

Lake Redwood Redwood Falls, MN

The Coalition for the Restoration of Lake Redwood



The Next 100 Years

A Proposal of Economic Development and Environmental Responsibility

Redwood River Recreational Redevelopment Program

The objective of this proposal is to promote the development of additional recreational, environmental, and economic opportunities within the city of Redwood Falls. We plan to accomplish this goal by enhancing the accessibility and usability of one of our city's primary assets; Lake Redwood. The successful redevelopment of Lake Redwood will have the potential to significantly benefit the health of our local residents, guarantee a stable water source for the city's hydroelectric power plant, improve the water quality entering the Minnesota River, attract younger relocating professionals, as well as drive additional tourism dollars into the local economy. These improvements will create a community minded, family friendly, and youth oriented outdoor recreational venue.

Key Projects

- Dredging of 650,000 CY of sediment from Lake Redwood
- Add aeration fountains in Lake Redwood
- Provide a new pedestrian bridge at the south end of Lake Redwood
- Develop a lake accessible park in connection with the new pedestrian bridge
- Create an east bank Lake Redwood lookout
- Construct a high bridge at the Redwood River gorge
- Continue the city bike/ fitness trails on the west side of Lake Redwood

Future Development Projects

- South Lake Redwood parking facility
- North Ramsey Park bike/ fitness trail
- Redwood River gorge lower lookout
- Ramsey Park north campgrounds

Proposal

This proposal will establish the Redwood River Recreational Redevelopment Program and with a budget of \$12,500,000 will establish Redwood Falls as a family friendly, recreationally focused, regional tourist destination. It will be focused on promoting outdoor recreational opportunities, clean energy, and also create an environmental storm water safeguard for the Minnesota River.

History

Redwood Falls is an agricultural based community originally established in 1864; only two years after the US Dakota War began at the nearby Redwood Agency and which was then fought throughout the region. Some of the original pioneers of the city were involved in the conflict and returned to the area once it was reopened for settlement because of its natural beauty and its potential to successfully support a growth oriented community.

The Redwood River has always been a valuable resource for the area. It was named Cansayapi by the Dakota which means; "where they paint the trees red". Painting the base of the trees red created an identifying landmark for traveling relatives. The US government also established the area's first sawmill at the Falls of the Redwood which is now close to downtown Redwood Falls. The mill was set up in 1855 to produce the lumber which would be used to construct the reservation housing established by the treaty of Traverse Des Sioux.

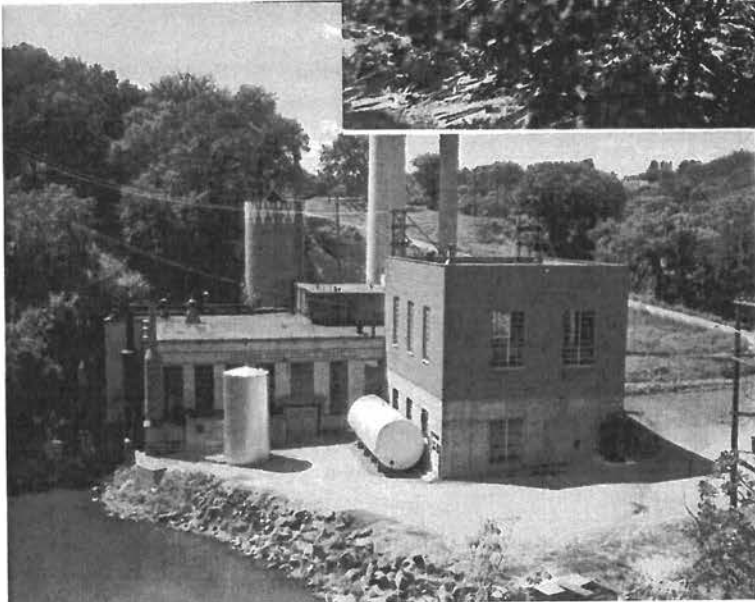
Since the city's inception, the river has been an integral part of the community. One of the first undertakings the founding fathers set out to accomplish was to rebuild the abandoned government sawmill. Then, with the growing popularity of wheat farming in the area, three flour mills sprang up along its banks in Redwood Falls and one further downriver at a site in North Redwood. The owner of one of these mills; AC Burmeister installed a dynamo in his mill in 1899 to begin generating electricity for his use and shared the excess power with other members of the community. This idea was so well received that he quickly devised a plan to generate more power and make it readily available for the entire city. His proposal included building a dam on the river which would create a reservoir large enough to supply power for the entire city. In 1901 the dam was built and Lake Redwood was formed.

