



# Waukee Trailhead Public Art Project

## *Waukee Railroad Pergola - In the Shadow of the Rails*

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8/30/14

### Project Overview

**Background:** The Waukee Trailhead Public Art Project is part of a broader regional initiative to create and install significant public outdoor art environments along the Raccoon River Valley Trail corridor, to enhance the cultural, recreational/health and economic benefits associated with this unique public resource. Waukee is the first trail community to move forward with the construction of a significant (“iconic”) public art installation at the City’s trailhead located at the intersection of Highway 6/Hickman Road and 10<sup>th</sup> Street/Co Hwy R22. This site is significant in that it serves as a key gateway to both the western and northern routes of the 89 mile Raccoon River Valley Trail system. This site currently receives high volume use which is expected to grow significantly due to the recent opening of the 72 mile interior trail loop and the site’s proximity to the greater Des Moines metro area. Plans are also underway to link the Raccoon River Valley Trail at Perry with the High Trestle Bridge & Trail near Woodward which will further increase the number of users coming to the project site as a regional destination. On a more local level, the project is integrated with the Waukee parks & trails system and linked to the Des Moines metro trail system, offering an additional unique recreational and cultural facility for residents of Waukee and surrounding metro communities.

**Project Leadership:** The project is supported and led by the **Waukee Trailhead Public Art Committee** an ad hoc community based group, comprised of representatives from the Waukee Area Arts Council, Waukee Schools, Dallas County Conservation Board, Raccoon River Valley Trail Association, the City of Waukee and several other key community leaders. The project is located on city property and upon completion will be operated and maintained by Waukee’s Park & Recreation Department.

**Project Plan & Design:** In 2013 the Committee raised \$26,000 in private and corporate donations, which in combination with \$10,000 in seed money from the City was used to retain the services of RDG Planning & Design, a nationally recognized Des Moines firm. RDG’s contracted services includes development of the public art design and the related site plan. The project is directed by RDG’s David Dahlquist, an artist and senior partner of the firm, who has significant experience in working with Iowa communities in the design and implementation of large scale public art installations. Most noteworthy of Dahlquist’s recent work is the award winning High Trestle Trail Bridge near Woodward, Iowa. The project design process which is now finished has included the holding of public meetings and workshops for the purpose of gaining the inputs and direct involvement of the Waukee community and surrounding region. The resulting project design, **Waukee Railroad Pergola ...“In the Shadow of the Rails”**, plays on Waukee’s railroad history and the repurposing of the rail line to create the Raccoon River Valley Trail system, which serves the same original rail communities. The art installation, comprised of several structures, is integrated with the trail path and trailhead park, providing visitors the experience of interaction with the art. Please see the color brochure for additional project information and images of the design and site plan.

### Project Benefits and Impacts:

Due to the project’s strong visibility and association with the Raccoon River Valley Trail and the Des Moines regional trail system, it is expected that the number and diversity of visitors coming to use and experience the site will be significant. The regional population base directly benefited by the project will be in excess of 400,000. Based on current trail user statistics, annual visitors to the project site will exceed 70,000 in

2014, a 110% increase over 2012 (the first year statistics were kept) and are expected to reach 100,000 by 2015. These numbers will increase with the completion of this project and as the trail system continues to expand and gain notoriety. Those coming to the site will be comprised of a mix of local, regional and out of state visitors, representing a broad and diverse socio-economic population, coming to the site for a variety of recreational and cultural experiences. As a unique outdoor attraction the project is expected to have a positive impact on community health by encouraging more people of all ages and abilities to get outside, use the trail systems and to be physically and mentally active.

Due in part to its association with the Raccoon River Valley Trail, the project is expected to become a regional destination for many visitors as well as trail users. This in turn will have a positive impact on the local and regional economies. This includes increased tourism and consumer spending within the greater Waukee area as well as the other communities located along the 89 mile trail corridor.

From a cultural perspective, it is important to note this is a significant public art initiative for the region and is expected to serve as a catalyst to encourage additional outdoor public art within the greater Waukee community, as well as the other communities located on the Raccoon River Valley Trail. Public art does something that neither a public space without art nor even a museum with all its art can do: it can capture the eye and mind of someone passing through our public spaces. It can make us pay attention to our civic environment; it can encourage us to question what's around us. Much of the community's newly built environment lacks the resonance of history or reflection of civic ownership, which makes residents proud of where they live. A carefully conceived public art installation and environment such as this project connects us to our history, the natural world and an ephemeral quality of life - providing places of meaning within our community. Art celebrates the qualities that make one place different from another and creates a sense of civic vitality, health and wellbeing for our towns and communities.

**Project Cost & Funding:** The total cost of the project, including the design phase is \$1,045,000. To date \$400,000 has been raised or committed, leaving a goal of \$645,000. Funding for project construction will come from grants and private and corporate donations in combination with support from the City. Funding from the City will consist primarily of capital improvements to the project site, with the core Public Art features being paid for with donated funds. The Waukee Trailhead Public Art Committee is helping to lead the fund raising efforts. Fund raising will take place throughout 2014 with construction expected to begin in 2015.

Project grants and donations are received by and administered through the Waukee Foundation, Inc., a 501(c)(3) public charity established by the City in 2006 to receive tax deductible donations for funding of special purpose community projects. As fiscal agent, the Foundation maintains a segregated subaccount exclusively for the receipt, expenditure and financial accounting of funds donated to the Waukee Trailhead Public Art Project.

**Project Contacts:**

Jim Miller, Trailhead Public Art Committee Chair  
515 / 224-5516 office  
515 / 971-3462 mobile  
[Jim.Miller@MorganStanley.com](mailto:Jim.Miller@MorganStanley.com)

Cindy DePond, Waukee Area Arts Council  
515 / 306-0999 mobile  
[ckwrk@aol.com](mailto:ckwrk@aol.com)

Matt Jermier, Waukee Parks & Rec Director  
515 / 978-0007 office  
515 / 707-0147 mobile  
[mjermier@waukee.org](mailto:mjermier@waukee.org)

David Dahlquist, RDG - Dahlquist Art Studio  
515 / 284-1675 office  
515 / 404-0146 mobile  
[ddahlquist@rdgusa.com](mailto:ddahlquist@rdgusa.com)

