

Norfolk Insider

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“Johnson Park Trail Project Grant Awarded”

A portion of a historic area in Norfolk is about to get a facelift. The Nebraska Game and Parks Board of Commissioners recently awarded a \$561,373 grant to fund the Johnson Park Trail Project.

“Johnson Park is a historical landmark. I always thought we should have a trail for people to walk along and enjoy this area and the North Fork River. This is a fantastic opportunity for Norfolk to improve our trail system,” said Stan Staab, former general manager of the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District (LENRD) and a member of the Johnson Park Trail Project Committee that submitted the grant. The City of Norfolk and LENRD are responsible for

20% or \$141,593 of the total \$707,966 cost for the project. The 7 Cities Century Bike Ride Committee is also donating \$5,000 for the project.

The newly funded 10 foot wide, 5,115 feet long Johnson Park Trail would begin on Cottonwood Street near Norfolk Avenue. It then would traverse west along the North Fork River and make a loop through Johnson Park before going across First Street and following the North Fork River north to Elm Avenue and connecting to the new city trail there on 3rd Street.



“This trail is in the heart of Norfolk. Right in this area is where the first settlers put their homes. We appreciate all of the work the committee did in making this grant possible including studying different trails routes, making use of connecting trails and working through all of the minute detail it takes to put a complicated grant application like this one together,” said Shane Weidner, City of Norfolk Administrator.

The committee has met for more than a year and includes members: Shane Weidner, Pat Mrsny, Mark Dolechek, Candace Bossard and Sheila Schukei, City of Norfolk; Stan Staab, LENRD; Josh Moening, Thad Murren, City of Norfolk Council Members; Darrel Novacek, North Fork Development Project; and Cheryl Johnson, Elkhorn Valley Trails Network and 7 Cities Century Bike Ride Committee. Partnering organizations in this project have included the City of Norfolk, the LENRD, the Norfolk Sanitary District, the Elkhorn Valley Trails Network, the National Park Service, JEO Consulting Group, Inc., the 7 Cities Century Bike Ride Committee, and the North Fork Development Project.

The American Society of Landscape Architects had named Johnson Park as their “priority redesign project” and submitted concept plans last January to a Norfolk City Council subcommittee.

“I am really pleased that the City took the lead on this project and that the LENRD was able to partner along with them. It will be a benefit for many years to come,” Staab said. He and Darrell Novacek have been co-chairs of the North Fork Development Project at monthly meetings for each of its nine years of existence.

“This project is another example of how our community leaders work together to get things done and improve the quality of life in Norfolk and Northeast Nebraska,” said Novacek.

“Years from now, I think you’ll look back to see this project as a catalyst for riverfront development in Norfolk. It will provide great benefits to the entire community. I’m proud of the citizens and city staff who came together and worked very hard to earn this significant award,” said Moenning.

The project was one of seven outdoor trail projects for federal funding through the Recreational Trail Program approved at the Nebraska Game and Parks meeting in Lincoln on Thursday. No timeline has yet been set for the project.