

Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

www.ci.norfolk.ne.us

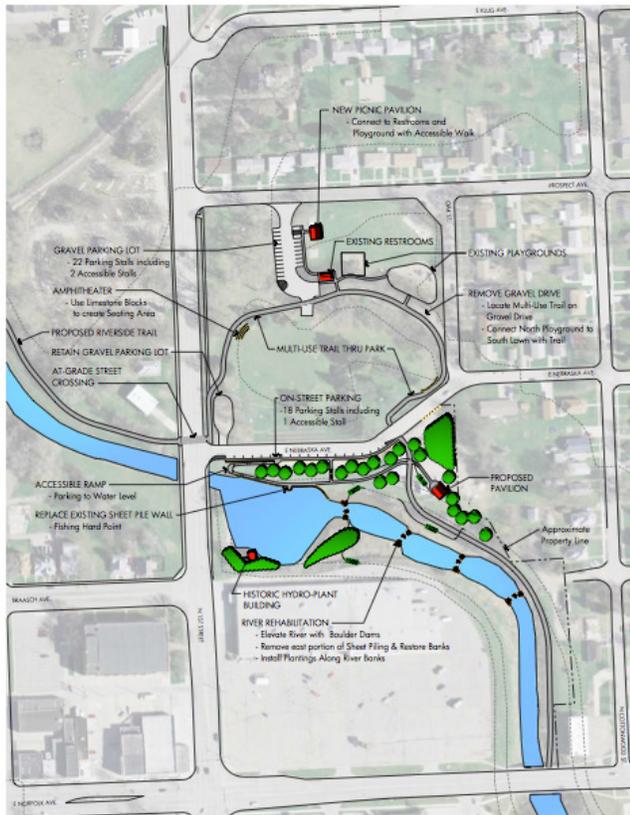
January 23, 2014

“Johnson Park Improvements Discussed”

One of the oldest parks in Norfolk has gotten attention from local and national groups in the last year. Johnson Park, located just north of Norfolk Avenue on First Street, was a priority redesign project for the American Society of Landscape Architects. They donated their services for two concept plans that were unveiled at a subcommittee meeting of the Norfolk City Council Wednesday morning.

After reviewing both plans, the group decided to go forward with grant proposals and possible private partnerships to make some of the proposed updates to the park possible.

“This is a great neighborhood and a park with great historical significance. It’s close to where Norfolk started and in the 40’s was home to a beautiful flower garden. We want to make it again a park the community can be proud of,” said Josh Moenning, Norfolk City Council member.



JOHNSON PARK CONCEPT PLAN
RETAIN NEBRASKA AVENUE - RIVER REHABILITATION
NORFOLK, NEBRASKA

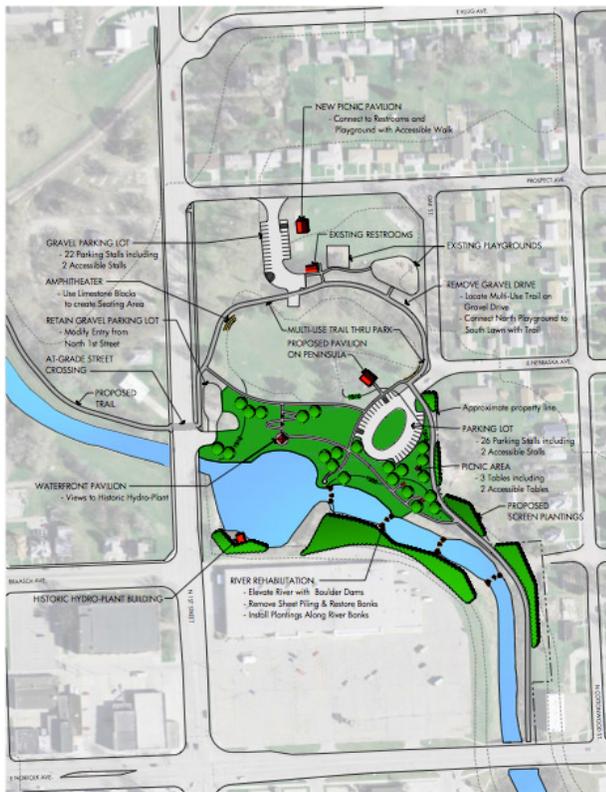
Both of the concept plans presented include a multi use trail that would be built through the north section of the park. The difference between the two plans is that one involves taking out East Nebraska Avenue from First Street to Oak Street.

“The purpose of closing Nebraska Avenue is to connect the park with the North Fork River. The trails community supports a trail system along the river and this would connect the park with that system,” said Shane Weidner, Norfolk City Administrator.

Features in both concept plans include: adding a 22 stall parking lot at the north end of the park off Prospect Avenue; two new picnic pavilions; removing the city maintenance sheds; an amphitheater constructed near the existing basin in the park; and removing the existing gravel driveway.

On the plan in which the segment of Nebraska Avenue is retained, 18 parking stalls would be added along the street. On the plan with Nebraska Avenue removed, a circular driveway with 26 parking stalls is built at the southeast corner of the park.

Neighbors in the area who were contacted about the project were very positive about the proposed plans for the park.



JOHNSON PARK CONCEPT PLAN
 CONNECT PARK TO THE RIVER - RIVER REHABILITATION
 NORFOLK, NEBRASKA



Sara Jones, a daycare provider who lives just east of the park, said she takes kids there any time the weather is nice.

“The shelters are old and small. Any improvements would be wonderful. It’s a very safe park and safe to bring a lot of kids as they can’t easily get onto the street,” Jones said.

Kevin Smith lives directly to the east of the park and said he would like to see some updates.

“It’s not a big difference to me (to close the portion of Nebraska Avenue). People go too fast when they cut through. There could be a lot of improvements in the park – they could really spice it up,” Smith said.

The committee decided to begin work on a grant application to the National Trails Council and to pursue partners who would like to help with funding on the park improvements.

“The restoration of Johnson Park has great community development potential. It could some day be a destination for people who not only live in Norfolk but who are visiting and want to walk on a trail, have a picnic in an area and enjoy a park that’s historically important to Norfolk,” Moenning said.