

Riverwalk 203 | Master Plan

Naperville, Illinois

September 11, 2020
Updated December 10, 2025

- This Riverwalk 2031 Master Plan is dedicated to the visionary leaders, generous donors, and tireless volunteers who created the first two blocks of the Naperville Sesquicentennial Riverwalk in 1981, the countless advocates who have advanced the Riverwalk vision, and the future leaders, donors and volunteers who will improve and sustain our beloved Riverwalk for generations to come. -

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Hannah Brauer (2024 – Current)

Seth Michael (2024 – Current)

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Debra Lellbach (2016 – 2022)

Acknowledgements



Consultants:



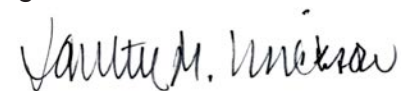
Message from the Chairman of the Naperville Riverwalk Commission

Having grown up in Naperville and watching it transform from a small farming community into one of the best places to raise a family in America, I am proud to play a role in stewarding our community’s crown jewel, the Naperville Riverwalk. I look forward to seeing this vision of the 2031 Master Plan take shape and to the continued fulfillment of the dream that began decades ago.

The Riverwalk has woven itself through every chapter of my life—first as a young mother exploring its paths with my small children, later as the focus of my professional work, and now as a volunteer helping to forge its future.

When it opened in the 1980s, the Riverwalk was the shining new gem of downtown Naperville. My husband and I brought our toddlers there to enjoy family time and the beauty of nature. Years later, in 2006, I was hired by the City of Naperville as the first Riverwalk Administrator. For nearly 15 years, I supported the Riverwalk Commission, managed the donor program, and answered thousands of questions from residents and visitors about the Riverwalk and Naperville. After retiring, I was honored to join the Riverwalk Commission; first as a member, and now as Chairperson, where I have the privilege of focusing on the future of our community’s centerpiece through the 2031 Master Plan.

The projects in this Master Plan represent the collective vision of many people who have imagined new possibilities for the Riverwalk. Some initiatives, like the Nature Prairie Garden and the Eagle Street Gateway, are already complete. As the Riverwalk approaches its 50th anniversary, the 2031 Master Plan will help define what it becomes for the next generation.

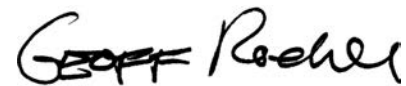


Janette M. Erickson
Chairman of the Naperville Riverwalk Commission
November 20, 2025

Message from the Former Chairman

When I moved to Naperville in 1990 my future boss drove me around Naperville to get me excited about accepting the position and relocating to Naperville. His first stop was a tour of the Naperville Riverwalk. Although this was in the dead of winter I was still very impressed with what I saw! His name is Rick Hitchcock, past Riverwalk Chairman who helped, along with several other visionaries, to mold the vision for this amazing Riverwalk. I’m thrilled to be following in his footsteps to present a new vision for how the Riverwalk will continue to impress. To showcase this vision, we present the Master Plan, a look into the future of what the Riverwalk will look like when we celebrate the Riverwalk’s 50th anniversary! The intent of the Master Plan is to guide how future improvements will make the Riverwalk better. Currently there are gaps in the Riverwalk. The projects presented in the Master Plan will fill the gaps and broaden and enhance the user’s experience.

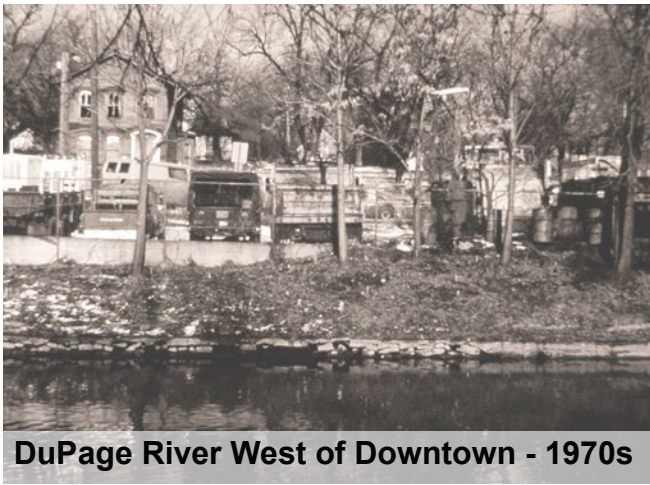
I want to congratulate the Riverwalk Commissioners, staff, our consultants and all those who provided valuable perspective as this Master Plan was formed. As in any Master Plan, this is not a fixed document but is a working plan to be molded by new opportunities as they surface. We look forward to sharing this vision with all of those who value the Riverwalk as the glue that holds this community together.



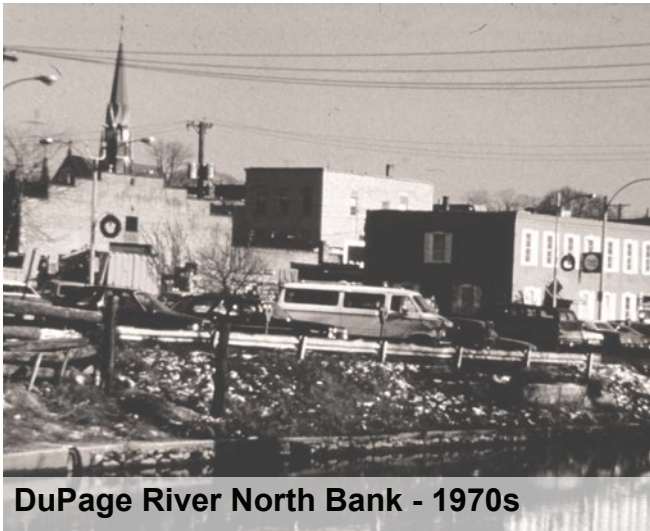
Geoffrey Roehl
Former Chairman of the Naperville Riverwalk Commission
September 11, 2020

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DuPage River West of Downtown - 1970s



DuPage River North Bank - 1970s



Volunteers Lay Bricks - 1981

Creating a Path Forward

In 2031, we will celebrate the 200th anniversary of our city’s establishment, the 100th anniversary of Centennial Beach and the 50th anniversary of the Riverwalk. Built in 1981 by local volunteers to commemorate the city’s 150th anniversary, the original, two block Sesquicentennial Riverwalk galvanized community spirit and shaped Naperville’s outstanding national brand. Today, Centennial Park and the Riverwalk, heralded as the crown jewels of Naperville, stand as testament to the can-do momentum of engaged citizens whose vision inspires today’s emerging possibilities for the celebration of Naperville’s bicentennial in 2031. Riverwalk champions are poised to grasp this celebratory opportunity to further shape its mighty future.

