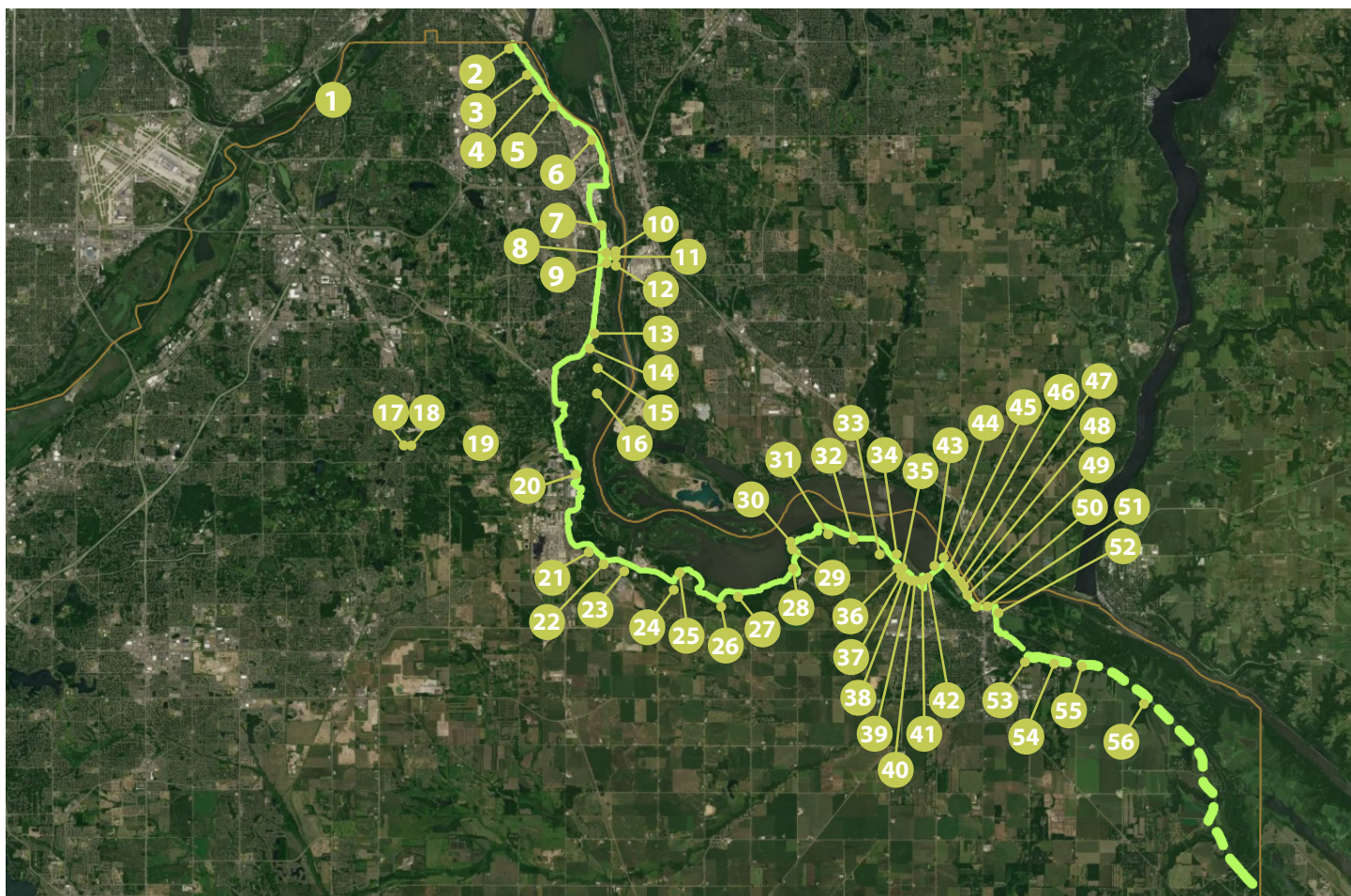
Key	Comment
11	N/A
12	I like taking Old Concord Blvd sometimes because there is less ambient noise from Hwy 52 than along Cahill. The existing route along Cahill is handy for shopping or stopping at restaurants.
13	Love the view and walking or along the bluff
14	N/A
15	More overlooks would be great
16	Like new connection
17	N/A
18	Like trail loop for Bison Area
19	Love the Bison
20	Riding through the woods, bridges with overlooks
21	Trail through the woods. View of the river.
22	N/A
23	Scenic bridge
24	Absolutely one of the best trails in the twin cities area. Please make more secluded and dramatic trails!!!
25	Spring lake park
26	Trail through the woods.
27	N/A
28	N/A
29	N/A
30	Farmland.
31	Not a fan of biking along the road.
32	Great view of river and damn
33	Fun to look at barges
34	Like overlook but should be improved
35	I enjoy the river and the beauty of nature between the Confluence Hotel and Lock and dam #2 in Hastings
36	Food, hotel
37	I like seeing the barges & other boating activity.

## Places I Like:

Key	Comment
38	City park with staged events
39	I like the train activity.
40	Ice cream shop and deli
41	Vermilion Falls - scenic
42	N/A
43	Alignment is consistent with previous plan to connect Hastings and Red Wing
44	United Heroes League
45	I would love to see the trail extended
46	Connecting the trail to Red wing is great! This will connect the Twin Cities trail system to the Cannon Valley trail, the future Mississippi bluffs trail, and the future Goodhue pioneer trail (which will connect all the way to Rochester)
47	This extension is a great idea
48	Boat landing and fishing
49	N/A



## "COMMENTS OR IDEAS" DETAILED MAP



### Comments or Ideas

Key	Comment
1	Would like to see a more Bike/Walk friendly connector between Lilydale Trailhead and South St Paul
2	I would like there to be signage or markings differentiating between Dakota County Parks maintained trail and St. Paul Parks maintained trail.
3	N/A
4	Put a foot bridge here that connects Concord/Bryant to the MRT. There are constantly people walking/biking on this bridge, and vehicles frequently speed and do not stop at the posted stop signs - a bridge people can safely walk or bike over here is far overdue.
5	Improve access to river along levee for fishing/river viewing etc
6	Build bridge to island
7	Provide access to edge of water.... fishing/birding?
8	Promote businesses along greenways
9	Add connection to/from marina/restaurant
10	Host pop-up bier garden/food

## Comments or Ideas

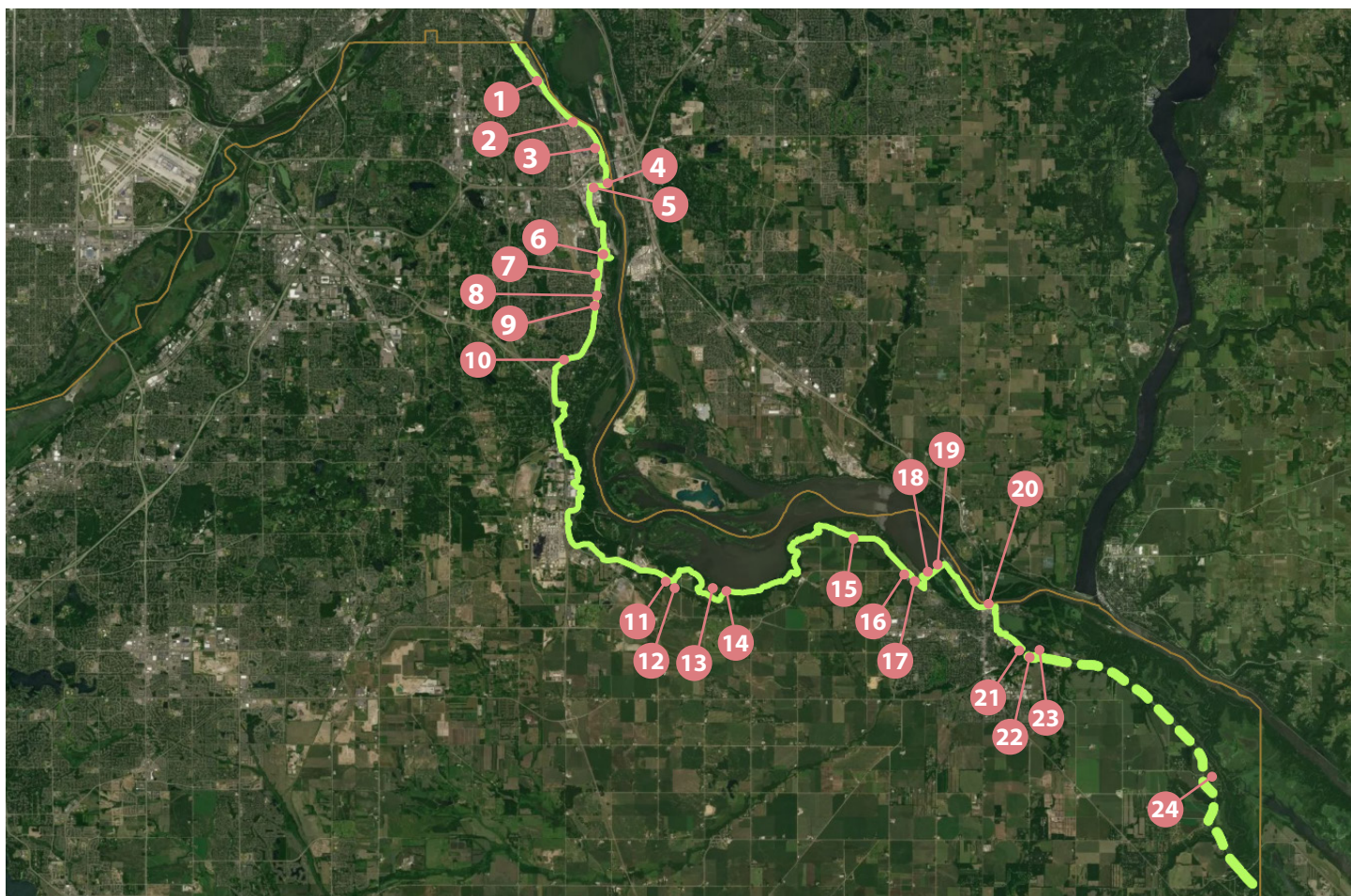
Key	Comment
11	Restore floodplain forest
12	Add kayak/canoe access at pier
13	N/A
14	Would be great to avoid concord through this stretch
15	Add trail or bike lanes when Inver Grove Trail is reconstructed as alternative to riding on Concord!
16	Rail corridor would be ideal if it was ever available
17	Very interested in seeing this portion of the trail completed
18	FINISH the Connection to Lebanon Hills!!!
19	FINISH the Connector to Lebanon Hills!!!
20	Add little library with river and nature themed books
21	Partner with Flint Hills to reopen the ski hill
22	Paint a mural on the road divider
23	More garbage cans along the whole trail. Then maybe lazy people will pickup after they're dogs.
24	Need connector trail from downtown Rosemount. County Rd 42 too busy and dangerous to bike along.
25	Improve facilities to serve trail/greenway use better
26	Add elevated bison viewing spot of greenway
27	Manage invasive plants to improve views from trail to river
28	Add another overlook
29	I agree with the other commenter, a campsite would be a really awesome and open up some really fun opportunities to explore the greenway.
30	Bicycle/Hiker campsite please! With the Mississippi River Greenway it would be so helpful to have a place to camp for the night along the trail. None of the other campsites in this area are close to the trail and all Dakota County Parks have 2 night minimums on the weekend and do not have a no turn away policy which is really tough for bicycle touring because weather and mechanical failures can upset even the most thought out plan. I've used the site at Three Rivers' Carver Park Reserve and Stearns County's Rockville County Park and those both came in very handy for a couple of times I biked more than a day entering or leaving the metro area on a longer trip or for a one night out and back to check that I pack the right things for a longer trip. It's right along the Mississippi River Trail route where I have met multiple people who ride hundreds of miles along it throughout the years.
31	Please restrict E Bikes from trail. The speed and disregard for pedestrians on the trail makes them dangerous. At the least please post signs establishing rules for the bikers. A couple examples are slow down when approaching pedestrians and sound horns or shout a warning when approaching from rear
32	I would like to see more dog poop stations. Designated off leash dog areas
33	N/A
34	What is this? A different trail from the existing trail?

