



EMPOWERING SMALL MINNESOTA COMMUNITIES



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to DiscoverSM



Helping small Minnesota communities develop resilient infrastructure while strengthening their social, environmental, and economic fabric.



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Root River Trail - Preston to Forestville State Park - Community - Preston, Harmony, Lanesboro and UMN/DNR Plan Collaboration

Supported in 2025 - 2026 the UMN Empowering Small Minnesota Communities (ESMC) Program

Community Futures track is an opportunity for communities to address their future in compelling, realistic, practical, and implementable ways led by the UMN Minnesota Design Center. Projects are community-scale and employ design thinking with community leadership to create a community strategy that involves individual fundable projects that support that strategy.

Find out more about ESMC: <https://z.umn.edu/ESMC-home>

Preston-Harmony-Lanesboro Community/University Collaboration Focus areas

Root River Bike Trail extension

- Scaffolding and capacity for community-led process across Preston, Harmony, and Lanesboro
- Research, communication, mapping, facilitation and more to help move this forward in concert with the MN Dept. of Natural Resources

Root River ecosystem investment

- Scaffolding and capacity for community-led ideas to address needs/opportunities for Root River ecosystem alongside trail planning
- Research, design, communication, ideation, facilitation and more to develop Root River ecosystem ideas and initiatives that complement the Root River trail work

Our work to date (1)

Community engagement & leadership

- 5 community meetings connecting Preston, Lanesboro and Harmony with key collaborators (DNR, others)
- Largely focused on Preston to Forestville State Park Root River trail planning



Our work to date (2)

Root River Trail expansion

- Project scoping with key Fillmore county partners
- Engaged DNR and understood opportunities for next steps & \$2M in state funding
- Enabled DNR to include trail engineering from Preston all the way to Forestville State Park
- Grew understanding, led by DNR, of trail requirements that will inform future routes (i.e. accessibility and grade)
- Secured & discussed 3 of 4 DNR-developed trail engineering designs
- **Identified \$6.0 million construction cost estimate - trail construction and related river ecology projects.**
- Built community awareness
- Developed a group of Fillmore County water experts and advocates for engaging with Root River ecosystem needs



Project partners/programs engaged

Community partners (organizations/departments)

- Preston Historical Society
- Community leaders in Preston and Harmony (misc.)
- MN Historical Society
- MN Dept. of Natural Resources
- Forestville State Park
- Lanesboro, Harmony and Preston mayors
- Root River Current
- MN Driftless Fly Fishing
- MN House of Representatives (district 26B)

University of Minnesota team

- Center for Sustainable Building Research
- Minnesota Design Center
- Southeast Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, UMN Extension

Contact us for more information

- Jon B. DeVries, Preston Historical Society:
jonbdevries@gmail.com and 312-919-2969

University of Minnesota team

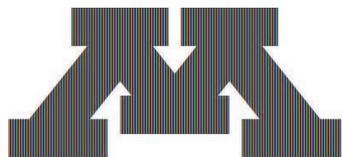
- Dan Handeen, Research Scientist, Center for Sustainable Building Research, and Minnesota Design Center affiliate:
handeo20@umn.edu
- Andi Sutton, Executive Director, Southeast Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, UMN Extension: sutto364@umn.edu

UMN Partners

Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs



CENTER FOR TRANSPORTATION STUDIES



Resilient Communities

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Building Community-University Partnership

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DESIGN CENTER
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EXTENSION

Thank you!