After considerable public outreach and the thoughtful evaluation of existing resources, stakeholder expectations, and widely recognized best practices, the Naperville Riverwalk Commission prepared this **Riverwalk 2031 Master Plan** to inspire the community and its leaders and to guide Riverwalk policy and resource allocation. This plan defines compelling goals, measurable objectives, exciting projects, and a thoughtful implementation process that when complete, will enhance and maintain the Riverwalk’s extraordinary cultural, environmental, and economic impact on Naperville’s success. The call to action is simple: ***Implement this important plan “for generations to come.”***

Riverwalk Evolution

Naperville has a long and proud history of forward-thinking citizens who have contributed their valuable ideas, time, land, capital and other resources to make an exceptional community.

In the grip of the 1980 recession, community leaders were determined to create the Sesquicentennial Riverwalk in much the same fashion as their 1931 depression-era predecessors conceived, privately purchased and constructed the 45-acre Centennial Park (including The Beach) using significant contributions of donated cash, in-kind gifts, Works Progress Administration and volunteer labor. In fact, Sesquicentennial Commission leaders intentionally avoided state and federal funds to allow for greater design and construction flexibility. Instead, some of Naperville’s most influential business leaders proclaimed the Riverwalk vision to countless audiences, made generous cash and in-kind contributions, and inspired other private donors to give, generously. Along with the City’s contribution of publicly-owned riverfront land and \$200,000, the original two-block Riverwalk was funded by approximately \$750,000 in donated cash and \$250,000 of in-kind donations of materials and labor from local contractors.

Carefully unveiled at prominent public celebrations, segment after segment of the Riverwalk unrolled like a breathtaking new carpet from White Plaza at Main Street to the Amphitheater at Eagle Street. The new Riverwalk captivated the community, and the efficient, home-spun implementation strategy ignited an unimagined spirit of pride and unity that continues, today.

With widespread community support, and using a combination of public and private funds, the Naperville Riverwalk Commission has collaborated with both City and Park District officials to incrementally expand the Riverwalk. In the early years, the signature Riverwalk path, with its distinctive pavers, lighting, benches and landscaping,

advanced along City and Park District-owned riverfront, revealing – then transforming underutilized and often hidden public assets into cherished community landmarks like the Dandelion Fountain, Paddleboat Quarry, Rotary Hill, and Landforms Sculpture. Subsequent east and west expansions of the Riverwalk were only made possible by tireless, behind-the-scenes advocacy of Riverwalk Commissioners and the generosity of private property owners like the Fredenhagen family.

Riverwalk Today

Today, the Naperville Riverwalk stretches along 1.75 miles of the DuPage River. It encompasses approximately 100 acres of riverfront park that includes dozens of distinctive features linked by 16,000 feet of signature paver path with its shepherd-crook lighting, comfortable benches and a rich variety of native and ornamental landscapes.

The Naperville Riverwalk has become our unequivocal cultural centerpiece, a treasured urban oasis, and a powerful economic development catalyst. In fact, the Riverwalk is much more than an iconic **place**, it is the memorable **experience** most often associated with Naperville’s exceptional national brand. Nurturing that brand requires the diligent maintenance and systematic rehabilitation of the Riverwalk’s existing assets. Using the annually updated Riverwalk Asset Management Plan, and working through a time-tested Intergovernmental Agreement, the City of Naperville and the Naperville Park District collaborate, with guidance from the Naperville Riverwalk Commission, to maintain and rehabilitate, when appropriate, all of the existing Riverwalk assets.

In addition to maintaining our valuable Riverwalk, we have an exceptional opportunity – and obligation to future generations - to expand on the foresight and generosity of previous generations.

2031 Riverwalk

In 2031, we will simultaneously celebrate the 200th anniversary of our city's establishment, and milestone anniversaries of Centennial Park and Sesquicentennial Riverwalk. We will continue to be captivated by the Riverwalk's familiar, existing features, and we will delight in exciting new attractions. This Riverwalk 2031 Master Plan describes those new attractions - along with an actionable implementation process that will advance our stewardship of the Riverwalk.

In 2031, from West Jefferson Avenue to Martin Avenue, the Naperville Riverwalk will remain one of our most iconic and important cultural, recreational, environmental, and economic development assets.

After careful consideration of many new improvements, the Riverwalk Commission has identified six **Capital Projects** and six **Enhancement Projects**, which when complete, will fulfill the Bicentennial Goal. To qualify, each of the Capital and Enhancement Projects will:

- Maintain or improve river **ecology and habitat**
- Complete **connectivity** gaps within the Riverwalk boundaries
- Expand every day and programed **capacity**
- Increase visitor **safety, accessibility and hospitality**
- Enhance **appearance** while maintaining signature characteristics
- Engage the next generation of Riverwalk **advocates and donors**