While building the dam and creating a source of environmentally friendly power for the city which is still in existence today was probably one of the largest contributions ever made to the city, it would have been impossible to predict the other benefits that resulted from its construction. A public beach was established on its eastern shore for the city, ice blocks were cut from the frozen lake to cool local iceboxes, ferries would transport residents up river to a public park for a day's picnic, the 1930's and 40's traveling public brought multiple summer resorts, fishing became commonplace, and the popularity of waterskiing in the 1970's was not overlooked on Lake Redwood.

Sadly, over the last 100 years the health of the lake has been declining. Over that time it has filled with sediment from the surrounding 640 square mile watershed and while efforts to reduce new sediment have slowed the rate of settlement, the deferred maintenance of the accumulated sediment has allowed over 650,000 CY of sediment to accumulate within it's basin, limiting it's use as a recreational option. It's time to work together to reestablish the opportunities that have been lost.

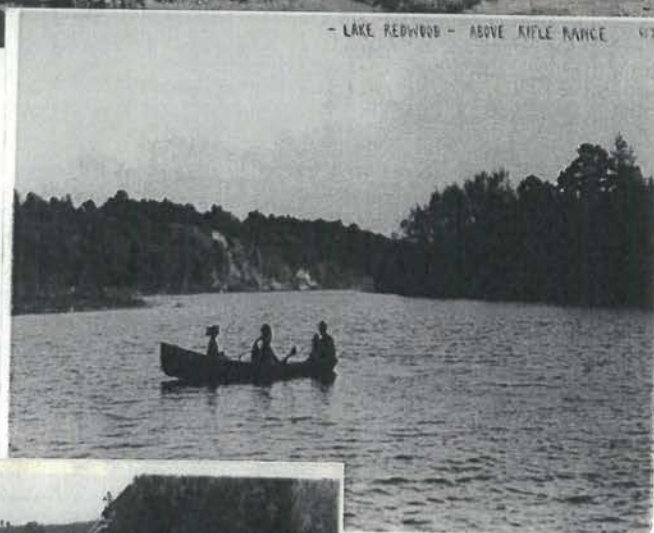
Commerce

Over the years the river has provided the local community with a source of power since the original government sawmill was constructed in 1855. The current reservoir system was built in 1901 and has provided a significant source of green energy to the community for more than 100 years. That source of environmentally friendly power is being threatened by the sediment accumulating in the reservoir.



Tourism

The lake became very popular for travelers in the 1930s and 40s and at one point there were three summer resorts operating on Lake Redwood. Redwood Falls was nicknamed The Scenic City in 1912 because of its many beautiful landscapes and the lake and its associated waterfall were a large part of attracting visitors.



Watersports

The dam wasn't created with the intention of developing a resort type of atmosphere, but sometimes commercial driven ideas can result in very favorable unintended consequences. Generations of local children grew up learning to swim in Lake Redwood. Unfortunately, the last generation didn't have that opportunity because of sediment reducing the average depth of the lake from the original twenty feet to less than three feet. As late as the 1980s, waterskiing and speed boats were a common form of recreation.



Fishing

Fishing was always an activity enjoyed by families on the lake and could be appreciated in both the summer and winter seasons in Redwood Falls. The reduced depth and thick sediment in the lake has substantially depleted the once abundant fishing opportunities.



*Catch at lake Redwood
1908*



Environmental

Lake Redwood was designed to be a reservoir for power generation for the city of Redwood Falls. This was when the population of the city was 1,600 and even when adding in the surrounding area it didn't create much of a footprint. In 1901 the designers of this basin didn't foresee the mechanical advancements of farming yet to come or anticipate the impacts of the automobile. But their creation may become relevant again 100 years after they conceived it. Lake Redwood can be redeveloped as a storm water sedimentation basin for the surrounding area and contribute to the protection of the nearby Minnesota River. With proper management of the sediment in Lake Redwood, it could be used to clean the storm runoff before it enters the Minnesota, thereby reducing the sediment that travels down the main waterway. They created a storm water detention pond almost 100 years before they became mainstream. What they designed as a local asset can now become a regional storm water treatment facility. We have an opportunity to clean Lake Redwood, create additional outdoor recreational activities, extend the life of the city power plant, and treat the regional storm water before its sediment enters the Minnesota River by simply creating the Lake Redwood Recreational Redevelopment Program and planning for the next 100 years of Lake Redwood.



