

# **Grant Wood Loop Strategic Plan**

**March 2023**

# Grant Wood Loop's Vision and Mission

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## Vision

**Our vision for the Grant Wood Loop is that the residents of the region and the visiting public will... Engage. Reflect. Return.** Whether you paddle, pedal, stride, ride, or rest, our region has developed a national model of public-private partnership, inviting all to find their personal meaning and lasting memories with connections to:

- Dramatic, timeless landscapes
- Inspiring parks and pathways
- Rivers, creeks, and lakes
- Arts, culture, and history
- Historic communities and places
- Local food and agriculture
- Interpretive, educational, and recreational programs for all ages

## Mission

**To enhance, promote, sustain, and connect our region's cultural, natural and park assets.**

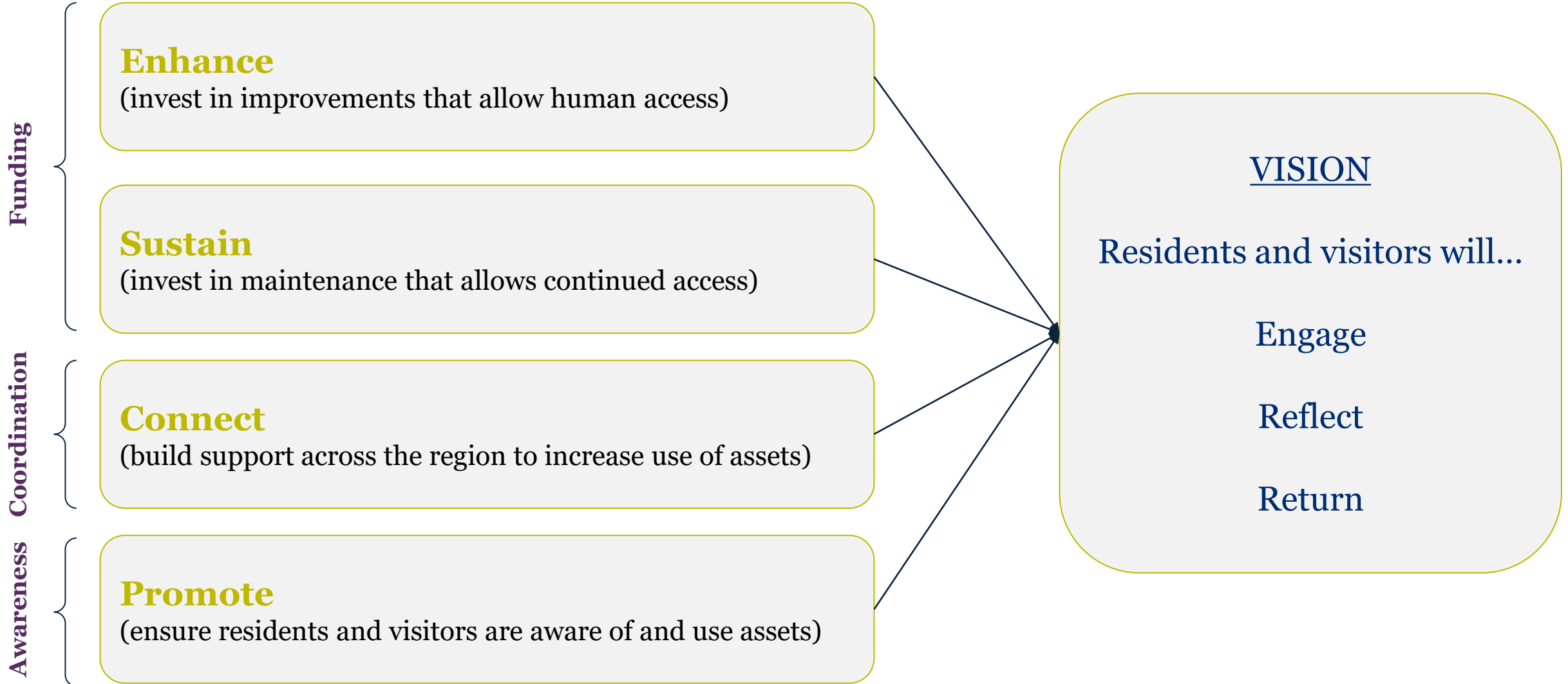
# Grant Wood Loop's definition of "need"