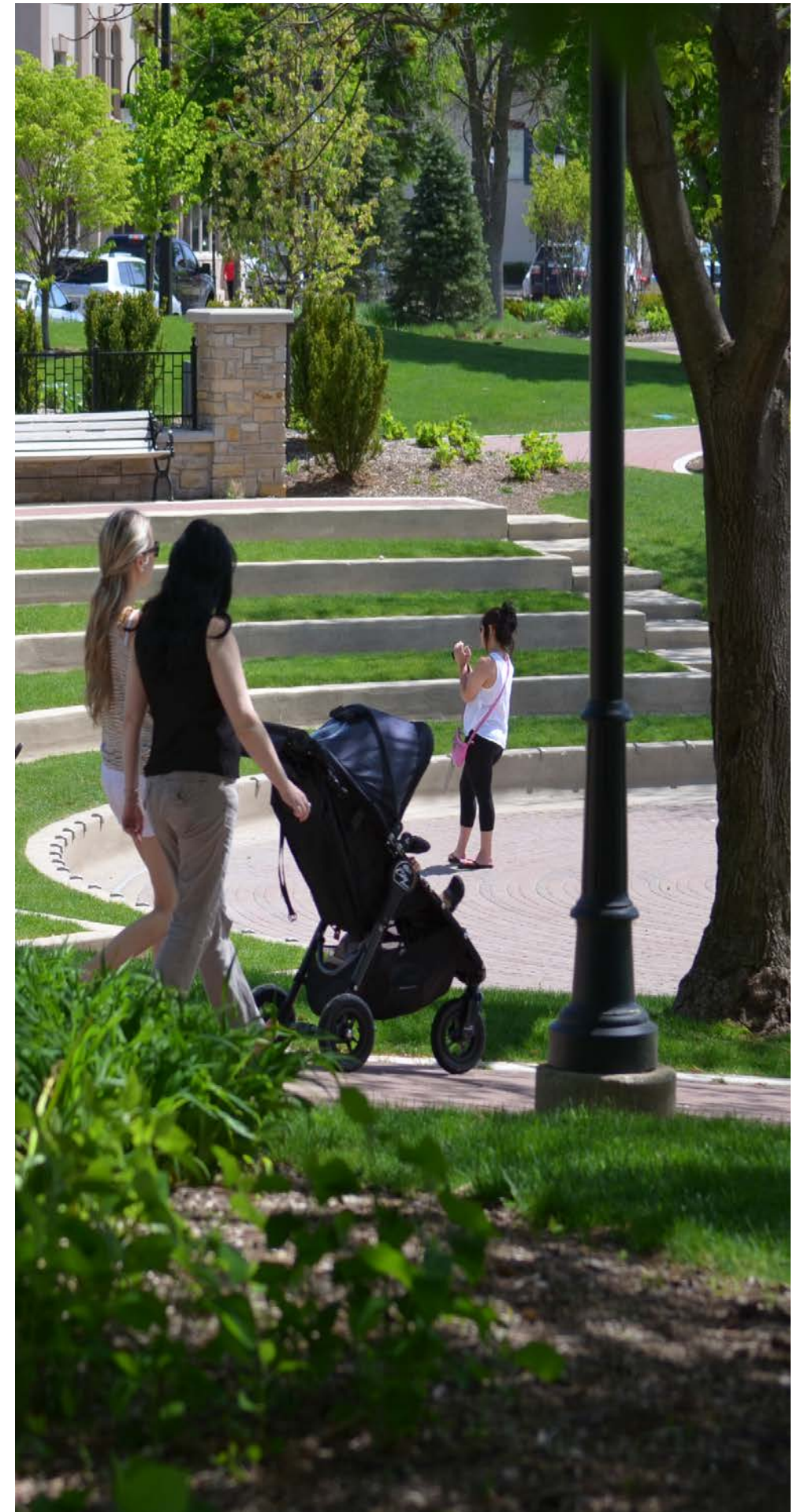
Capital Projects

Each of the six Capital Projects will accomplish every master plan objective, and are defined by their larger scale, greater complexity, substantial construction costs (\$300,000 or more), and anticipated catalytic outcomes. Consequently, the Capital Projects will likely require more complex funding, public/private partnerships, and phased construction. The Grand Pavilion Plaza and the Eagle Street Gateway projects will correct existing deficiencies and add significant new dimensions to existing Riverwalk features. The Main to Washington Streets Riverwalk completely reimagines the existing south bank and includes a large portion of the north bank of the river. The 430 South Washington Street, East Bank Riverwalk, and the South Gateway projects are entirely new additions to the Riverwalk.

On the following pages, the Capital and Enhancement Projects are summarized, without priority, following the flow of the river; upstream to downstream. For clarity, the **Capital Projects** are titled in blue and the **Enhancement Projects** are titled in green. Regardless of type or scale, the Naperville Riverwalk Commission is committed to completing each outlined project – indeed, all Riverwalk projects, following rigorous planning, design and construction standards that are outlined in Implementation, at the conclusion of this document.

