

# CITY OF COUNCIL BLUFFS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**RIVER'S EDGE PHASE FOUR**

**Council Bluffs, IA** – The fourth and final phase of the Council Bluffs riverfront project stands to retain talent, attract new residents, boost the local economy, and build community. River's Edge Phase Four plans include an observation tower, pier, treetop walk and trails, climbing adventure course, and children's play area.

"Our riverfront exists as a place of significance that builds pride and community among residents," said Council Bluffs Mayor Matt Walsh. "Phase Four delivers additional opportunities to engage with the riverfront and spur further economic development."

In 2015, U.S. Census data showed Iowa in the top seven states registering economic losses due to migration. The accumulated loss for the Council Bluffs/Omaha metropolitan area in 2015 equaled approximately \$5.6 billion in wages and salaries.

Nationwide trends indicate riverfront developments like River's Edge reduce the magnitude of local talent loss. Based on outcomes in other states, River's Edge Development could reduce migrations on both sides of the river by 4.6 percent.

According to the U.S. Census, young adults with college degrees have higher relocation rates than the total population. Council Bluffs' riverfront connects to population demographics that support riverfront development with the average age of people with Council Bluffs riverfront access is 33.1.

One million college-educated 25- to 34-year-olds move across state lines annually. Because mobility declines with age, the location decisions of people in their twenties and thirties shape the future of a metropolitan's economic success. Today's young adults pursue areas with recreational amenities surrounding rivers and parks. River's Edge Development positions Council Bluffs for growth.

"Phase Four will immediately impact the quality of life in our community," said Walsh. "Each component, from the playground to the pier, provides access to the kinds of activities that greatly benefit health, happiness, and wellbeing."

Southwest Iowa Nonprofit for Collective Impact (SINC) is conducting the fundraising and management for River's Edge Phase Four in partnership with the City of Council Bluffs.

"SINC is an Iowa 501(c)(3) that has been established to form a 'collective impact' approach to envision, design and partner on major transformative projects for Southwest Iowa," said Pete Tulipana, President of SINC. "These transformational projects involve partnerships with various large non-profits, governmental and non-governmental agencies, and major philanthropists through the region."

Tax increases are not part of the River's Edge funding plan. Phase Four is funded entirely by private donations which have been raised by SINC. The estimated budget is \$50 million, and all of the funds have been committed by private donors and area foundations. The Iowa West Foundation provided the lead gift of \$15 million.

"With our office on the riverfront, we have a front-row seat to the community engaging with the amenities every day, whether it's taking a picture with the Looking Up sculpture, exercising along the trail, or enjoying a picnic atop the River's Edge Pavilion," said Brenda Mainwaring, President and CEO of Iowa West Foundation. "There's so much more on the horizon with Belle's Play Garden and other developments. I encourage residents and visitors to come see all that this area of Council Bluffs has to offer."

Leveraging private funding of nearly \$50 million, Council Bluffs taxpayers could experience a significant rate-of-return. According to The Economic and Fiscal Impact of the Council Bluffs Riverfront Development, a study completed by Goss & Associates for the Mid Iowa Growth Partnership, total City tax collections are estimated to be \$57.4 million. During the riverfront's two-year construction phase, the project can support 1,337 jobs annually and 3,249 jobs annually during the 30-year operation phase, boosting state and local taxes by \$131.7 million.

Community members helped shape the plans for River's Edge Phase Four. In 2018, the riverfront project team hosted four public meetings encouraging the public to view project renderings, vote on ideas and programs, and provide feedback. Phase Four incorporates many community suggestions, including a connection with the river, waterfront trails, and the children's play area.

"River's Edge intends to be a public space that creates a strong sense of pride for the community," said Walsh. "It's a place where people of all ages and abilities can access and enjoy Iowa's beautiful riverfront."

Construction of Belle's Play Garden, the first amenity of Phase Four, has begun. Belle's Play Garden features a series of Missouri River-inspired play and educational elements, including a 15-foot-tall pelican play feature with climbing structures, a slide, intimate enclosures, and a lookout perch.

The Go Play Initiative (founders: the Knudtson and Davidson families), and Back to the River Inc., provided the leadership funding for Belle's Play Garden.

"We are excited for the project to begin the construction phase. It has been so fun to see the play structures being built, and that excitement will only grow as construction gets underway, and then again when families return to the riverfront to play and enjoy this special part of the park," said Heather Tomasek-Knudtson with The Go Play Initiative.

River's Edge Phase Four details regarding amenities, flood mitigation, ecosystem restoration, and conceptual renderings are available at [www.councilbluffs-ia.gov/riversedge](http://www.councilbluffs-ia.gov/riversedge).

*The mission of the City of Council Bluffs is to continuously improve the quality of life and attractiveness of the City of Council Bluffs.*

*The mission of SINC is to provide education, financial services and fundraising assistance to entities in Council Bluffs and southwest Iowa.*