## Comments or Ideas

Key	Comment
35	Create round-about with future development slow cars coming into residential area - transition speed limit to 35
36	Less people taking the shortcut through the neighborhood streets and more people using the bike trail
37	Add alternate on-road route signs to avoid crossing CSAH 42 twice - maybe painted symbols
38	Add trail to avoid crossing 42
39	Repurpose the old farm site of a Mississippi River Greenway/Great River Road - Visitor and Event Center
40	Poop station / trash can
41	Smoother / easier elevation change and turn
42	Create an overlook
43	This section is very slippery and icy due to poor draining and refreezing
44	N/A
45	Add Birding/improved rest areas along levee
46	Provide a board walk connection to the new island
47	Add hiking and birding overlooks to wetland area
48	Improve access and amenities to support popular fishing picnic area
49	Please include a 12 month porta potty between the Confluence Hotel and Lock and dam #2
50	Poems by local artists on the trail downtown
51	Move the 5 mile marker sign so that it is not in front of the historic landmark. This sign is in the way if you want to take a photo. Somebody really messed up when they decided to put this mile marker sign in this particular place.
52	Like more direct trail vs going through parking lot
53	N/A
54	Consider putting trail on north side and pulling away from road now that wastewater plan is no longer being built here
55	Preserve at-grade rail crossing for access to WMA/Open Space/Lake
56	Land is for sale could be a good stop on future trail/greenway



## "CONCERNS" DETAILED MAP



### Concerns

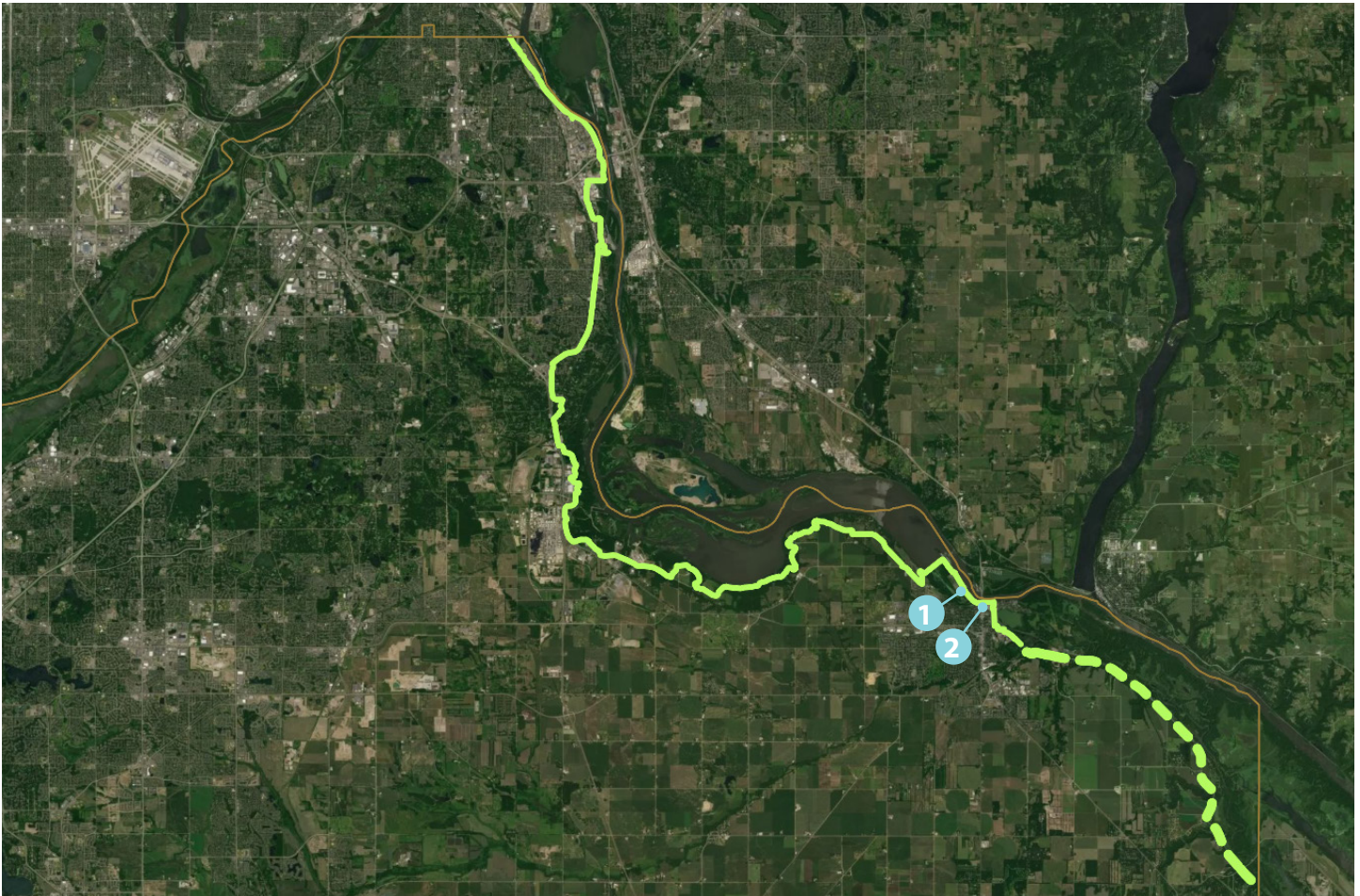
Key	Comment
1	Needs a safe pedestrian access to the trail from concord and Bryant
2	Condition of trail here is not good. Uneven surface and cracks
3	The smell around this area can be offensive at times.
4	Why is the color of water so different? Pollution issue?
5	It gets really dark in this section. If possible, it would be nice if some lights were installed along the darker areas of the trail.
6	Strip Club
7	Crossing improvement needed
8	I don't like riding through neighborhoods and along a road.
9	I agree with the other comment here. Riding along the road in this section is by far the least enjoyable section of trail. I always leave the trail and ride on Inver Grove Trail and River Rd.
10	Trail along concord is not a great experience

## Concerns

Key	Comment
11	Signage along this section is subpar. I missed the turn and just biked on the road to downtown Hastings somewhere near here.
12	Prohibit E Bikes from trail
13	N/A
14	N/A
15	N/A
16	Directional signage could be improved.
17	I don't like riding along the road.
18	This section is in really bad shape
19	This section deeply needs repaving. It's so rough right now. We should make sure all of the existing trail is highly maintained before expanding it.
20	More signage needed to direct to trail to Prescott, WI
21	Interactions with disc golf course at CP Adams Park. A trail along the road would be better when factoring in all users.
22	No good trail to bike south of Hastings. I typically use the gravel roads West of the greenway.
23	It is nice to keep the trail away from the road and near the railroad or natural amenities and nice views if possible
24	N/A