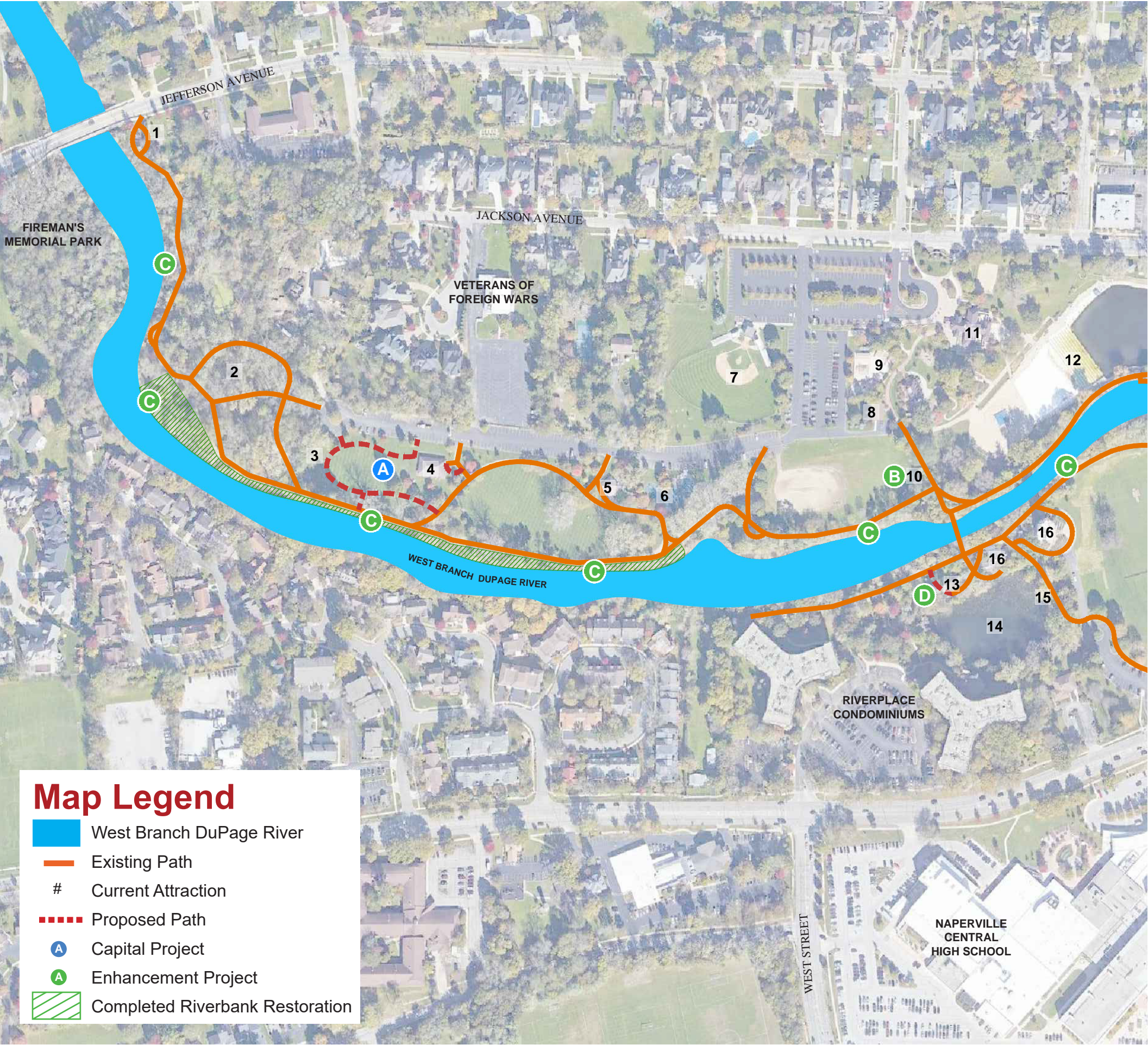
Enhancement Projects

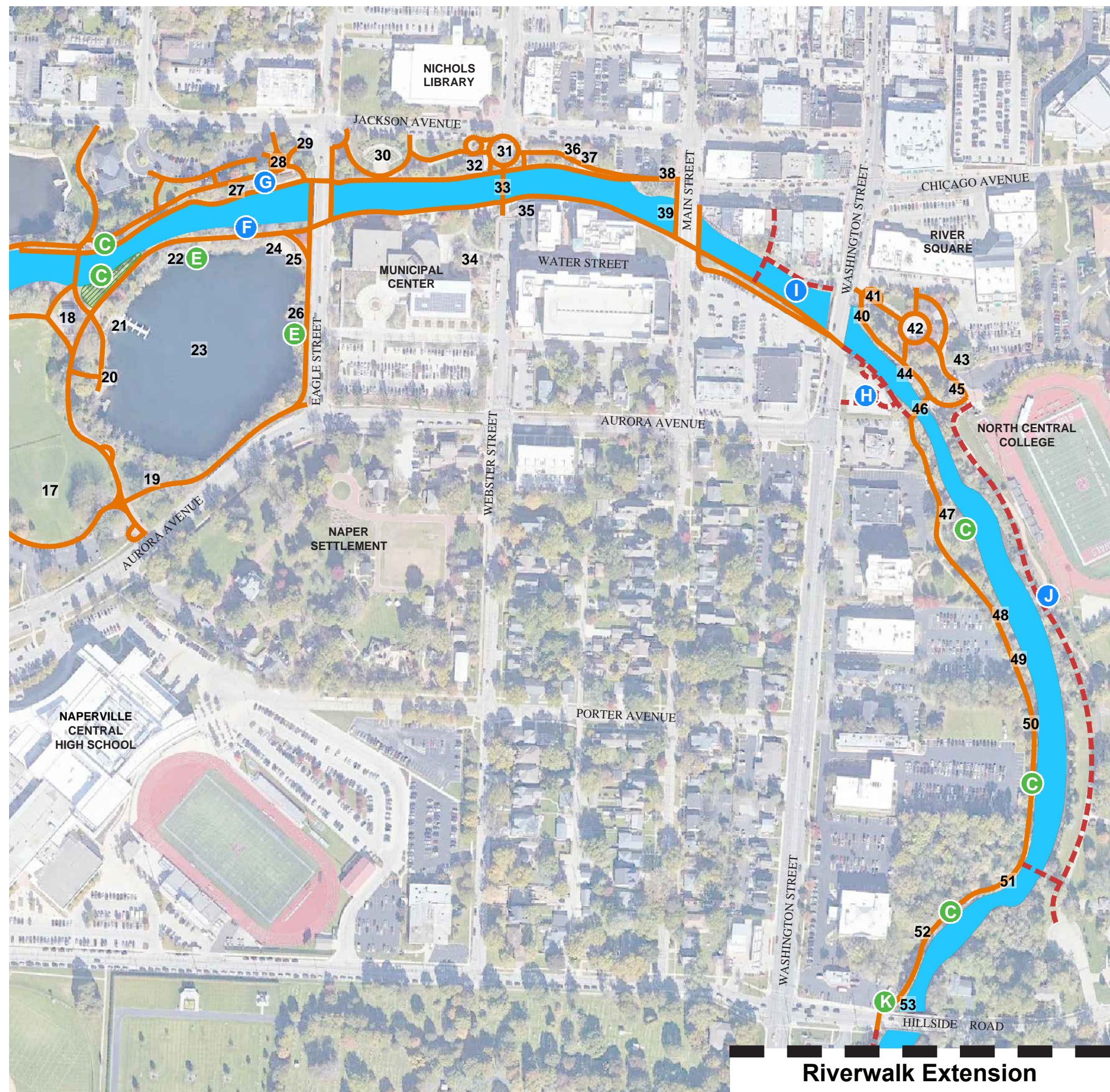
In addition to the annual rehabilitation of existing assets completed by the Naperville Park District, the Naperville Riverwalk Commission recommends the construction of six Enhancement Projects that reach beyond traditional rehabilitation. Compared to the Capital Projects, the smaller, less complex and less costly (less than \$300,000) Enhancement Projects may be near-term funding and construction opportunities. The Prairie Nature Garden, Paddleboat Quarry Overlooks, Netzey Overlook, Riverbank Ecological Restoration, Artists' Overlook, and Hillside Road Gateway each offer distinctive, less costly opportunities to advance the master plan objectives, and engage a wide array of individual and corporate donors.