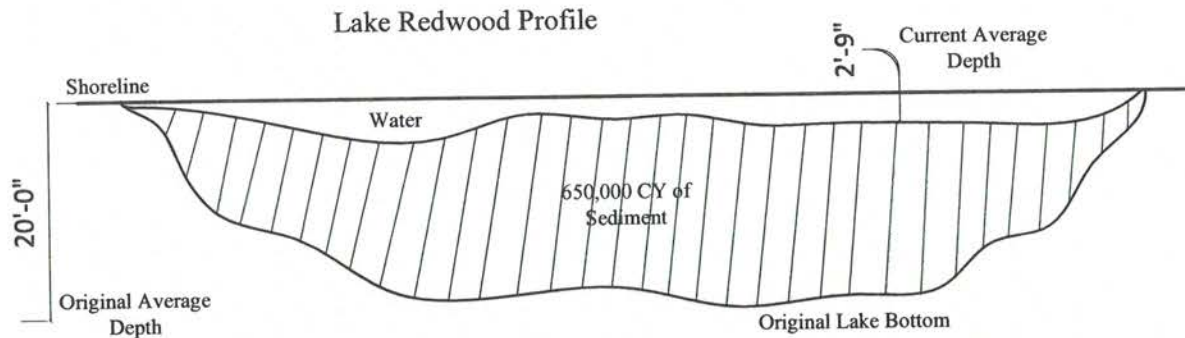
Proposed Redwood River Recreational Redevelopment Improvements

This proposal is looking at the bigger picture of reestablishing Lake Redwood as a recreational and commercially viable community asset. These projects, when combined will create a shining example of healthy outdoor living in rural Minnesota, attract new families to the area, and increase the economic development opportunities of the area by creating a destination location worthy of consideration as one of the jewels of Southern Minnesota.



Dredging of Lake Redwood

The primary goal of this redevelopment effort is to get the sediment removed from the lake basin and again make it a viable recreational venue for swimming, fishing, and boating. The goal is to return it to its former stature as one of the centerpieces of the city's tourism efforts by removing 650,000 CY of sediment from the lake and reestablishing its original twenty foot depth.



Lake Redwood Fountains

An additional measure which would be implemented to help improve the future water quality would be to add aeration to the stagnant portion of the lake. Our proposal includes adding three 100 horsepower lake fountains to the area just south of the current boat launch. These fountains would serve the dual purpose of aerating the water, as well as creating a visual water and light show for visitors to the lake.

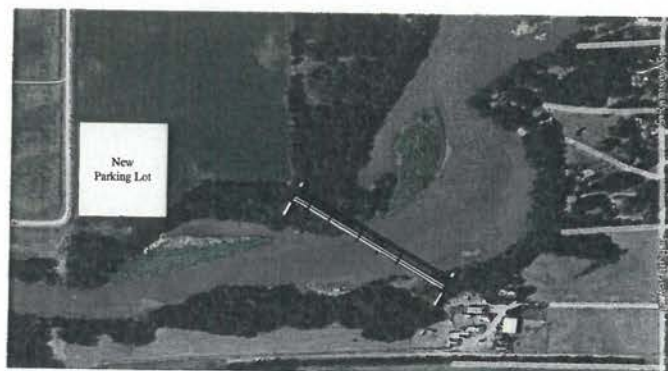


Fountain Locations



South Lake Redwood Pedestrian Bridge

A pedestrian bridge at the south end of Lake Redwood would allow visitors to experience the currently underutilized area of the lake as well as create an integral part of a city wide biking/ fitness trail which will eventually encompass the entire perimeter of the city. It will allow users the opportunity to exercise or just enjoy the outdoors from a protected trail system.



South Lake Redwood Park

When the entire lake becomes accessible there will be a need to create public space at the south end of the lake. The city currently owns property in that area which could be converted from unused green space to a public park. The land is a low bank riverfront property with an old roadbed climbing out of the valley to Ramsey Street in Redwood Falls. This street access would be the entry point for the south lake park.