## "PROGRAM OR EVENT IDEAS" DETAILED MAP

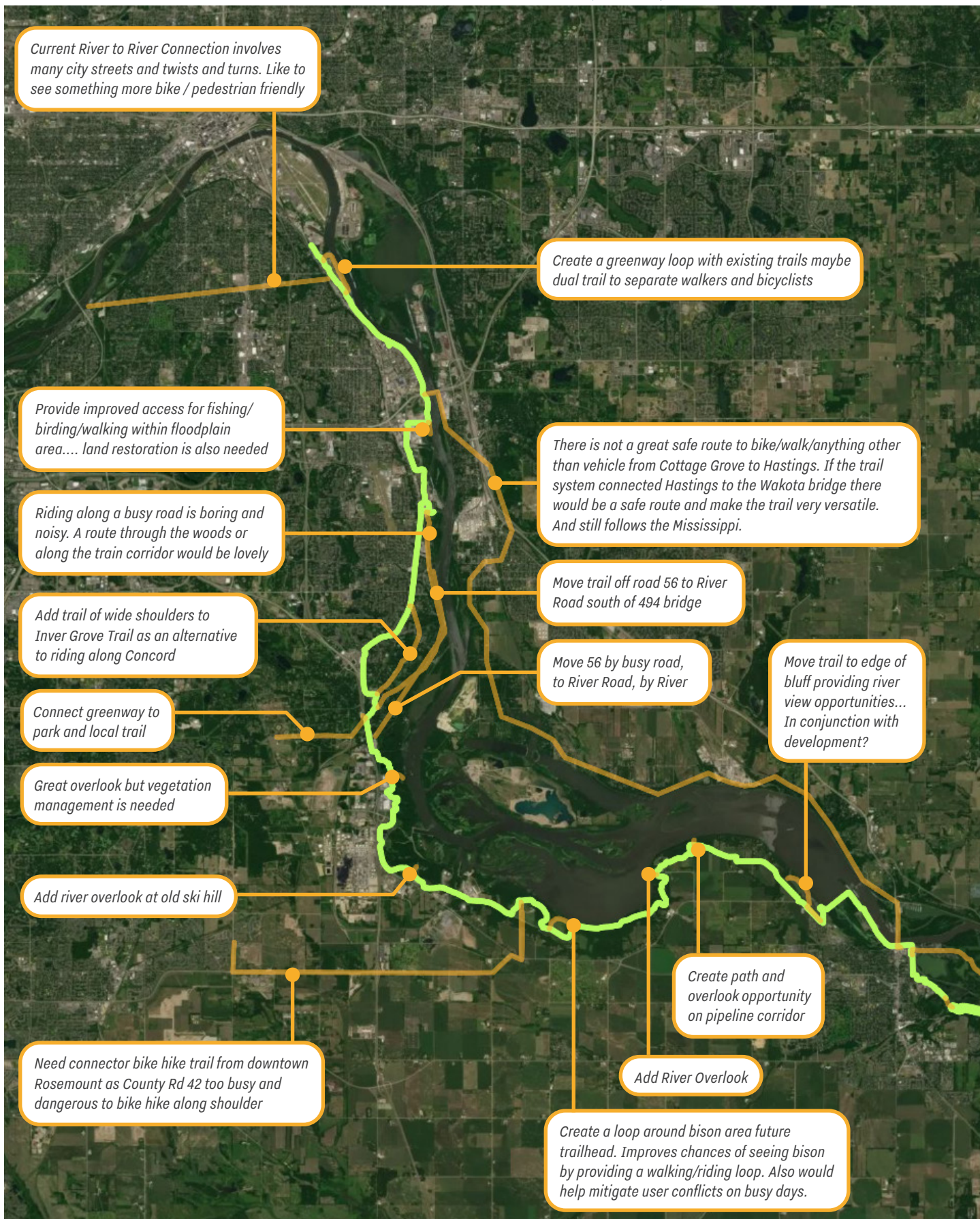


### Program or Event Ideas

Key	Comment
1	Please keep this our little nature retreat in Hastings, walkers,bikers, and fishermen love it
2	Host a ride with MN Bike Alliance - Like the Twin Cities/Mankato/Albert Lea bike tours

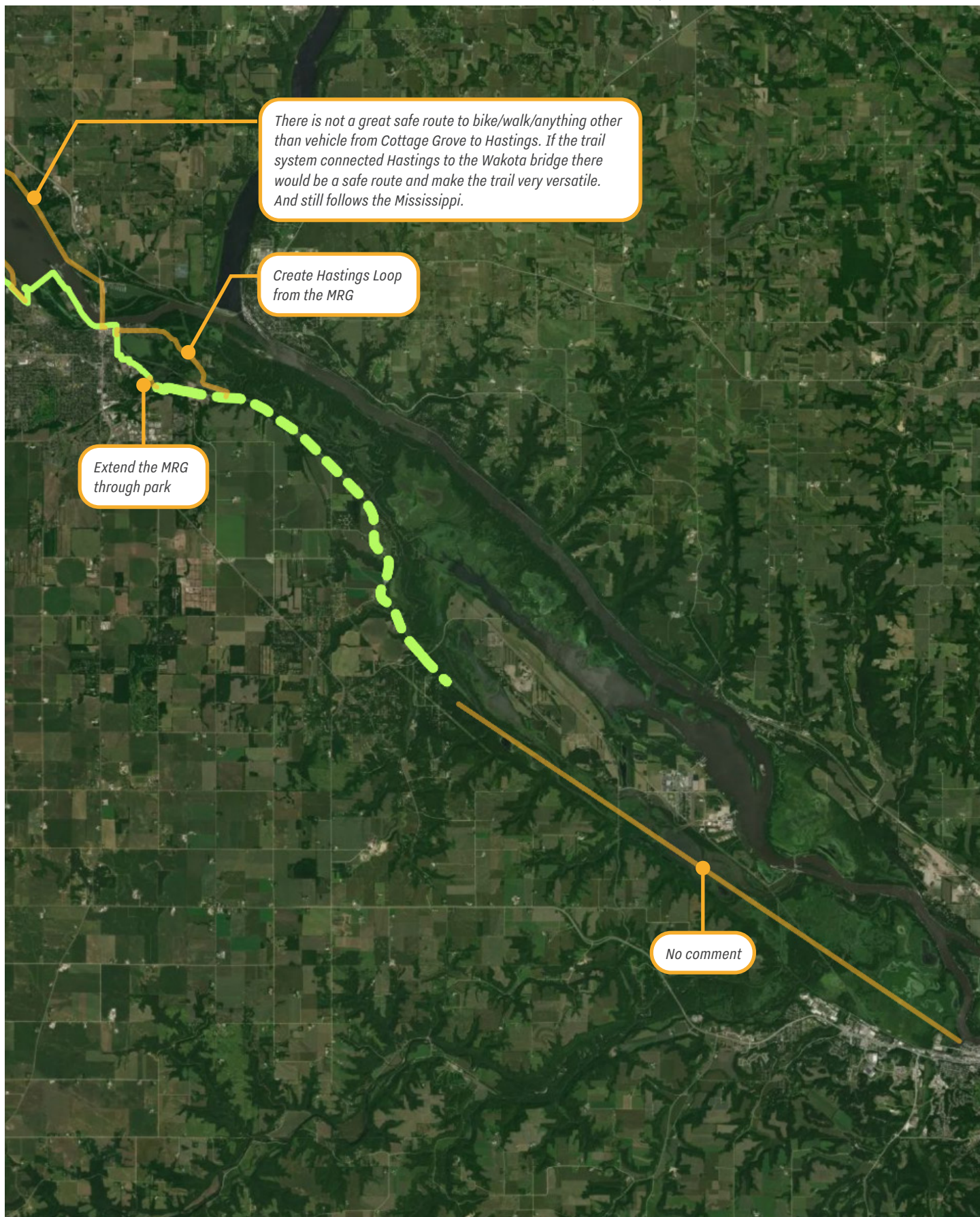


## "DRAW IDEAS FOR FUTURE TRAIL CONNECTIONS" DETAILED MAP (NORTH)





"DRAW IDEAS FOR FUTURE TRAIL CONNECTIONS" DETAILED MAP (SOUTH)



# DAKOTA COUNTY STAFF & AGENCY ENGAGEMENT

## PROCESS

While public input was collected, feedback was also gathered from Dakota County staff and agency representatives. Dakota County Parks and Trails staff who work with or support the trail system, such as operations and maintenance, planning, and events/management staff, were engaged and asked to provide feedback.

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The following pages provide a summary of what we heard from staff and agency representatives.

### ONLINE INTERACTIVE MAP (MAPTIONNAIRE) - STAFF + AGENCY RESULTS ONLY

A separate online map was developed specifically for Dakota County staff and agency representatives to review and share feedback. This interactive online map was open during the same period as the public map (October 2025 to December 2025). During that time, there were **46 total visitors**, **39 submitted responses**, and **39 bounce visitors** (see chart below). Figure 4.1 shows a break down of the types of responses we received.





