RIVER WARREN CITY

GRANITE FALLS:

AREA CHARACTER ANALYSIS

ALIGNMENT STRATEGY

TRAILHEAD DESIGN
AREA CHARACTER ANALYSIS:
OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS
The following locations in Granite Falls were analyzed for their potential as trailheads and points of interest along the trail.

OAK STREET BRIDGE:
This two-lane bridge is to be retrofitted to accept the two lanes of bicycle traffic. The existing bridge could accommodate two 12-foot driving lanes, a 10-foot sidewalk, and a 16-foot striped two-way trail can be accommodated.

OPPORTUNITIES: The Oak Street Bridge provides views of the Minnesota River, but viewing areas would need to be created. The bridge could bring trail users to downtown.

CONSTRAINTS: Steep slopes lead to the bridge from the trail. A potential re-routing to Central Avenue, Baldwin Street, Miller Avenue, and Oak Street would avoid the steep grades. A cantilever on the bridge’s south side would eliminate crossing the road twice. The new water line on the bridge may make this challenging.

GRANDVIEW STREET:
This vacated city street is strategically positioned at the intersection of the proposed Minnesota River Trail and the Minnesota River Scenic Byway is within a short walking distance of downtown Granite Falls.

OPPORTUNITIES: Proximity to downtown and the availability of public land make this site a potential trailhead location.

CONSTRAINTS: Steep slopes would challenge bicyclists and its small size would accommodate only a few parked cars.

7th AVENUE TERMINUS / FARMERS’ MARKET DISTRICT:
The terminus of 7th Avenue is a key civic space that is currently underutilized. An ideal location for a trailhead, it is a block from downtown and is close to the pedestrian bridge, Oak Street Bridge, and Rice Park. The site is large enough to accommodate a trailhead building and parking.

OPPORTUNITIES: With improvements and trail routing along the west bank of the river, this location can become a focal point to highlight the historical, recreational, and geological resources of Granite Falls. A trailhead at this location would increase the vitality of downtown.

CONSTRAINTS: Although much of this land is in public ownership, some privately held land might need to be acquired.
AREA CHARACTER ANALYSIS:
OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS

RICE PARK & PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE:
Rice Park occupies the east bank of the river and acts as the sister park to the downtown riverfront. Amenities include river fishing access and areas for picnicking. A pedestrian bridge connects the two riverbanks providing easy access to downtown from the park.

OPPORTUNITIES: An existing public space, the park’s existing amenities make it a potential destination along the trail. The trailhead could be located in the park.

CONSTRAINTS: The pedestrian bridge is currently signed “No Bicycles”; cyclists must walk their bikes across the bridge. The bridge does not meet the minimum dimensional requirements for bicycles. Its 7.5 foot width is short of the 8 foot minimum, and its 8 foot vertical clearance is short of the required 10 feet. Much of the park is in the floodplain.

HIGHWAY 212 BRIDGE UNDERPASS TRAIL:
The trail needs to cross busy State Highway 212. Routing the trail under the highway bridge along the current sidewalk is a safe alternative because it mitigates potential conflicts between trail users and highway traffic.

OPPORTUNITIES: Routing the trail under the existing highway bridge provides access to the Works Progress Administration (WPA) River Overlook.

CONSTRAINTS: The sidewalk needs to be redesigned to accommodate bicycle traffic. The vertical clearance needs to be increased to 10 feet, the pathway widened to 12 feet, the steps eliminated, the trail regraded, and safety railings added.

W.P.A. OVERLOOK HISTORIC SITE:
This river observation structure offers views of the natural beauty of the Minnesota River Valley and historic sites. This historic overlook is attributed to the well known Minnesota landscape architect A.R. Nichols. Built between 1933-1943, it is on the National Historic Register.

OPPORTUNITIES: This resting place along the trail allows for panoramic views of the river as well as an historical interpretation of the structure.

CONSTRAINTS: Because the overlook is on the historic register, the trail alignment has to maintain the historic integrity of the site.
W.P.A. OVERLOOK HISTORIC SITE

RICE PARK & PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

HWY. 212 BRIDGE UNDERPASS TRAIL
TRAIL ALIGNMENT STRATEGY:
The proposed trail alignment and trailhead in the City of Granite Falls:

- Celebrates Granite Falls ancient geology and its unique location within the riverbed of the Glacial River Warren,
- Supports activity in the downtown,
- Add value to the city’s flood recovery projects,
- Add to amenities and increases trail access for local residents.

TRAIL ALIGNMENT: POTENTIAL SPINE TRAIL
The potential spine trail:
- Follows the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe railroad corridor from Wegdahl,
- Crosses the Oak Street Bridge with striping on the south side of the existing bridge deck,
- Connects the trail to the Granite Falls Riverfront Greenway and the Downtown Trailhead,
- Continues south along the riverfront to 10th Avenue where it crosses Prentice Street with painted cross walks, flashing yellow lighting, and pedestrian crossing signs,
- Runs along Prentice Street on the traffic side of the existing parking lanes with separate bike lanes in both directions,
- Is marked with a painted crosswalk, flashing yellow lighting, and pedestrian crossing signs at the intersection of Prentice St. and 4th Street,
- Moves south on 4th Street passing beneath Highway 212.

