

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
CONTACT:**

City of Watertown Announces Riverside Park Inclusive Recreation Area Initiative

Watertown WI, August 21, 2024 – The City of Watertown is thrilled to announce the launch of a groundbreaking initiative to build the Riverside Park Inclusive Recreation Area, a space where accessibility, community, and imagination come together.

The Riverside Park Inclusive Recreation Area has been envisioned through the collaborative efforts of a diverse focus group including parents, children, educators, caregivers, and community stakeholders. Over the course of three productive meetings starting in August 2023, this group worked closely with Mayor McFarland, the Parks and Recreation staff, and the esteemed Landscape Architect firm Parkitecture to design a fully-inclusive recreation area—marking a first for Watertown and the surrounding region.

"Creating a space where everyone, regardless of their abilities, can come together and enjoy the beauty of Riverside Park is a dream come true for our community," said Mayor Emily McFarland. "This project reflects our commitment to inclusivity and our belief in the power of play to bring people together."

The Riverside Park Inclusive Recreation Area will feature an enchanted forest theme, complete with unique elements like an ogre bridge, a Riverside Park-inspired footbridge, a ship, musical butterflies and flowers, and a flowing blue "river." These imaginative components are designed to engage all ages in play, while other elements of the space ensure it is a haven for everyone. The area will include a walking path with seating, accessible family restrooms, and additional accessible parking spots.

With a generous initial donation of \$10,000 from the Greater Watertown Community Health Foundation, the project has already taken significant steps forward. The proposed budget for the construction of this transformative play space is between \$1.5 million and \$1.75 million, funds which the City aims to raise through community support and grants.

Inclusive features of the recreation area include:

- Play areas catering to different age groups: toddlers, 2-5 years, and 5 and older
- Turf and poured surfaces for ease of movement
- Zero entry access
- Quiet spaces
- Secure fence encircling the playground
- Solid surface, graded path with distance markers for exercising

The Riverside Park Inclusive Recreation Area is more than just a playground; it is a testament to the community's dedication to creating spaces where everyone can thrive. The project invites community members to contribute and be part of this transformative initiative. Opportunities for recognition include naming rights for specific areas within the park, donation plaques, and even the entire facility naming rights.

Join us in building a fully inclusive recreation area that celebrates diversity and fosters community spirit. For more information on how to contribute, please visit watertownwi.gov

City of Watertown mission statement: To provide for, protect, and serve the citizens and businesses of Watertown in an efficient, strategic, and measured manner, while creating a community culture where close knit connections are key, that is rich in small town values balanced with modern conveniences, that is poised for development, and is an idyllic community that leverages location and outdoor opportunity.