Current Attractions

1. Brethren Peace Plaza
2. Sindt Woods
3. Chuck Papanos Memorial Garden
4. Grand Pavilion
5. Warming House / Restrooms
6. Jaycees Playground
7. Centennial Park Baseball Field
8. Studio One
9. Rothermel Family Skate Facility
10. Prairie Nature Garden
11. Centennial Beach Bathhouse
12. Centennial Beach
13. Netzley Plaza
14. Netzley Quarry
15. Netzley Shelter
16. Millennium Carillon In Moser Tower
17. Rotary Hill / Sled Hill
18. Paddleboat Quarry Rentals
19. Rotary Harmony Park
20. Gregory Gazebo
21. Jaycees Marina
22. Nalco Shelter
23. Paddleboat Quarry
24. Sesquicentennial Overlook
25. Farmer's Plaza & Cliff Preston Memorial
26. Physicians & Dentists Shelter
27. Oliver Hoffman Pavilion
28. Landforms Sculpture
29. Eagle Street Gateway
30. Amphitheater, Millennium Wall, & Labyrinth
31. Dandelion Fountain
32. Smykal "Free Speech" Pavilion
33. James & Harold Moser Bridge
34. Naperville Jaycees Park
35. Naperville Township Plaza
36. Naperville Exchange Club Veteran's Plaza
37. Exelon Nuclear Garden
38. White Plaza & Horse Trough Fountain
39. Main Street Bridge Overlook
40. Rotary Plaza
41. Fredenhagen Park
42. Exchange Club Memories Fountain
43. Champion Ash Tree
44. Jaycees Gazebo
45. Wehrli Family Garden
46. Dr. Edward & Cecelia Moser Bridge
47. Masonic Plaza
48. Charles Vincent George Garden
49. Naperville Community Gardeners
50. Morton Arboretum Grove
51. Nicor Plaza
52. O'Shaughnessy Garden
53. Edward Hospital Plaza





Riverwalk Extension

Master Plan Attractions

Capital Projects

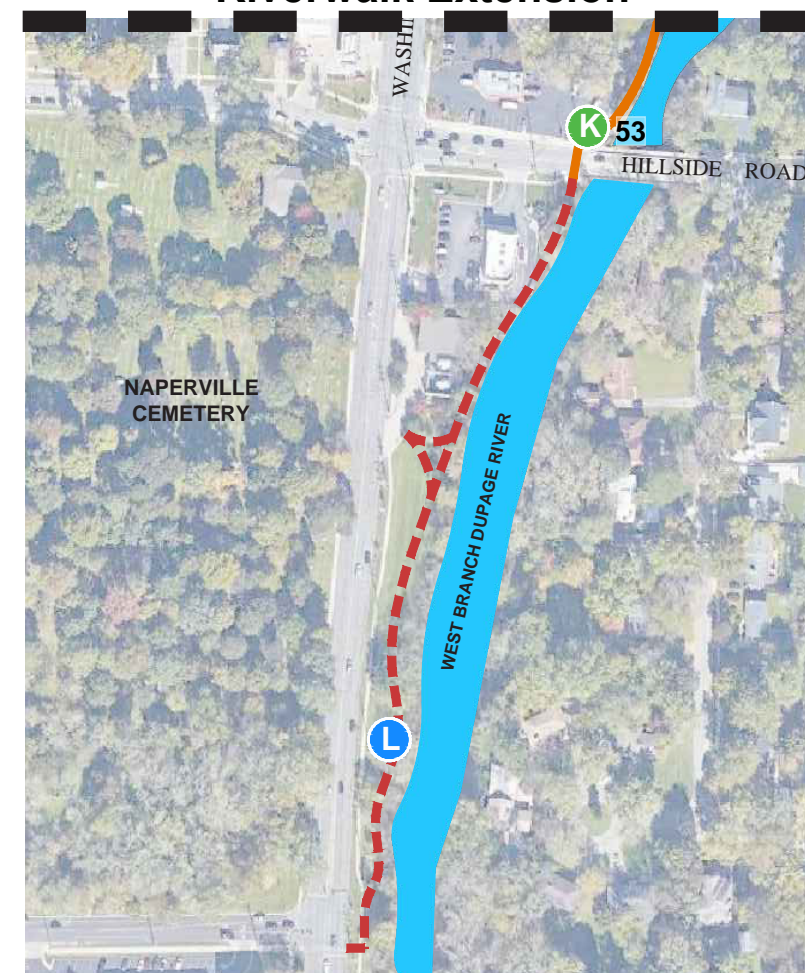
Defined by their larger scale, greater complexity, and substantial construction costs.

Enhancement Projects

Defined by their smaller scale and lesser complexity.