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We have identified 3 key elements of the "need" Grant Wood Loop exists to serve:

- **Funding** for projects that enhance and improve local natural areas
- **Coordination** across counties to think holistically about where investment is needed, how to connect natural spaces, and how to advocate for support.
- **Raising awareness and use** of parks and natural spaces

# The areas of need align to the elements of GWL's mission statement



# Grant Wood Loop intended impact

<u>Stakeholder</u>	<u>Impact</u>
Residents/ Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Improved quality of life through:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Increased access to environment</li><li>○ Improved health</li><li>○ Increased quality experiences</li><li>○ Economic growth</li></ul></li></ul>
Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Enjoy experiences when they visit</li><li>● Extend visits</li><li>● Become ambassadors for the region</li><li>● Attracted to live in the region</li></ul>
Natural spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Protected and expanded ecological community</li><li>● Preserved natural gems</li></ul>
Local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Increased tourism dollars</li><li>● Positive economic impact</li></ul>
Local entities (funders, elected officials, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Increased support for the region and natural spaces here</li><li>● Increased funding for natural spaces</li></ul>

# High Level Strategy

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## Strategic Element

## Description

### **Enhance and Sustain**

#### **Invest in improvements and maintenance of parks and natural areas**

- Identify projects for investment.
- Identify relevant funding sources.
- Access funding sources.
- Distribute funds for identified projects.

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### **Connect and Promote**

#### **Build support across the region to increase use of assets**

- Create ambassadors of the parks.
- Engage in calls to action aligned to the mission.
- Build legislator awareness about parks and natural areas.
- Facilitate collaboration between organizations.
- Share information and opportunities with relevant stakeholders who can market and disseminate more broadly.

# Enhance and Sustain: Invest in improvements and maintenance of parks and natural areas

<b>High level actions</b>	<b>Activities</b>
Identify projects for investment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Maintain and contribute to a list of identified projects across the region.</li><li>● Estimate cost of each project.</li><li>● Estimate timeline of each project.</li></ul>
Identify relevant funding sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Share information within the organization about new relevant funding opportunities as they become available.</li></ul>
Access funding sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Apply for large grants that could fund projects already identified for investment.</li><li>● Collaborate with relevant organizations to complete funding applications.</li><li>● Write letters of support for other members' grant applications.</li></ul>
Distribute funds for identified projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Distribute funds to organizations that will manage the projects.</li></ul>

# Connect and Promote: Build support across the region to increase use of assets

High level actions	Activities
Create ambassadors of the parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Develop guidance for conducting public events related to parks and natural areas in order to educate the public (e.g., ribbon cuttings).</li><li>● Build tools for groups and organizations to use to build advocates for parks and natural areas.</li></ul>
Engage in calls to action aligned to the mission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Disseminate information about calls to action to Board members and their organizations as well as other partner organizations in the counties.</li><li>● Encourage individual organizations to take action (<i>GWL will not take action as a collective body</i>).</li></ul>
Build legislator awareness about parks and natural areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Identify opportunities to communicate directly with legislators.</li><li>● Educate legislators about the value of Parks to People.</li><li>● Encourage ambassadors of the parks to communicate with their legislators.</li></ul>
Facilitate collaboration between organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Bring organizations together in partnership to coordinate on efforts to move the mission forward.</li><li>● Share information with relevant marketing entities in the area about projects completed or underway or other important information about natural spaces.</li></ul>



# Board committee structure

## Committees:

## Description/Responsibilities:

### Funding Research and Projects (Enhance & Sustain)

- Identify and share potential funding sources.
- Compile funding opportunities surfaced by all GWL board members.
- Lead on completing funding applications.
- Maintain and contribute to a list of identified projects across the region.
- Estimate cost of each project.
- Estimate timeline of each project.
- Distribute funds to appropriate organizations for project execution.

### Communication (Connect & Promote)

- Serve as the liaison to public entities doing ribbon cuttings or other public activities related to natural spaces.
- Lead on disseminating information to relevant bodies.
- Identify opportunities to communicate to legislators.
- Facilitate bringing organizations together.

### Executive

- Complete all required paperwork for the maintenance of the 501(c)3
- Ensure legal compliance for all organizational activities.
- Manage finances.
- Recruit new board members.