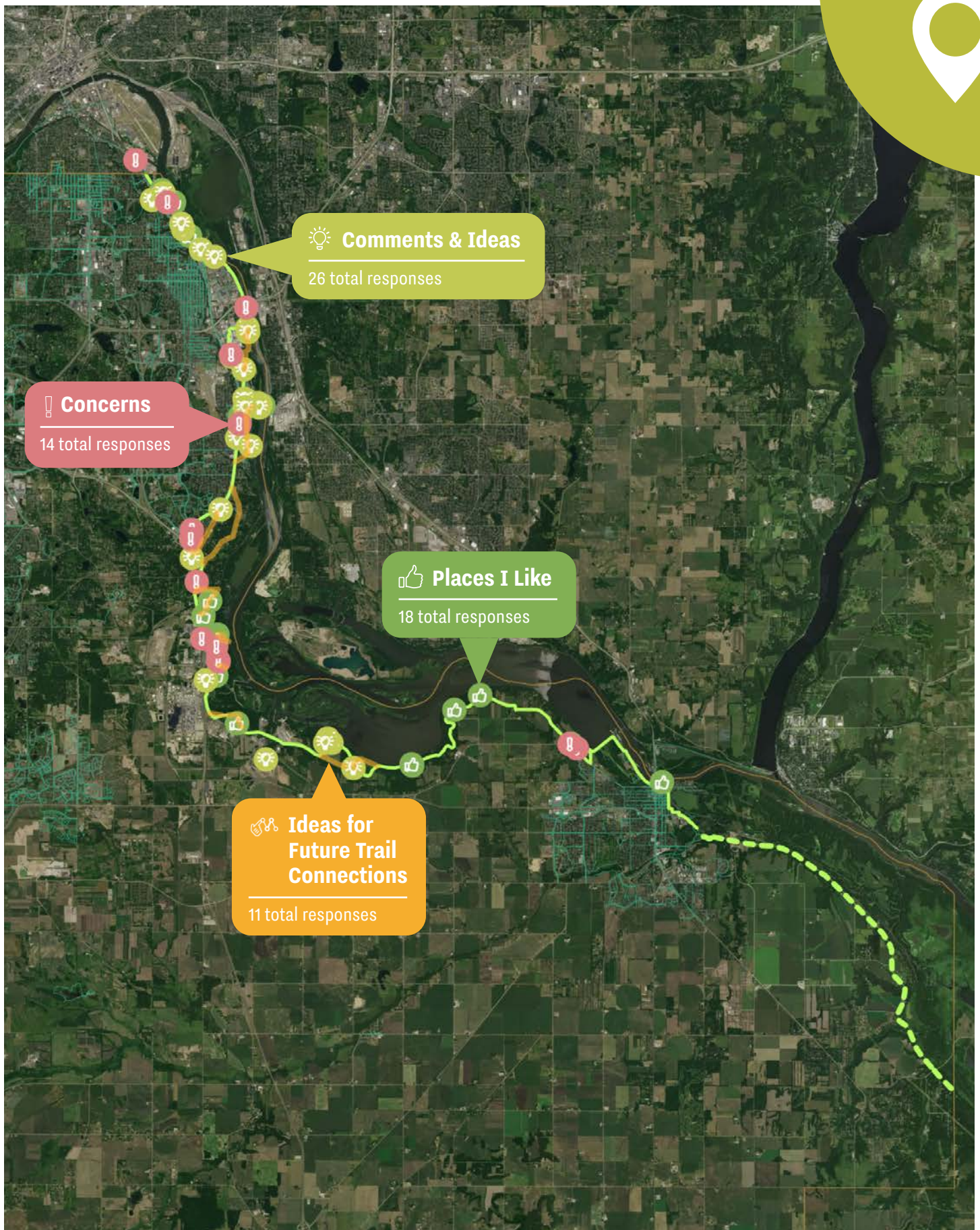


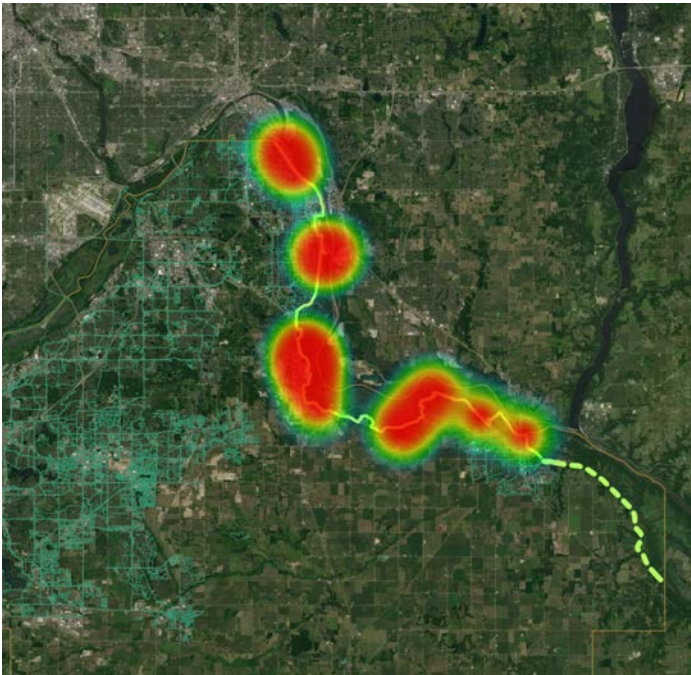
Figure 8.1 Online Interactive Map with Staff and Agency Submitted Responses