- A** Grand Pavilion Parking and Plaza
- B** Prairie Nature Garden - *Phase 1 Completed September 2024*
- C** Riverbank Ecological Restoration (multiple sites)
- D** Netzley Overlook
- E** Paddleboat Quarry Overlooks - *Completed July 2023*
- F** Eagle Street South Bank Improvements
- G** Eagle Street Gateway - *Completed October 2025*
- H** 430 South Washington Street - *Scheduled for 2026*
- I** Main Street to Washington Street Riverwalk and Bridge
- J** East Bank Riverwalk and Bridge
- K** Hillside Road Gateway - *Scheduled for 2026*
- L** South Gateway - *Scheduled for 2026*

Riverwalk Extension





Conceptual Illustration

Grand Pavilion Parking and Plaza

Today

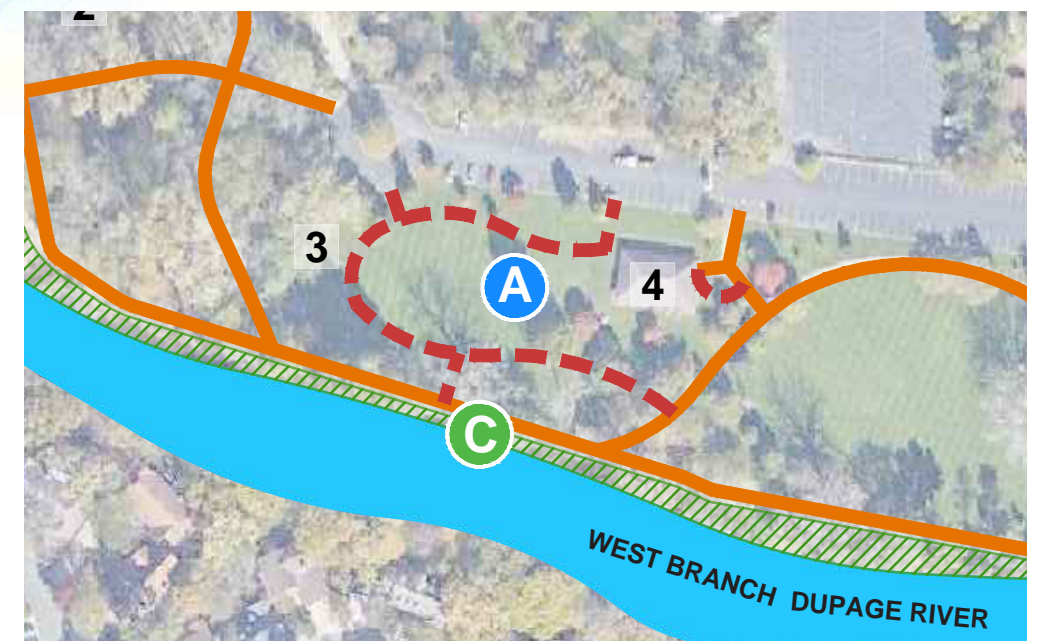
Constructed in 1987, the 3200 square foot Grand Pavilion, which comfortably seats 270 at movable picnic tables, is a favorite spot for family, corporate and philanthropic events. In fact, its ample parking and expansive setting make it so popular that it's often challenging to reserve during prime seasonal dates, and its frequent, heavy use takes a toll on the surrounding lawn.

