



Dear Riverwalk Patron:

Thank you for your interest in the Naperville Riverwalk.

The Naperville Riverwalk Commission is pleased to present this preliminary draft of our first update to the Naperville Riverwalk Development Guidelines. Since its completion in 2004, the City and Park District have accomplished many of the recommendations described in the plan. However, much work remains, and the Riverwalk is more important than ever to the success of our community. It's more than just a little ironic that, as we contemplate the future of the Riverwalk, we find ourselves in the midst of the most significant recession since 1981 – the year that the first phase of the Riverwalk was dedicated.

Naperville was settled and grew up along the DuPage River in the early 1800's. In the late 1900's, we could have easily become just another suburb struggling to find its identity while coping with rapid growth. Fortunately, it turns out that the same river that nurtured our early success was instrumental to our lasting success.

In a remarkable leap of faith during the severe 1981 recession, a group of mission-driven volunteers built the first section of the Riverwalk on Main Street using \$200,000 of seed funding from the city and a \$150,000 gift from Harold and Eva White, the former owners of the Naperville Sun. Ever since White Plaza was dedicated in the summer of 1981, the Riverwalk has steadily grown into a nationally acclaimed, multi-million dollar, 60 acre riverfront park with miles of handsomely landscaped brick paths that link our great community and its thriving downtown.

Conceived as a homegrown, permanent commemoration of our City's 150th birthday, the Riverwalk has become the unequivocal centerpiece of the community and has brand recognition across the country. Its enormous environmental, recreational, cultural and economic benefit to the downtown, in particular, and the whole community, in general, is undisputed.

In 1980, Mayor Rybicki appointed a group of volunteers, which later became the Naperville Riverwalk Commission, to guide the early development of the Riverwalk as a part of the City's year long sesquicentennial celebration. While the volunteer commissioners have changed over the years, the 13 member Riverwalk Commission continues to guide the development and rehabilitation of the park, today. In 1999, the Riverwalk Foundation, a separate group of volunteers, was formed to raise funds for Riverwalk enhancements and educational outreach.

In January 2003, after most of the Riverwalk had been constructed, the City and the Park District adopted an Intergovernmental Agreement and Lease that identified responsibilities for the continued improvement and maintenance of the Riverwalk. In 2004, as prescribed in that agreement, the Riverwalk Commission prepared the Riverwalk Development Guidelines and the Initial Riverwalk Reserve Study in order to identify, respectively, the scope and probable construction costs of new improvements and the rehabilitation of aging, previously constructed improvements. Subsequently, the Riverwalk Commission crafted a work plan that concentrated on rehabilitating the most prominent assets, enhancing key features and completing exciting, new opportunities. Since then, the Riverwalk Commission, with the unwavering support of the City and Park District, has accomplished many of the master plan recommendations, including the dramatic rehabilitation of the first segment of the original, 1981 riverfront park between Main Street and the Dandelion Fountain. Still, much remains to be completed, and recently, several compelling circumstances prompted the Riverwalk Commission to re-examine the Development Guidelines.

First, more than 25 years of use and exposure have caused extensive deterioration of some important improvements, such as the lower bulkhead wall. Even though the Park District has stayed out in front of routine maintenance, thereby extending the life of many assets, some improvements, like the bulkhead walls, clearly need special attention. In fact, our recent reconstruction of the easterly half of the original 1980 Riverwalk confirmed the need to replace the entire bulkhead wall between Main and Eagle Streets. Our work on the next segment of the rehabilitation also exposed the need to address some subtle, yet complex, accessibility issues near the amphitheater, which were not contemplated in the 2004 plan. In addition, last fall, a developer announced plans to construct a mixed use building across from Fredenhagen Park, north of Burger King. The Riverwalk Commission and the City both saw this as a particularly important opportunity to complete a prominent geographic gap in the Riverwalk. This opportunity, combined with the City's recession-driven need for fiscal restraint, caused us to temporarily postpone the rehabilitation of the Riverwalk between the Dandelion Fountain and Eagle Street. Finally, the 2004 plan prescribed an update every 5 years, which, coincidentally corresponds nicely with the recently adopted update of the Intergovernmental Riverwalk Agreement.

When the city celebrates its bicentennial in 2031, we expect that the Riverwalk will still be the iconic centerpiece of the community. And, because of its enormous environmental, recreational, cultural and economic significance, the Riverwalk will continue to require our special attention.

To that end, this update of the Naperville Riverwalk Design Guidelines, clearly articulates the Riverwalk Commission's consensus goals, objectives and prioritized recommendations for the systematic improvement of the physical Riverwalk assets over the next 20 years. Please note that this preliminary draft describes and prioritizes 29 projects, most of which have been carried forward from the previous plan. However, we have included a few new projects, like a new barrier free walk that will connect the lower and upper level walks immediately west of the Eagle Street bridge. Once we receive the community's input, we will finalize our recommendations, including potential construction costs, and prepare a corresponding 5 year capital improvement plan.

We anticipate that the city will continue to fund the construction of most Riverwalk projects. However, there are some exciting opportunities for private donors to invest in the Riverwalk, just like they did during the 1981 recession when the first phase was originally constructed.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration. We welcome your feedback and recommendations as we complete our work over the next few months.

Sincerely,
Naperville Riverwalk Commission



Richard G. Hitchcock,
Chairman