## HEAT MAPS



**Places I Like:** Respondents favorite places, features, or improvements along the greenway

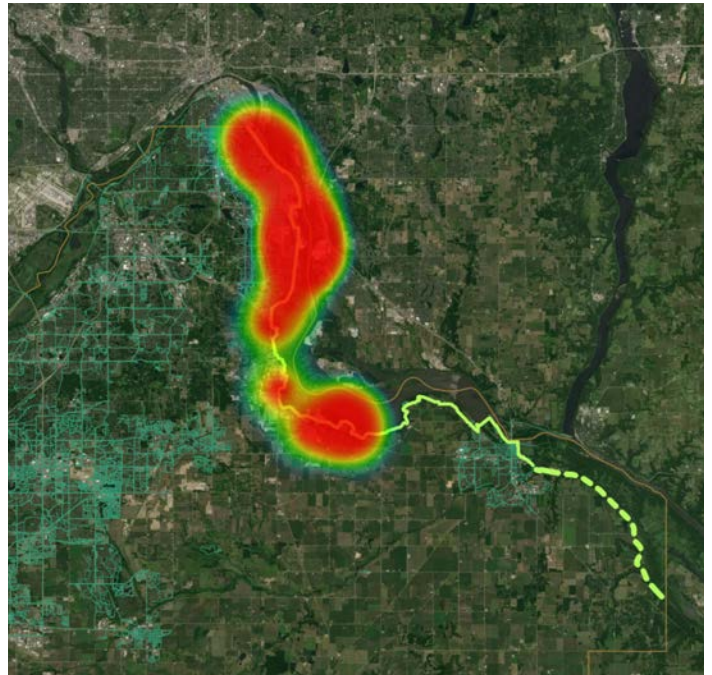


18

Comments



**Comments & Ideas:** Ideas for future improvements or something respondents would like to see change

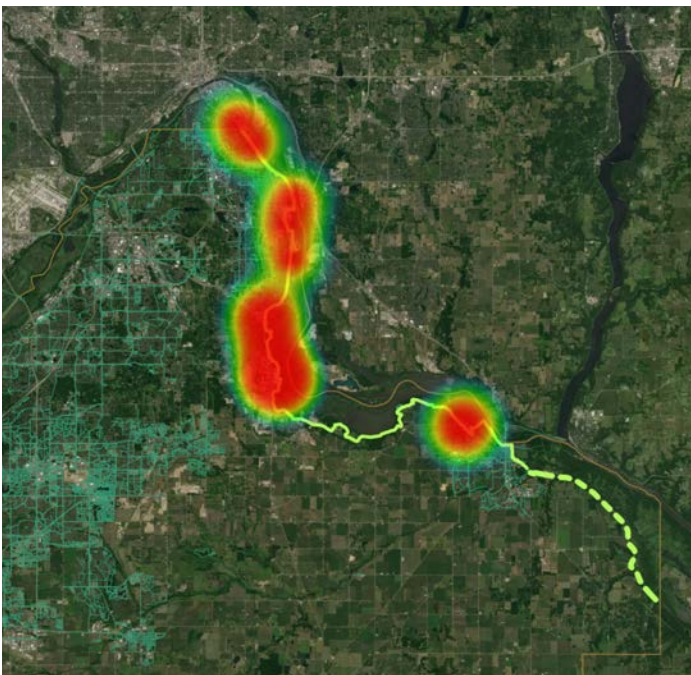


26

Comments



**Concerns:** Issues or standing concerns that respondents may have with particular features or areas



14

Comments



## "PLACES I LIKE" DETAILED MAP



### Places I Like:

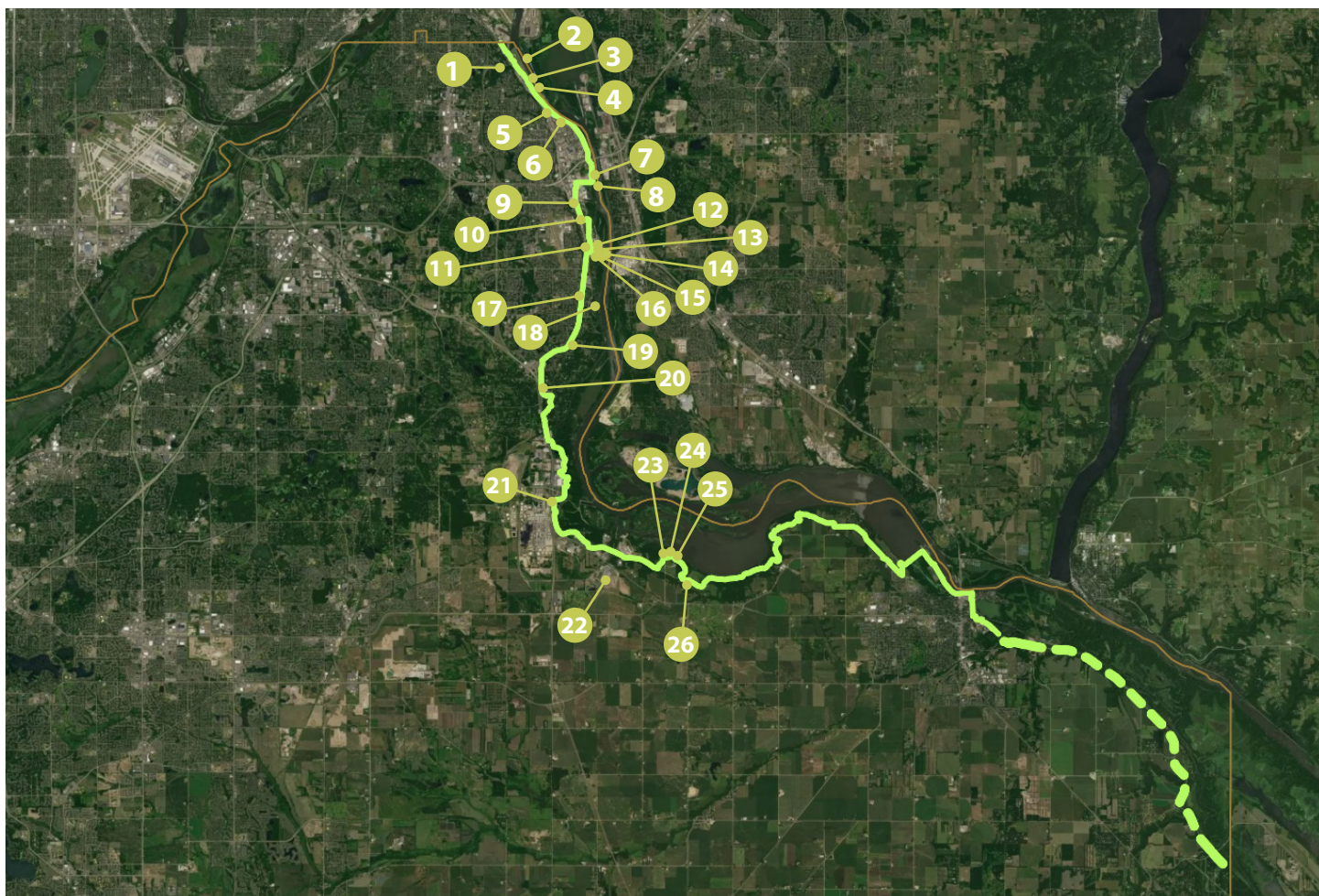
Key	Comment
<b>1</b>	Nice large parking area, access to bathrooms, access to other trails.
<b>2</b>	Shore fishing
<b>3</b>	Love to stop here to take photos of the river and use the bathroom/drink water.
<b>4</b>	Views, connection to the river
<b>5</b>	I love the challenge of the hill.
<b>6</b>	Getting away from frontage road would be great
<b>7</b>	Very nice, vegetated area. Usually very quiet.
<b>8</b>	Nice trailhead and amenities. I go here with my family for picnics and walks.
<b>9</b>	Viewshed and interpretive experience
<b>10</b>	Nice repair station.
<b>11</b>	I like the new trail connection to Spring Lake Park Reserve.

## Places I Like:

Key	Comment
<b>12</b>	Scenic ride and river views.
<b>13</b>	Such a beautiful place in winter.
<b>14</b>	Great amenities and picnic locations.
<b>15</b>	Connection to natural resources and environment. Comfortable ride due to greenway being “enclosed” by the forest on either side.
<b>16</b>	Public art along the Greenway.
<b>17</b>	Connection to the riverfront and downtown Hastings



## "COMMENTS OR IDEAS" DETAILED MAP



### Comments or Ideas

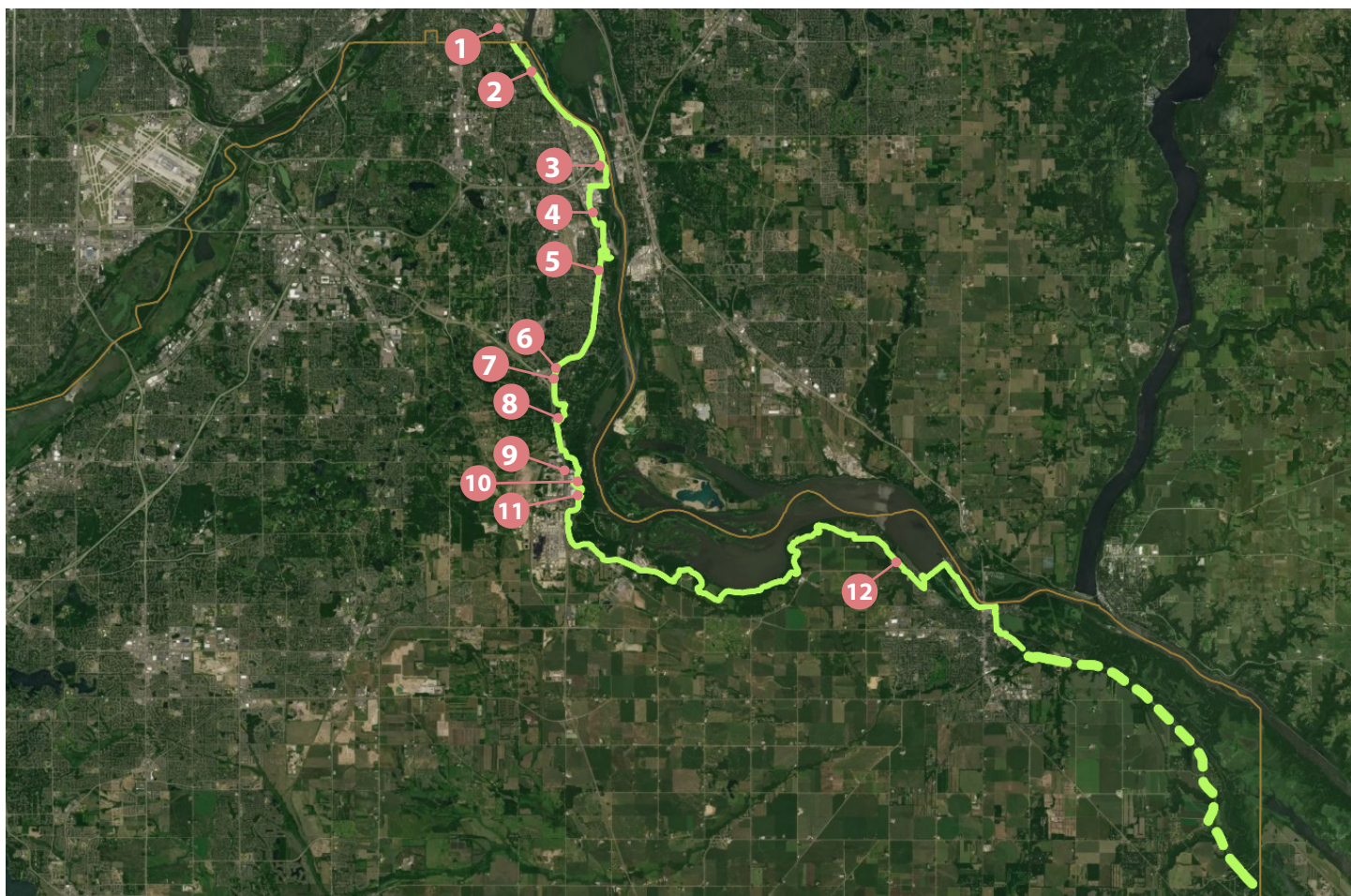
Key	Comment
<b>1</b>	Identify 1-3 mile walking trail loops at each trailhead and make sure there is a playground and/or an off leash dog area with the parks where trailheads are located.
<b>2</b>	Naming confusion with Kaposia "park" (disc golf course) with the parking lot and ball field.
<b>3</b>	Improve Fishing access
<b>4</b>	Mural on long flood wall
<b>5</b>	Public art on retaining walls
<b>6</b>	Potential fishing opportunities as USACE eases levee regulations
<b>7</b>	Nice hidden spot. Could benefit from some facelift.
<b>8</b>	Add fishing and bird viewing - hiking in packer preserve
<b>9</b>	Get rid of the noisy shooting range!
<b>10</b>	Work with IGH to minimize wildlife impacts due to the renovations the city is doing. I saw a fox a couple of times but with all the development, likely they will be displaced. And with the proximity to concord, I have seen dead raccoons and once a dead fox :(

## Comments or Ideas

Key	Comment
11	Choose 1 route for greenway - likely closer to river is probably the better route
12	Connect pier to marina/bar with a boardwalk.... public/private partnership
13	Upper deck for swing bridge
14	A second treetop trail/play space (in addition to the one in SLPR)
15	Provide a kayak and canoe launch at pier
16	Buy King of Diamonds and turn into a greenway visitor center.
17	Add tree lined boulevard to Concord to make it feel like a parkway
18	Potential Water Quality Partnership with potential overlook access to river
19	Agency/County partnership to preserve and protect undeveloped land along greenway for pull offs and pocket parks, similar to wildflower park experience
20	General comment: signs to indicate that the trail is shared with pedestrians and cyclists. A lot of people walk their dogs and are not paying attention to bikes.
21	Views aren't great south of here.
22	Corridor-wide ideas for art: murals (the 4,000' J-barrier, the tunnel, along the levee, parter with businesses that have large building faces that are visible from the trail). Parter with cities to create gateway art at city boundaries, and while my first preference is for chainlink fencing to be removed, utilizing the fencing as display space for temporary installations would be great). Excellent opportunity to parter with schools/classroom art teachers and working artists.
23	Archery Trailhead
24	Proposed canopy walk
25	I have walked here a few times trying to see the Bison when they are at this paddock but it's hard to see them due to the terrain and vegetation.
26	Looking forward to the new Fischer Avenue Trailhead.