## Board commitments:

- ❖ Attend 2 board meetings per year
- ❖ Join at least one committee and execute on defined responsibilities
- ❖ Attend committee meetings 2 times per year (between board meetings)
- ❖ Attend additional meetings as needed when funding becomes available

# 2-year organizational goals

## Committees:

## Goals:

### Funding Research and Projects (Enhance & Sustain)

- Potential projects list updated 2x per year
- GWL has facilitated collaboration on grant funding at least 1x per year
- Accessibility prioritized in project investments

### Communication (Connect & Promote)

- Tools and guidance documents developed
- At least 1 touchpoint per year with legislators by GWL members
- Information shared with marketing entities at least 2x per year
- DEI policy for outdoor areas drafted
- Website updated to reflect simplified focus in this plan

### Executive

- Different forms of diversity (e.g., race, culture, industry, ability) have been considered and emphasized when recruiting new board members
- A permanent “home” for the organization has been established
- 2x per year board meetings to collaborate and 2x per year committee meetings of each committee

# DEI strategy

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## Categories

## Strategy elements (also incorporated into action plan)

### **Internal improvements**

- Ensure the board includes a diverse set of people (including diversity of race, culture, industry, ability, etc.)
- Expand board to include community members who are passionate about outdoor recreation
- Set clear expectations about communication and engagement
- Ensure meetings are held during dates/times that work for the most people

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### **External improvements**

- Proactively seek feedback and input from underrepresented groups
- Partner with organizations that will expand GWL's reach to a more diverse population, both in communication and projects
- Support facilities/projects that improve access to all people

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### **Goals**

- Policy on DEI for the outdoor areas and park systems represented by GWL
- Funding/project goals around accessible facilities (for all people, including people with disabilities)
- Board diversity

# Action plan - Funding Research and Projects Committee (Enhance & Sustain)

<b><u>Action</u></b>	<b><u>Timing</u></b>
Identify projects for DRA application	Q1 2023
Select a chair for the committee	Q2 2023
Develop a form and process for updating projects list 2x per year (google form that populates a spreadsheet - keep the form open for 1 month prior to committee meeting)	Q2 2023
Develop an approach to ensure diversity and accessibility will be prioritized in project investments (include questions on the form)	Q2 2023
Develop an agreed-upon process for identifying and sharing grant opportunities	Q4 2023
Identify and share grant opportunities and complete applications as relevant	Ongoing

# Action plan - Communication Committee (Connect & Promote)

<u>Action</u>	<u>Timing</u>
Select a chair for the committee	Q2 2023
Share information with marketing entities	Q2 2023
Get website updated and simplified	Q2 2023
Develop guidance for conducting public events related to parks and natural areas in order to educate the public (e.g., ribbon cuttings).	Q4 2023
Build tools for groups and organizations to use to build advocates for parks and natural areas.	Q4 2023
Communicate with legislators	Q4 2023
Draft DEI policy for outdoor areas	Q4 2023
Develop a plan to gather feedback from underrepresented groups	Q4 2023
Identify partners that will expand GWL's reach to a more diverse population	Q4 2023
Share information with marketing entities	Q4 2023 and ongoing 2x per year

# Action plan - Executive Committee

<b><u>Action</u></b>	<b><u>Timing</u></b>
Select a chair for the committee	Q2 2023
Meet with PEI to discuss pilot year for GWL to be housed in PEI	Q2 2023
Update any relevant legal documents	Q2 2023
Update bylaws to reflect the updated strategy and committees	Q2 2023
Gather input from board members about accessible meeting times to ensure maximum participation. Revisit when new board members join.	Q2 2023
Develop an approach to recruiting and assessing new board members (with a focus on bringing different forms of diversity)	Q4 2023
Decide on permanent home for GWL	Q2 2024

## Additional notes

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Originally, this plan was meant to include a 3-year budget for staff and expenses. Because the board has decided to pursue a strategy that is volunteer board member-led and also does not include maintaining a dynamic website, the organization will not have a budget going forward. The organization is pursuing a partnership with Prosperity Eastern Iowa (PEI) to become the “home” of Grant Wood Loop. PEI was the original entity back in 2015 that pursued the Parks to People grant that led to the formation of the Grant Wood Loop.

In addition, the committee explored the possibility of leveraging the existing website to promote regional marketing. Grant Wood Loop has decided not to focus on marketing activities, so discussions are underway between Field of Opportunities, ECIA, and Travel Dubuque to develop an appropriate regional marketing strategy.