2031

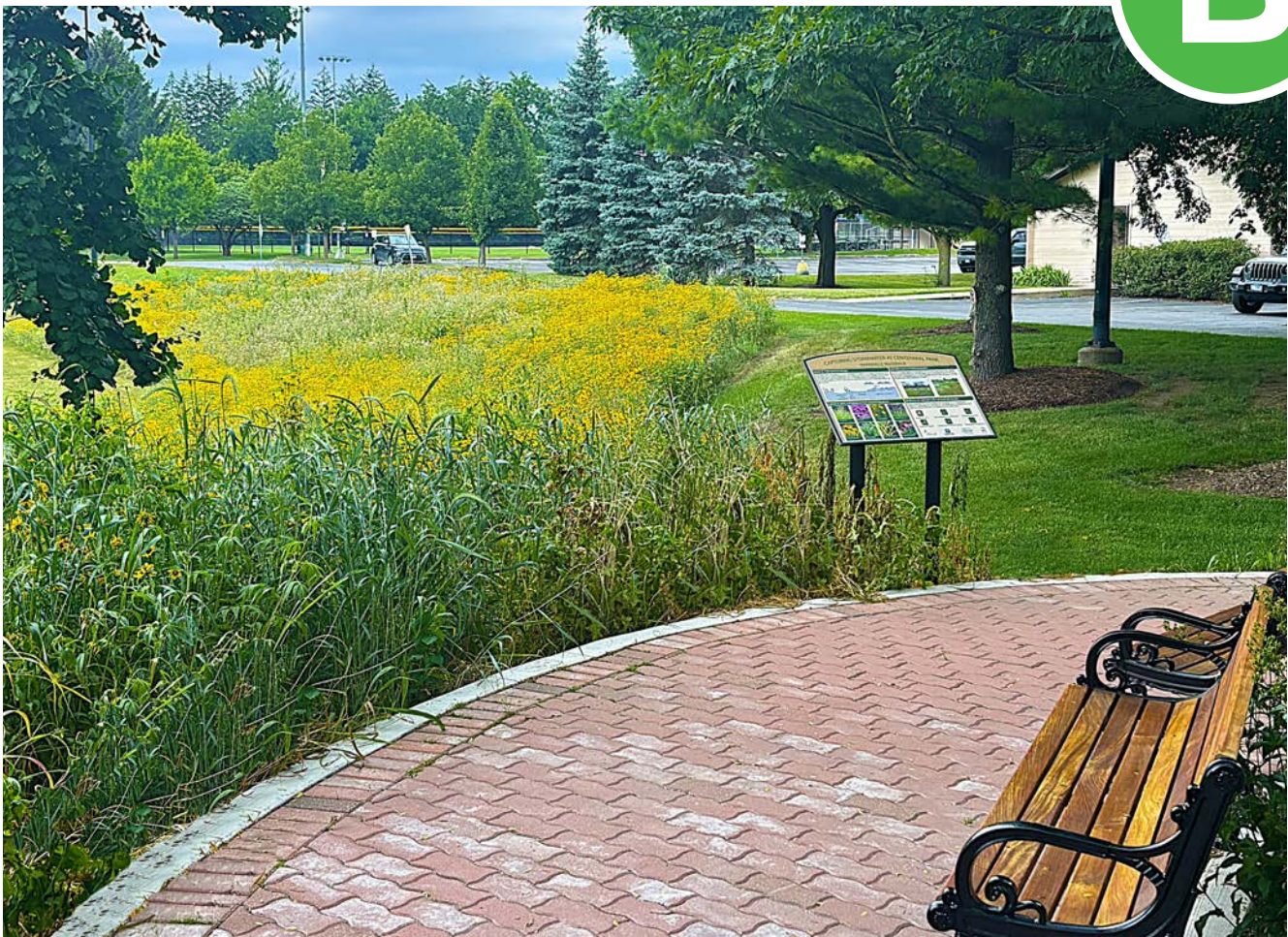
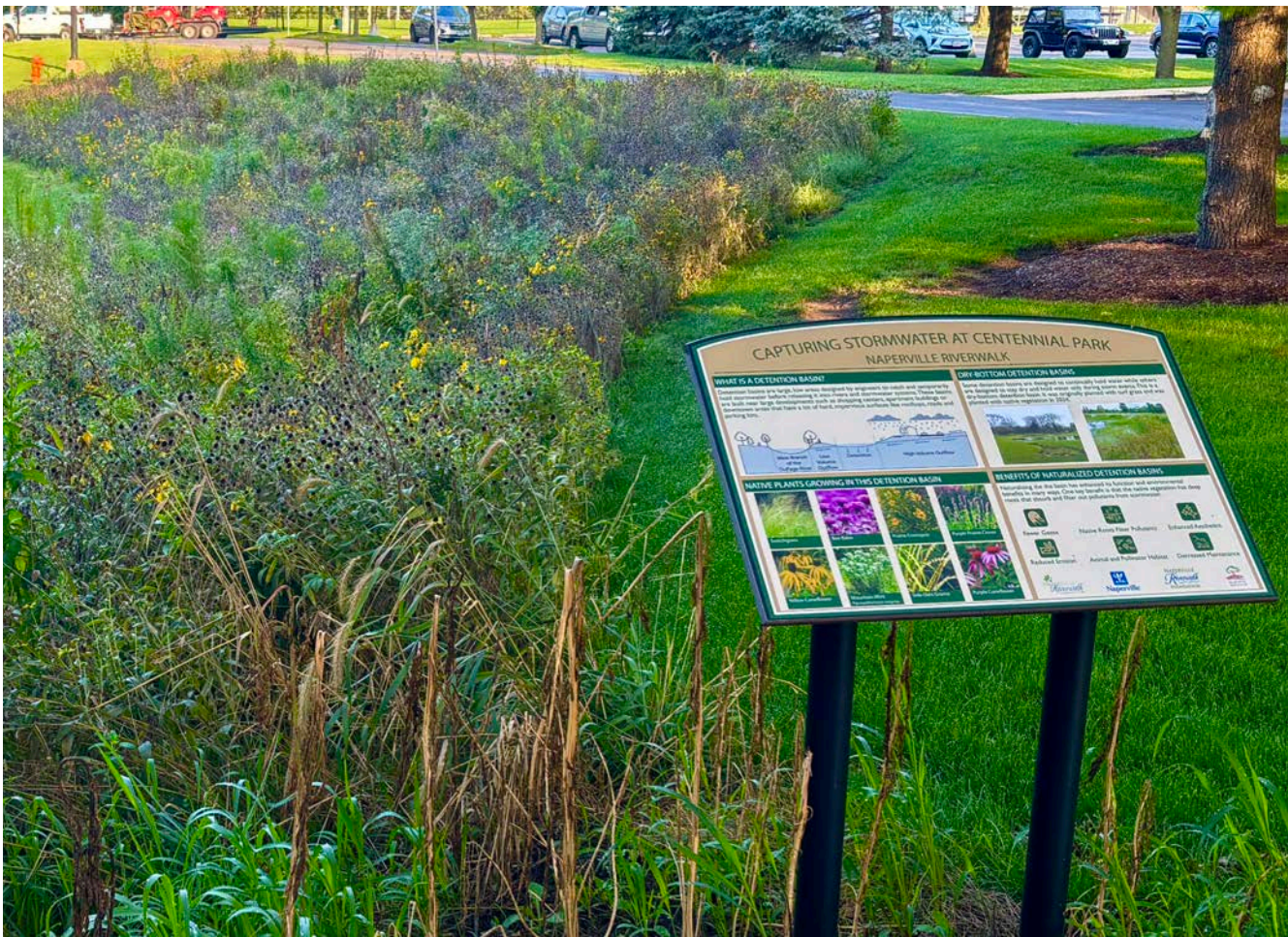
The City of Naperville conducted a survey and reviewed current uses to determine the most effective design program for updating this multi-dimensional Capital Project. Survey results highlighted community interest in amenities such as expanded seating, enhanced food preparation areas, improved drainage during wet conditions, better signage and wayfinding to restrooms and drinking fountains. These potential updates are intended to strengthen the capacity, flexibility, and overall hospitality of this valuable community asset.

