

11. Riverfront Revitalization Plan

Issues

The following issues were identified by the Riverfront Subcommittee and through additional analysis by the consultant team. Like the Downtown Revitalization Plan, the full Riverfront Revitalization Plan is a separate document that includes a detailed and site-specific analysis of the issues and topics discussed below.

- Balance of uses – How to balance ongoing industrial and transportation uses with the increasing demand for recreational use of the riverfront.
- Improved access – Move the rail storage tracks east of Bay State Milling.
- River-related uses – Not all riverfront uses require water and/or rail access.
- Trails – Continue to pursue trail links from Middle School to Prairie Island; connections to Aghaming Park, to regional trails (Root River, Great River trails).
- Redevelopment – Opportunities for high-end housing, retail, lodging along the riverfront.
- Public campground – Should the City continue to provide a campground? Issues with seasonal and semi-permanent use.
- Water-based recreation – How can the City enhance and promote water-based recreation for visitors and residents? For example, consider backwater tours of boats, tows and boathouses; and facilities for canoe and kayak storage and access.
- Identify and promote key riverfront destinations – These include Prairie Island Park, the Municipal Harbor, Levee Park, various boat landings, the Winona Yacht Club, the new Minnesota Marine Art Museum, and Aghaming Park.

Goals and Objectives

1. Mix of Uses. Encourage a wide range and integrated mix of industrial, retail, restaurant, park, entertainment and residential uses along the riverfront. The following general priorities are established for riverfront uses, with the understanding that these will vary depending on the character of each river segment:

1. Parks and protected open space
2. River-related industrial uses that take full advantage of their location
3. Housing and related uses that capitalize on the riverfront's amenities while providing for public access.



2: Improve access. Improve visual and physical access to the River and the riverfront's relationship with adjacent areas of the City.

Objective:

Create the Winona Waterfront Trail and connecting streets and river access points as an attractive, safe and accessible bicycle, pedestrian and paddling network that will enable people of all ages to access uses on the Mississippi River.

3. Provide recreation options. Provide river recreation options along the Mississippi River shoreline to enhance community livability and attractiveness to tourists.

Objectives:

1. Develop Prairie Island and Latsch Island parks as regional recreation and tourism attractions, focusing on attractions that will generate the highest returns on costs and produce the lowest impact on community assets and resources. Examples of attractions could include canoe and kayak rental, boating tours, fishing piers, birding/hiking paths, dog park/trail system, etc. Improvements to signage and circulation are needed in particular at Latsch Island Park.
2. Improve Levee Park as a gateway to Downtown Winona, to include day use dockage and a major visitor attraction.



4. Maintain current assets. Maintain and improve upon Winona's existing industrial, business and goods-transportation assets on the River while improving the River ecologically.

Objectives:

1. Improve the aesthetics of industrial parks and rail yards
2. Work with MnDOT and other agencies to improve access and traffic flow along the developed riverfront.
3. Minimize the number of physical and aesthetic obstacles between riverfront areas and adjacent areas of the City
4. Seek opportunities to acquire any vacant or abandoned buildings for redevelopment, to increase the tax base and clean up the industrial parks.

Policies and Actions

1. Waterfront Trail. The centerpiece of the riverfront plan is the development of the Waterfront Trail, envisioned as a continuous multi-purpose riverfront trail following or paralleling the levee, designed for non-motorized use: pedestrians, bicycles, inline skates and similar modes. Multiple easements for the trail have already been acquired. The design of the trail must address a variety of different shoreline conditions and existing access barriers, and therefore varies from segment to segment, as detailed in the Riverfront Plan. Specifically:

- The trail should be integrated with the potential downtown Conference/Performing Arts Center and with existing trails at Levee Park.
- The trail should be designed to avoid conflicts with port and dockage facilities

2. Riverway Streets. Create a series of riverway streets connecting neighborhood civic landmarks, parks/open space, and homes to the riverfront. The concept of a riverway street is that of a signed route geared towards bicycle and pedestrian as well as vehicular use, with visible bike/pedestrian connections to the Waterfront Trail. Suggested streets are: Johnson, Walnut, Liberty, Zumbro and Wall.

3. Water Recreation Trails. Re-institute and sign the canoe and kayak routes that extend from Prairie Island Park downstream to Aghaming Park and upstream to Verchota Landing. (A portage would be needed around the Prairie Island Spillway at Lock and Dam 5A.)

4. River Activity Zones. As detailed in the Riverfront Revitalization Plan, the riverfront should be thought of as a series of four districts or activity zones, which are similar to but more detailed than the land use classifications shown on the Land Use Plan. Each activity zone should have certain priorities for land uses, both primary and secondary. These priorities should be implemented through zoning and other land use decisions. The activity zones and priorities are:

- Natural/Open Space: wetlands, wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation. Priorities are natural resource protection, pedestrian land access, and non-motorized (paddling) water access
- Urban Recreation: active recreation, camping, marinas and dockage. Priorities are pedestrian, bike and limited vehicular land access, motorized and non-motorized water access. Remove rail conflicts, emphasize natural resource protection and seasonal/visitor activities.
- Urban Transition: commercial, recreational, housing. Priorities are pedestrian, bike and vehicular land access, minimizing of rail conflicts, encourage motorized and non-motorized water access
- Urban Diversified: industrial, commercial, utilities. Priorities are to sustain river-related industrial and transportation uses; rail and port activities may take precedence over vehicular access; pedestrian/bike access may follow closest alternate route where shoreline is unavailable.

5. Collaboration with State and Federal Agencies. Much of the river corridor is a 'patchwork' of state, federal and local jurisdictions and authorities, including the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources, the City, Winona County and Buffalo County, Wisconsin. This situation produces overlaps, gaps in protection, and occasional conflicts. Most notably, the City-owned Aghaming Park is located in Wisconsin and falls under both federal and state authorities, making enforcement and management difficult. Riparian rights are also interpreted differently in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The City should initiate discussion with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding a management agreement for Aghaming Park, allowing it to be managed in a manner consistent with the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife Refuge and the adjacent Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge.

6. River-Related Park Improvements. The Parks and Recreation Section of the Comprehensive Plan discusses parks as a citywide system. The following recommendations pertain specifically to high-priority improvements to riverfront parks:

- Latsch Island: Define and demarcate public and private (boathouse) parts of the park with signage, road improvements, and designated visitor parking and activity areas. Incorporate the (privately managed) Municipal Harbor as part of the park.
- Prairie Island: Revise management policies to encourage short-term use of the campground, rather than the current pattern of permanent seasonal use.
- Levee Park: Redesign this park to improve its connectivity to the downtown, to maximize river views and access, and to meet the other criteria discussed in the Downtown Revitalization Plan.