TRAIL ALIGNMENT: POTENTIAL ALTERNATE SPINE TRAIL
The potential alternate spine trail:
- Follows the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe railroad corridor from Wegdahl,
- Crosses the Oak Street Bridge with striping on the south side of the existing bridge deck,
- Connects the trail to the Granite Falls Riverfront Greenway and the Downtown Trailhead,
- Crosses the pedestrian bridge from downtown to Rice Park, follows Baldwin St. to Lincoln St,
- Crosses Hwy. 212 and proceeds along the Minnesota River Scenic Byway Alternate Route.

ADDITIONAL PARKING LOCATIONS:
Two locations are identified as potential additional parking locations. In addition to providing parking:
- The junction of the trail and Oak Street could provide information welcoming the trail user to Granite Falls, and
- The Rice Park location could provide recreation next to the river.
TRAILHEAD STRATEGY:
The Granite Falls Downtown Trailhead is located on the riverfront at the terminus of 7th Street; it:
- Creates a focal point for 7th Street and connects it to the amenities along the river,
- Reuses the restored BNSF depot or a building of the same scale as the trailhead building,
- Increases activity in the downtown and on the riverfront,
- Provides parking, bicycle racks, restrooms, water, and information, and
- Ties together existing amenities such as the farmers’ market, the proposed amphitheater, and the redesigned riverfront park into a vital district of public activities and public spaces.

TRAILHEAD RESOURCES:
The resources close to the trailhead in downtown are the:
- Proposed River greenway,
- Pedestrian bridge,
- Local trail connections,
- Historic sites, and
- Downtown businesses.
TRAILHEAD DESIGN OPTION ONE:
The Granite Falls Downtown Trailhead, civic gathering space, is incorporated into the Granite Falls Flood Mitigation Plan in order to provide access by trail users to amenities and to enhance the city’s historic core. Clusters of locally mined granite boulders spill across the site connecting the riverfront, the gathering spaces, and the main commercial street. Boulder-walled terraces planted with native hardwoods and prairie plants provide both flood protection and storm water management. Two options for a trailhead were designed.

The Option one Trailhead design:

- Relocates the refurbished historic train depot at the terminus of 7th Street to serve as a multi-use facility and trailhead,
- Invites visitors to explore the train depot and the new amphitheater from entrances flanked by linden trees set in prairie groundcover and marked with spilling boulders and prairie plants,
- Provides a new open-air structure that expands the existing farmer’s market that accommodates festivals, other events, and off-season parking,
- Creates a picnicking patio on the north side of the existing blue barn farmers’ market that also serves as terraced amphitheater seating,
- Locates a new parking lot for the trailhead and the amphitheater that uses granite boulder walls to create terraced storm water gardens that treat pollutants running off the parking lot,
- Uses boulder walls around the new trailhead to elevate the train depot structure above the one hundred-year flood plain, and
- Creates a protected riverfront greenway along the river in downtown Granite Falls.
TRAILHEAD DESIGN OPTION TWO:
The second trailhead design for downtown Granite Falls incorporates many of the same features of option one, but it has some significant differences. Like option one “Spilling Boulders” lead visitors’ from the historic downtown to the riverfront.

The Option two Trailhead design:

- Creates a design signature for the trailhead district contiguous to the main street using granite boulders, linden trees, prairie plants, and green metal building roofs,
- Removes the existing farmers’ market building and replaces it with a smaller market building and an open-air structure on a large plaza,
- Provides an expanded farmers’ market in an open-air structure that can also be used for off-season parking,
- Makes a floodwall along the southern edge of the trail,
- Ties the trailhead to the proposed riverfront amphitheater,
- Recycles the historic depot as the trailhead building for interpretative displays, restrooms, meeting rooms, etc.,
- Adds a terraced patio for eating or other activities to the existing farmers’ market,
- Accommodates the Popcorn Palace,
- Provides exterior bike racks,
- Increases parking for the riverfront and downtown businesses, and
- Creates rainwater gardens to treat storm water run off.
SECTIONAL VIEWS OF TRAILHEAD OPTIONS:
The sectional views are identified on the corresponding plans from pages 35 and 37, intend to illustrate the programmatic relationship between the Prentice St. business and downtown district and the riverfront. Both design options use the same entry linkage, signage, and the “Spilling Boulders” concept with variations seen in the farmers’ market area.

TRAILHEAD OPTION ONE:
Creates grade separation between the restored BNSF train Depot and the trail,
Uses boulder walls in concert with the proposed concrete flood walls to protect the Historic Depot and the downtown from flood damage,
And creates and enclosed outdoor gathering space around the BNSF Depot with oak and prairie plantings.

TRAILHEAD OPTION TWO:
Uses the “Spilling Boulders” concept to keep the trail and the depot at the same grade,
Incorporates a adaptable seating wall which also acts as a flood wall,
Has oak plantings in boulder walls to define the spaces between the depot and amphitheater,
Proposes a new farmers’ market structure with an open air shelter attached,
Places a new open air shelter at the amphitheater terrace edge creating a riverfront observation platform,
Uses storm water gardens to manage storm water flows.