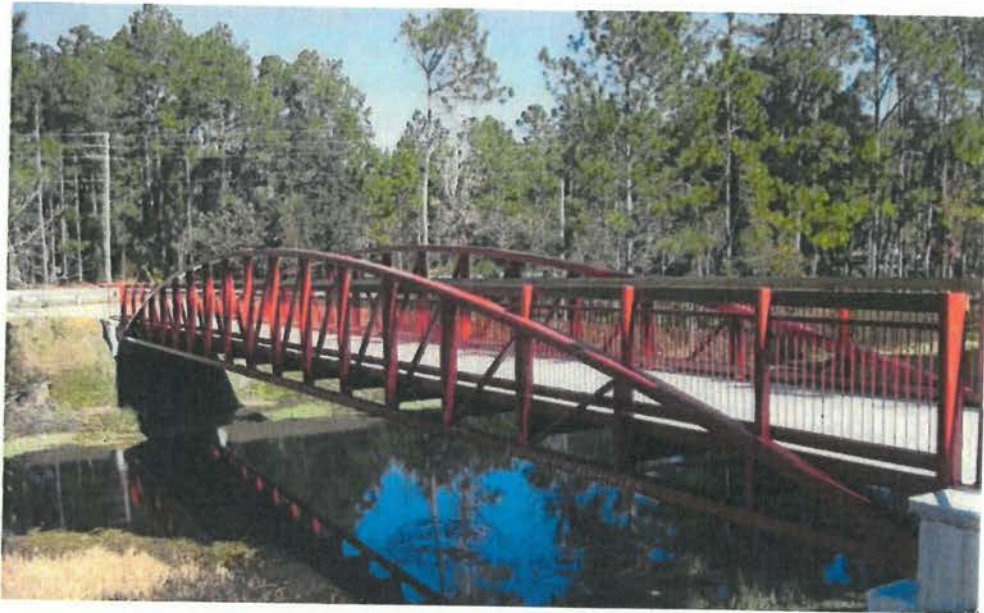
Lake Redwood East Bank Lookout

The original city beach was created on the east side of the lake along Minnesota Ave. between Second and Third Streets. This lookout would be placed in that same general vicinity. It would allow pedestrian access to a dock setting with a closer view of the dam and river gorge as well as provide another vantage point to enjoy the lake. This location also helps connect Lake Redwood to the downtown area.



High Bridge Pedestrian Walk

The high bridge pedestrian walkway would be located at the same location as the original high bridge. It would be a 170' crossbow style structure using atmospheric corrosion resistant steel to reduce maintenance and would be located directly over the Redwood River Gorge. It would provide access to a view of the exposed side of the dam and the associated waterfalls. This view is one of those that The Scenic City was named for and has been lost over the years with the dismantling of the old high bridge. This bridge would utilize the abutments that are already in place to support the utilities crossing the gorge in the same area.



South Lake Redwood Bike/ Fitness Trail

Given the full utilization of the lake and the south lake bridge crossing, a new bike/ fitness trail will be developed from Pikes Park to the pedestrian bridge crossing on the west side of the lake and from the pedestrian bridge crossing to Ramsey Street on the east side of the lake. This will be a key part of the fitness trail system when that project is completed. It opens up the entire west side of Redwood Falls for pedestrian traffic.



Future Redwood River Recreational Revitalization Projects

South Lake Redwood Parking Lot

Once the south Lake Redwood pedestrian bridge is constructed there will be additional interest in using the crossing and also using this area as a starting point for utilization of the trail system. A parking lot would be constructed near the south lake pedestrian bridge to accommodate this increased interest.

North Ramsey Park Bike/ Fitness Trail-- City Perimeter

This is an ongoing project in Redwood Falls. The city is working through the Parks Department to extend the trail system, both in the city and around the area to provide more opportunities for living a healthy lifestyle. The final goal is to have a trail that encompasses the entire perimeter of the city and then expand from that format to include other hubs in the area. This portion of the trail would tie the North Redwood section of the trail with the Lake Redwood section by creating a bike/ fitness trail which travels along the western edge of Ramsey Park.

Redwood River Gorge Lookout below the Dam

Ramsey Park has riverfront property which extends from the original Falls of the Redwood to the Redwood River Gorge. Currently, this is undeveloped park land but presents an opportunity to create a riverfront lookout peering directly into the gorge. It would be a great use of this land and offer a view of the river that has been hidden for years.

Ramsey Park North Campgrounds

Camping is a popular activity in Ramsey Park and while there is limited land within the current park property for expansion, a possible option would be to expand Ramsey Park to include land closer to the Minnesota River (Ramsey Park North). This could be a seasonal property where only camping facilities are available. It would expand the parks camping capacity and also offer visitor's access to the Minnesota River which is now just outside of the city limits.

Proposed Projects Preliminary Budget

<u>Description</u>	<u>Budget</u>
Dredge Lake Redwood	\$8,700,000
Lake Redwood Fountains	\$350,000
South Lake Redwood Pedestrian Bridge	\$850,000
South Lake Redwood Park	\$650,000
Lake Redwood East Bank Lookout	\$750,000
Redwood River Gorge High Bridge	\$450,000
South Lake Bike/ Fitness Trail	<u>\$750,000</u>
Total	\$12,500,000

Future Projects

South Lake Redwood Parking	\$450,000
North Ramsey Park Bike/ Fitness Trail	\$2,500,000
Redwood River Gorge Lower Lookout	\$650,000
Ramsey Park North Campgrounds	\$1,500,000

Redwood River Redevelopment Project

Summary

The redevelopment of a landmark community asset is a once in a lifetime opportunity. As a rural community, there are few opportunities that present themselves that could have as significant an impact on the future of this community as the redevelopment of Lake Redwood. Creating an outdoor recreational facility that has the ability to dramatically improve the overall health of our residents, guarantee a stable water source for our local hydroelectric power plant, attract younger professionals to the area, and drive additional tourism dollars into the local economy is truly an opportunity of a lifetime. This proposal is presenting a plan for Lake Redwood that will leave a lasting impression on this community for generations to come. It's more than simply dredging our lake; this project is an opportunity to make a significant long term investment in our community and in rural Minnesota.

Thank you for considering our future.