## "CONCERNS" DETAILED MAP



## Concerns

Key	Comment
1	Very industrial area with large truck traffic. Also, north of the crossing to get off the trail to go to St Paul/West SP, the road has debris and sharp objects. I had a flat tire here because of it.
2	Unvegetated turf grass, lack of species diversity or tree canopy
3	Very smelly area depending on wind direction.
4	Road crossing is in really bad shape.
5	Add pedestrian crosswalk beacon.
6	Significant bump on the trail. Very bumpy section going south.
7	Poor user experience
8	Significant erosion
9	Highway barrier between people and the Greenway south of Pine Bend Elementary- hard to connect to the trail here without a car
10	Bluff stabilization issues - along pine bend/spring lake sections
11	Slope erosion
12	Dangerous crossing

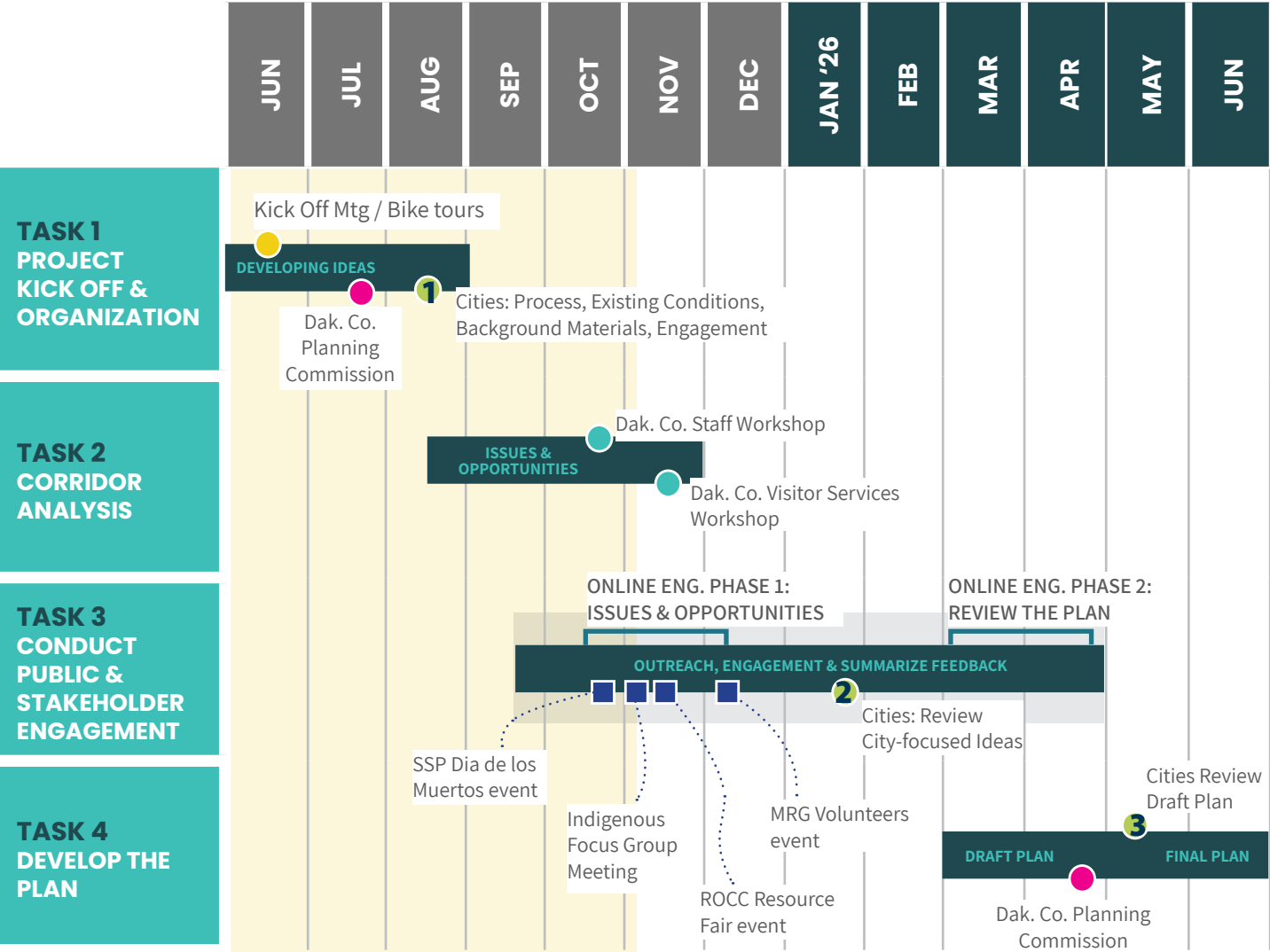


"DRAW IDEAS FOR FUTURE TRAIL CONNECTIONS" DETAILED MAP (NORTH)



# MRG LONG RANGE PLAN: PROJECT SCHEDULE

UPDATED NOV. 6, 2025



## SCHEDULE KEY


- Project Milestone
- City meetings
- Public Engagement Live Online
- Dakota County Planning Commission
- Dakota County Staff Workshop
- IN-PERSON POP UP AND FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS






1

## PROJECT PURPOSE



- Develop a cohesive vision
- Develop consistency through the corridor
- Pursue grant funding



2



## LONG RANGE PLAN GOALS



- Inventory of what is existing today + funded projects
- Update the plan for completing the trail to Goodhue County and Prairie Island Indian Community
- Enhance the trail with connections, amenities, trailheads, gateways
- Add signage, art, and interpretation
- Evaluate and prioritize opportunities for natural resource and water quality enhancements
- Consider operations and maintenance issues and recommendations
- Activate the greenway with infrastructure, events, and programs



FUNDED INTERPRETIVE NODES

3

## LONG RANGE PLAN GOALS



### TRAILHEADS AND GATEWAYS

- |                |                |                     |
|----------------|----------------|---------------------|
| • TRAIL ACCESS | • PARKING      | • PICNIC TABLES     |
| • RESTROOMS    | • WATER        | • TRASH & RECYCLING |
| • SIGNAGE      | • BIKE PARKING |                     |



4

## LONG RANGE PLAN GOALS

*Dakota*  
COUNTY

### ART AND INTERPRETATION

OPPORTUNITY  
FOR ART



OPPORTUNITY  
FOR ART



*Dakota ways of seeing interpretive installation on the Minnesota River Greenway*

**Interpretive Plans have been completed for the Minnesota River Greenway, the Mississippi River Greenway, and the Veterans Memorial Greenway**

*Carleough Environmental Magnet School students painting the mural at the Charlton Tunnel on the River To River Greenway*



5

## OVERVIEW OF THE GREENWAY VISION

*Dakota*  
COUNTY

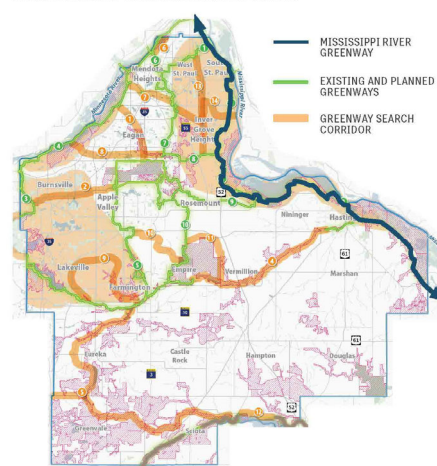
### GREENWAY VISION

*A multi functional open space corridor that provides multiple community benefits in the areas of water quality, habitat, recreation, and non-motorized transportation*

### Objectives Include

- Enhancing and interpreting habitat
- Connecting wildlife corridors
- Filtering and storing stormwater
- Creating a safe, amenity-rich trail network that meets needs of multiple users in all seasons
- Creating an inviting, connected, memorable and nature-based recreation system
- Activating with events, places and interactive features (fishing, birding, nature play, exercise, social places)

### DAKOTA COUNTY 2050 GREENWAY VISION



6

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

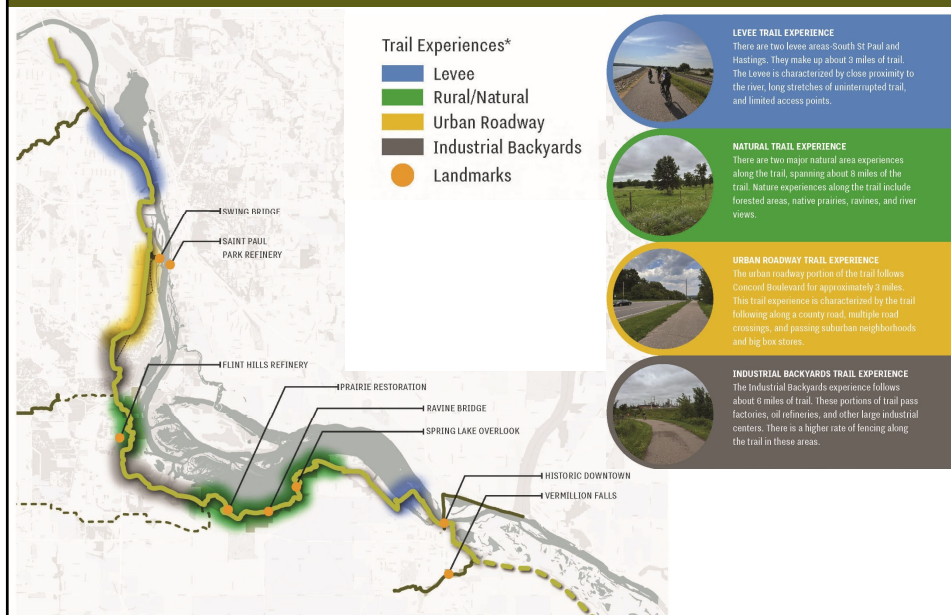
*Dakota*  
COUNTY



7

## MISSISSIPPI RIVER GREENWAY

*Dakota*  
COUNTY



8



# MISSISSIPPI RIVER GREENWAY



## GREENWAY USE

- GREENWAY USE NOW EXCEEDS PARK USE ..... AND GROWING
- MRG IS ONE OF THE BUSIER REGIONAL TRAILS IN THE REGIONAL SYSTEM AND USE SHOULD CONTINUE TO GROW.

