

## **APPENDIX F RIVERFRONT POLICIES**

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### **Bullseye! An Action Plan for Downtown Rockford (1986)**

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The riverfront has long been recognized as downtown Rockford's greatest asset and untapped resource. Earlier plans decry the community's failure to make the most of this resource. Bullseye! recommendations for finally doing just that include a complete walkway system, public access to the riverfront, protection of the view from and to the river, and boating facilities along the riverfront.

#### **Policies**

- ▶ Focus on the riverfront as an amenity – create a pleasurable environment.
- ▶ Encourage riverfront and green space linkages as opportunities arise.
- ▶ Improve walkways and lighting on downtown bridges. Any time one of the bridges is rebuilt, pedestrian facilities should be expanded and improved, with lighting at the pedestrian scale added.
- ▶ Encourage activities open to the public (such as restaurants) along the river.
- ▶ Strongly recommend that the Rockford Park District give first priority to building downtown pathways with its Build Illinois money.

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### **City Shores: Riverfront Plan Report (1987)**

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The City's overriding goals for the riverfront are simple and clear-cut:

- ▶ To increase public access physically and visually to the river and riverfront;
- ▶ To explore the economic opportunities of the riverfront; and
- ▶ To make the riverfront a place which is a source of enjoyment and pride for Rockford residents.

To achieve these overall objectives, however, there must be a coherent, consistent set of policies which ensures that various activities or projects are not at cross purposes with each other and that certain projects do not preempt the ability to carry out other projects desired by the community. The riverfront policies which follow are suggested as a means to avoid these types of problems:

- ▶ Recognize the river as a major public right-of-way.
- ▶ Improve the banks of the river as a cultural, recreational, residential and commercial resource.
- ▶ Prohibit off-premise signs and regulate other signs within 100 feet of the riverfront.
- ▶ Encourage a minimum of 30 feet of landscaping/buffering for existing commercial/industrial uses along the riverfront.
- ▶ Require a minimum of 50 feet of landscaping/buffering for new development along the riverfront.
- ▶ Allocate funds annually to riverfront development and maintenance.
- ▶ Prohibit any new parking within 30 feet of the riverfront.

- ▶ Secure riverfront land through public acquisition, easements, joint-use agreements and donations.
- ▶ Provide for handicapped access to the riverfront.
- ▶ Improve walkways and lighting on downtown bridges. Any time one of the bridges is rebuilt, pedestrian linkages should be expanded and improved with lighting at the pedestrian scale added.
- ▶ Encourage activities open to the public (for example, restaurants) along the river.
- ▶ Create incentives to encourage developers to provide public access for the enjoyment of the City's riverfront.
- ▶ Protect open views of the riverfront by limiting building heights (south of the Fordham Dam and north of the Whitman Street Bridge), and prohibiting buildings from blocking vistas down public streets leading directly to the river.
- ▶ Require all new development along the riverfront to dedicate a 30-foot right-of-way for public access.
- ▶ Focus on the riverfront as an amenity – create a pleasurable environment.
- ▶ Encourage riverfront and green space linkages as opportunities arise.
- ▶ Strongly recommend that the Rockford Park District give first priority to building downtown pathways with its “Build Illinois” money.
- ▶ Prohibit bicycling along the downtown riverfront (between Cedar and Whitman Streets on the west bank, and East State and Whitman Streets on the east bank).
- ▶ Require all new or rebuilt bridges over the river to be erected high enough to assure boat clearance.
- ▶ Develop a continuous riverfront pedestrian/bicycle pathway between Belt Line and Elmwood Roads.
- ▶ Provide a major public plaza on the riverfront suitable for accommodating community festivals, concerts and other large-scale community events.
- ▶ Give priority to acquisition and/or development of riverfront segments based on location, opportunity and immediacy of results.
- ▶ Develop a financial incentive program to encourage private investment and reinvestment along the riverfront.
- ▶ Restore, revitalize and redevelop deteriorated and underused riverfront areas for commercial, residential, cultural, recreational and other compatible uses.
- ▶ Obsolete and incompatible industrial uses should be replaced with commercial, residential or recreational uses.
- ▶ Encourage the location of development in areas where public services and facilities essential to such development are adequate.
- ▶ Establish design guidelines and review procedures for all structures and pathways within the riverfront study area.
- ▶ Buildings and other structures will be sited in the riverfront area so as to minimize damage to property and the endangering of human lives caused by flooding and erosion.
- ▶ Preserve, protect and restore areas such as those necessary for the support of wild and aquatic life.
- ▶ Identify and preserve those aspects, sites and areas of the riverfront having historic or cultural significance.
- ▶ Review public and private actions that impact the riverfront for conformance to these policies.

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## **Rock River Corridor: A Planning Guide (1988)**

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[Unlike the Bullseye! Plan and the City Shores report, this planning guide for the Rock River corridor was prepared by a committee drawn from all areas of the Rock River corridor, not just those within the City of Rockford.]

This Planning Guide acknowledges that, because people are naturally attracted to water, the Rock River is becoming our greatest natural attractor, and therefore focuses on, with equal importance:

- ▶ Protecting natural resources;
- ▶ Increasing public access along the river;
- ▶ Improving river aesthetics;
- ▶ Expanding river pathways;
- ▶ Expanding our visitor industry; and
- ▶ Upgrading the level of river policing.

To clarify these focuses, the participants of this project developed the following specific challenges:

- ▶ Preserve, protect and restore the natural resources and native diversity inherent to the Rock River;
- ▶ Provide for the optimum amount of physical and visual public river access;
- ▶ Make the Rock River and riverfront a source of community enjoyment and pride;
- ▶ Create continuous public pathways within the river corridor;
- ▶ Improve and enhance the Rock River as a natural gathering place for residents and visitors; and
- ▶ Make using the Rock River a safe and enjoyable experience.

To address these challenges, detailed programming and physical development opportunities were suggested in the Planning Guide for each one. Some have been implemented; others are still only suggestions.