### 2024 METCOUNCIL COUNTS

GREENWAYS	
BIG RIVERS REGIONAL TRAIL	253,223
MISSISSIPPI RIVER GREENWAY REGIONAL TRAIL	701,441
RIVER TO RIVER GREENWAY REGIONAL TRAIL	333,656
LAKE MARION GREENWAY REGIONAL TRAIL	103,282
MINNESOTA RIVER GREENWAY REGIONAL TRAIL	134,128
NORTH CREEK GREENWAY REGIONAL TRAIL	82,011
	1,607,741

PARKS	
LAKE BYLLESBY REGIONAL PARK	258,100
LEBANON HILLS REGIONAL PARK	646,536
MIESVILLE RAVINE PARK RESERVE	119,964
SPRING LAKE PARK RESERVE	161,564
WHITETAIL WOODS REGIONAL PARK	93,684
THOMPSON COUNTY PARK	300,000
	1,579,848

### HISTORIC COUNTS

GREENWAY	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2022	2023	2024
BIG RIVERS	142,700	132,100	116,400	151,400		140,607		253,223
MINNESOTA RIVER				67,100		104,766		134,128
MISSISSIPPI RIVER	27,000	70,900	110,000	207,700		251,911	530,701	701,441
NORTH CREEK						52,782		82,011
RIVER TO RIVER	32,700	20,700	19,900	110,800		310,658		333,656
LAKE MARION								103,282

9

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



## Engagement Methods

- Yard Signs Along the Trail
- Online Interactive Map
- In-Person Pop-Up Events
  - Dia de los Muertos Celebration
  - ROCC Resource Fair



## Online Interactive Map Stats



Figure 4.1 Online Interactive Map with All Submitted Responses

10

## WHAT WE HEARD



### Key Takeaways

- Strong appreciation for the Mississippi River Greenway
- Value natural settings (wooded areas, blufftop views, river overlooks, and wildlife experiences)
- Long, contiguous trail connections are seen as major strengths



Image from Dia De Los Muertos Celebration

### Priorities for Improvement

- Safer routes (away from busy roadways)
- Improved trail condition and maintenance
- Better crossings/connections
- Clearer wayfinding and signage
- Expanded access to the river

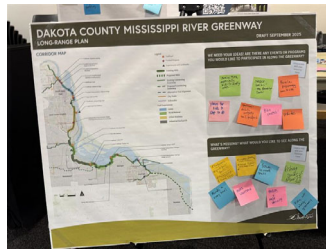


Image of Community Engagement Board from ROCC Resource Fair

11

## WHAT WE HEARD



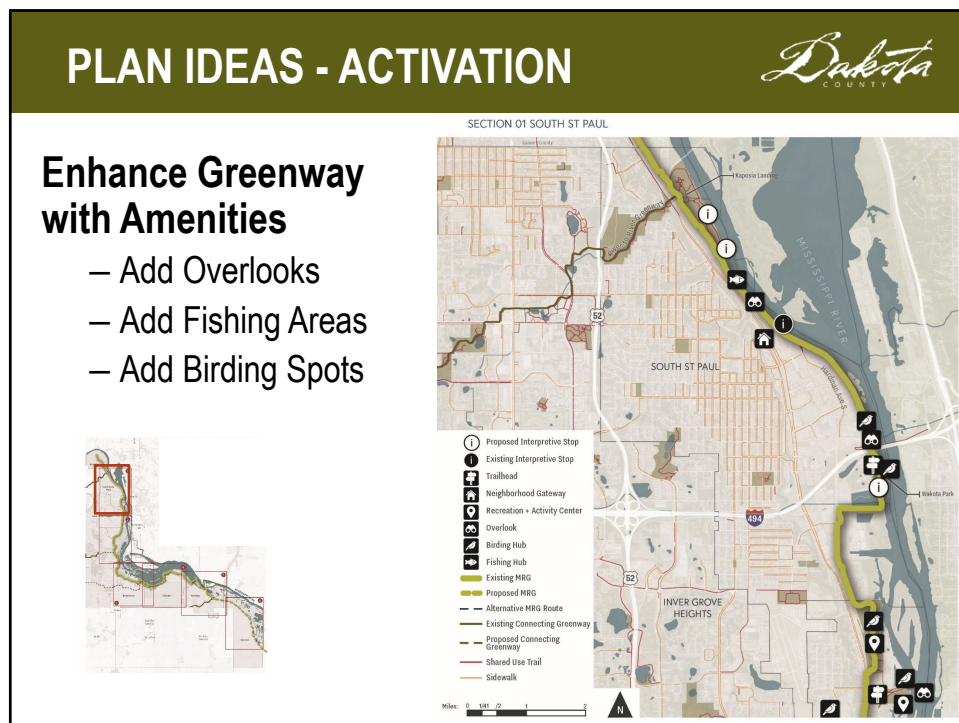
### Desired Enhancements

- Additional off-road connections
- New bridges, boardwalks, and loop connections
- Small scale amenities and placemaking
  - Rest areas, water access, trash and dog waste stations
  - Public art, murals, and interpretive features
  - Pop-up events, programming, and partnerships with local businesses
- Interest in camping and bicycle touring amenities

12



13



14

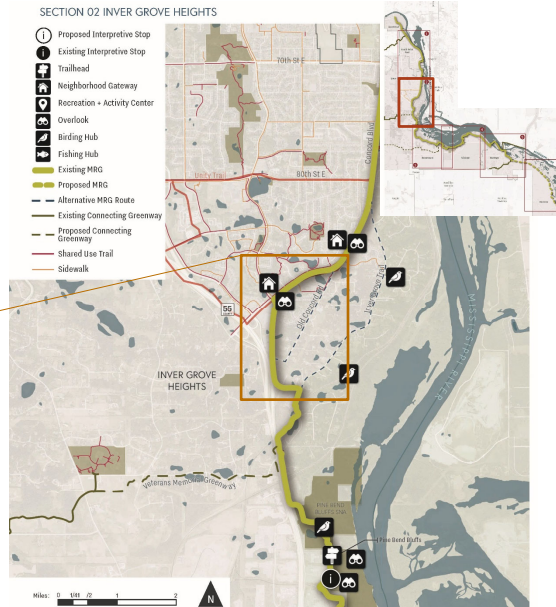
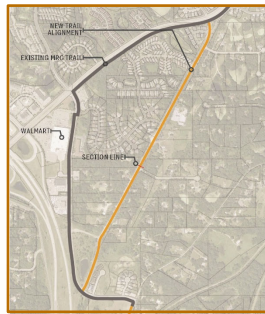


## PLAN IDEAS - ALIGNMENTS

*Dakota*  
COUNTY

### Recommended Alignment changes

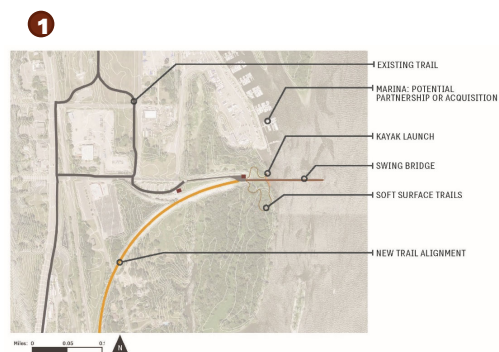
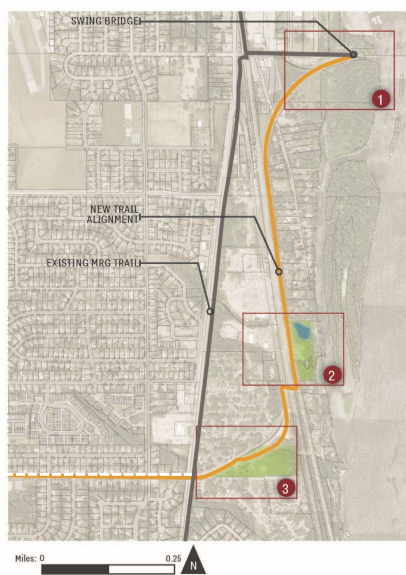
- Lower Rail Extension
- Old Concord
- Long Term with development and or land preservation opportunities



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## PLAN IDEAS - ALIGNMENT

*Dakota*  
COUNTY



16

## PLAN IDEAS – WATER QUALITY



2



- Water quality opportunity
- Adds river access
- Partnership with city of Inver Grove Heights

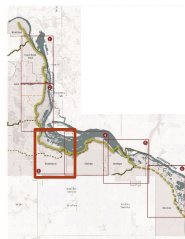
17

## PLAN IDEA



### Enhance Greenway with Amenities

- In coordination with private landowners
- Flint Hills etc.



SECTION 03 ROSEMOUNT



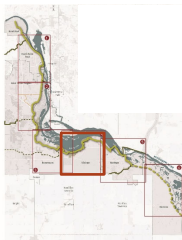
18

## PLAN IDEAS - ACTIVATION

*Dakota*  
COUNTY

### Enhance Greenway with Amenities

- In coordination with Spring Lake Park Long-range Plan



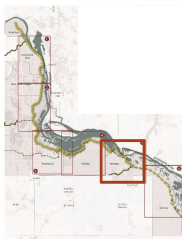
19

## PLAN IDEAS - ACTIVATION

*Dakota*  
COUNTY

### Enhance Greenway with Amenities

- Activate the riverfront



20

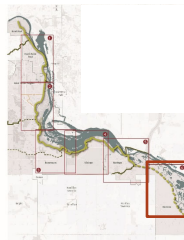


## GREENWAY EXTENSION



### Complete southern segment to Goodhue County border

- Build trail
- Include enhanced landscape, water quality, and restoration areas
- Add gateways and river access



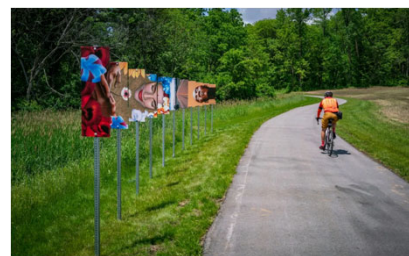
21

## PROGRAMING – NEW INITIATIVES



### Programs/Events

- Expand signature events along the Greenway
- Create a corridor-wide race and/or fundraiser
- Support local partners through stewardship roles and small grants
- Support compatible commercial activity



### Interpretation/Art

- Pop-up art at trailheads
- Community-partnered installations (i.e. MOSAIC)
- Seasonal art for winter activation
- Interactive augmented reality interpretation

22

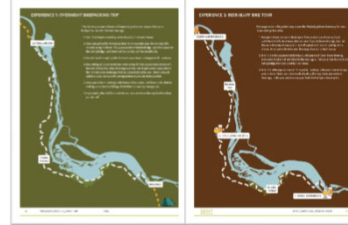
## IMPROVED MARKETING/INFO

*Dakota*  
COUNTY



### Online Materials/Marketing

- Greenway education/awareness
- River tourism experience
- Online flyover and virtual preview experiences
- Real-time river conditions



### Self Guided Tours (Themes)

- Curated biking, walking, and paddle loops (pedal/paddle)
- Self-guided greenway art tour
- Augmented Reality tour

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## CONCEPTS

*Dakota*  
COUNTY

PROPOSED CONCORD PARKWAY



PROPOSED OVERLOOK



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# CONCEPTS



## Finish 2014 MRG Interpretive Plan

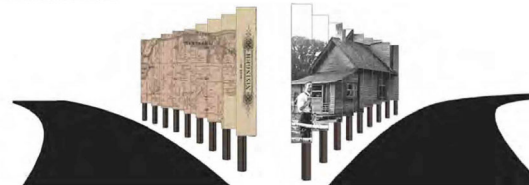
### PROPOSED CANOPY WALK

#### SPRING LAKE PARK TREE CANOPY WALK STRUCTURE



TREE CANOPY WALK ENTRY FRAMES

### LENTICULARS



Lenticulars, recommended in the 2014 Mississippi River Design + Experience Plan, could help enhance MRRT signature and connection to the river on the Lock Blvd section in Nininger Township

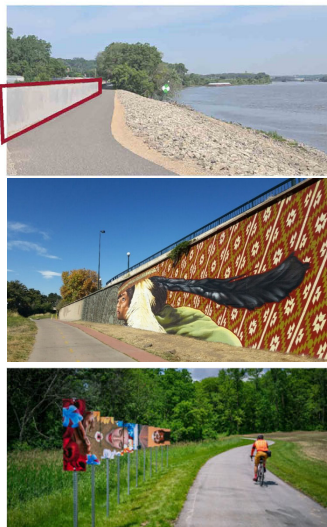
25

# CONCEPTS



## ART AND INTERPRETATION

OPPORTUNITY FOR ART



## GREENWAY ACTIVATION

- SELF-DIRECTED PROGRAMMING
- GROUP RIDES
- FUN RUNS
- EVENTS
- FISHING
- BIRDING
- LOOP TRAILS
- WORK OUT STATIONS



26



## INTEGRATE – INDIGENOUS THEMES



### Supplement the 2014 MRG Interpretive Plan with Indigenous Themes

“Flowing Together: Stories of Nature, People, and Belonging”

Subtheme	Focus
Honor the First Voices	Uplift Dakota stories, knowledge, and living presence.
Follow the River's Rhythm	Engage with the land and river as living relatives and changing ecosystems.
Weaving Many Stories	Celebrate shared cultural histories and contributions.
We Shape This Place Together	Foster belonging, shared care, and collective stewardship.

27

## IMPLEMENTATION IDEAS

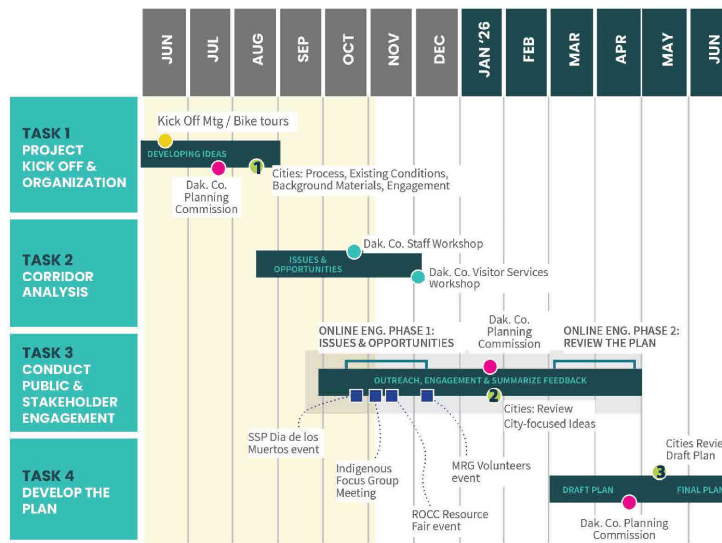


### Funding and Implementation

- *Expand “Greenway Collaborative”:* Partner with our cities/agencies along corridor to activate greenway with programs and supporting investments that improve user experience
- *Grant Funding:* Position projects in plan for external funding opportunities. Link typical funding sources to project.

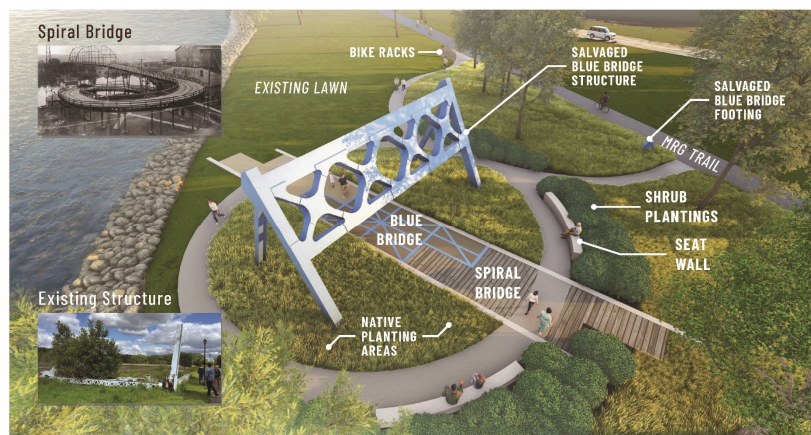
28

## NEXT STEPS



29

## Questions?



30

## Citizen Advisory Committee Member Statement of Representation - 2026

The purpose of this form is to either confirm or waive individual eligibility for per diem compensation to citizen appointees to boards, committees, commissions, councils, or task forces appointed by the Dakota County Board of Commissioners.

According to the Citizen Advisory Committee Membership Policy: County Board appointees to the following committees, who are not representing a governmental unit, receive \$50 per diem (but no additional expense reimbursement) for attendance at regular and special meetings of the committee:

Community Corrections Advisory Board  
Extension Committee  
Human Services Advisory Committee  
Library Board  
Planning Commission  
Zoning Board of Adjustment

Please check **ONE** of the following statements:

- ☐ I represent another governmental unit in connection with my presence on this board, committee, commission, council, or task force **AND:**
- ☐ I receive compensation, in the form of salary or a per diem, from that governmental unit for my participation. Therefore, I am not eligible to receive per diem compensation from the County for my attendance at regular or special meetings of this group.
- ☐ I do not receive compensation from that governmental unit for my participation. Therefore, I am eligible to receive per diem compensation from the County for my attendance at regular or special meetings of this group.

OR

- ☐ I do not represent another governmental unit in connection with my presence on this board, committee, commission, council, or task force. I am therefore eligible to receive per diem compensation from the County for my attendance at regular and special meetings of this group.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the board, committee, commission, council, or task force to which you have been appointed to serve:

---

***Please complete and return this Statement of Representation to your Committee  
Staff Liaison.***



**Dakota County Planning Commission Member  
Consent to Release Private Data - 2026**

Minnesota Statutes Ch. 13 on data privacy requires that you be informed that the following information about you is considered **private data: home telephone number and e-mail address.**

I hereby grant permission to use the information provided below by me, including that which is considered **private data**, for use in preparing a Planning Committee membership roster to be distributed to members.

**Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name First Name

**Home Address:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Street

\_\_\_\_\_  
City MN State Zip

**Telephone/Fax:**

( ) ( ) ( )  
Home Business Fax

**E-mail Address:**

\_\_\_\_\_

This consent expires one year from the date of signature.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Committee Member**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**