Potential Project Cost: \$2,750,000

Anticipated Annual Maintenance Cost: \$16,569 - \$21,540



Location Map



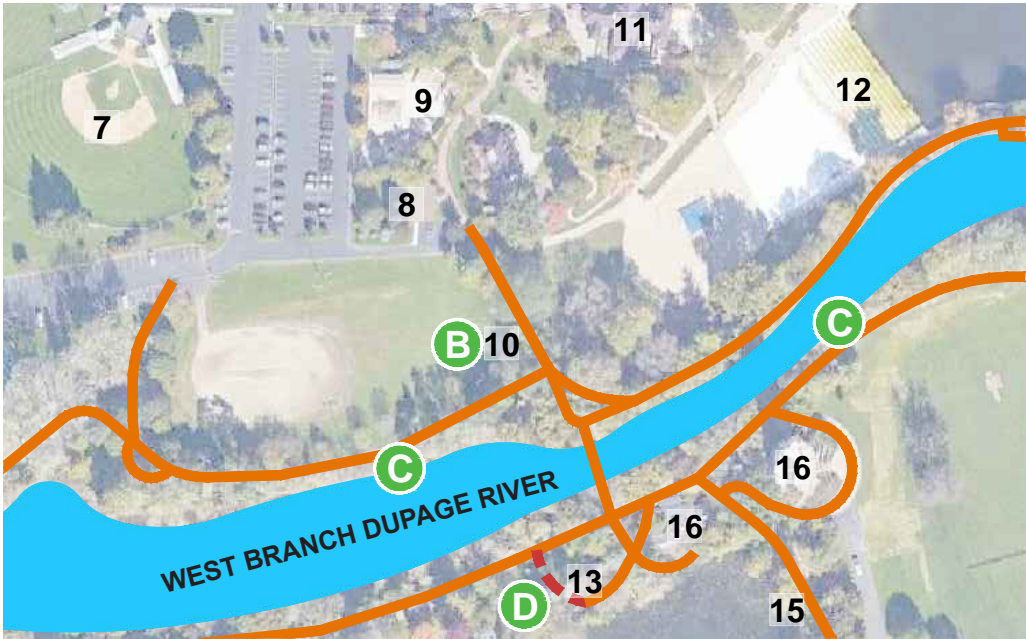
Site Photographs

Prairie Nature Garden

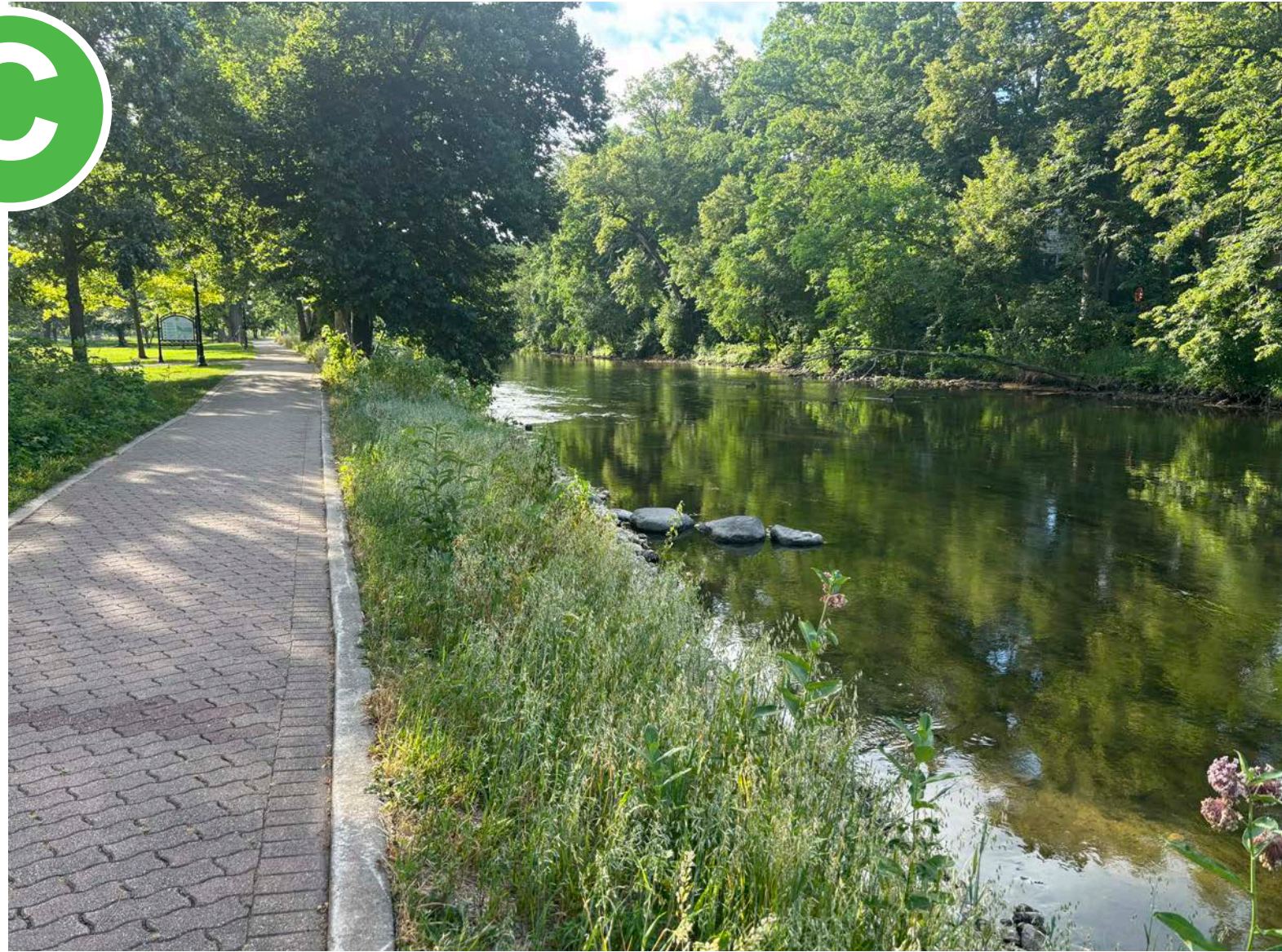
Background
 Since the mid-1970s, this two-acre, saucer-shaped site has been used for storm water detention for runoff from the Centennial Beach parking lot. During the summer months, the Park District maintains a small sand pit and net for volleyball play, and in the winter, when the weather cooperates, they flood the bottom for ice-skating.

Implemented
 While still used for storm water management, seasonal volleyball and ice skating, a large portion of this highly visible area has be transformed into a prairie pollinator garden. The garden provides great hands-on potential for trained volunteers, and once established, this Enhancement Project will provide a distinctive Riverwalk experience that showcases native ecology, habitat and natural storm water filtration. The educational signage helps visitors understand the purpose and impact of the garden. There are possibilities for expansion of this landscape feature as the park district completes its own master plan.

Project Phase 1 Completed in September 2024
Anticipated Annual Maintenance Cost: \$4,410 - \$5,730



Location Map



Site Photograph

Riverbank Ecological Restoration

Today

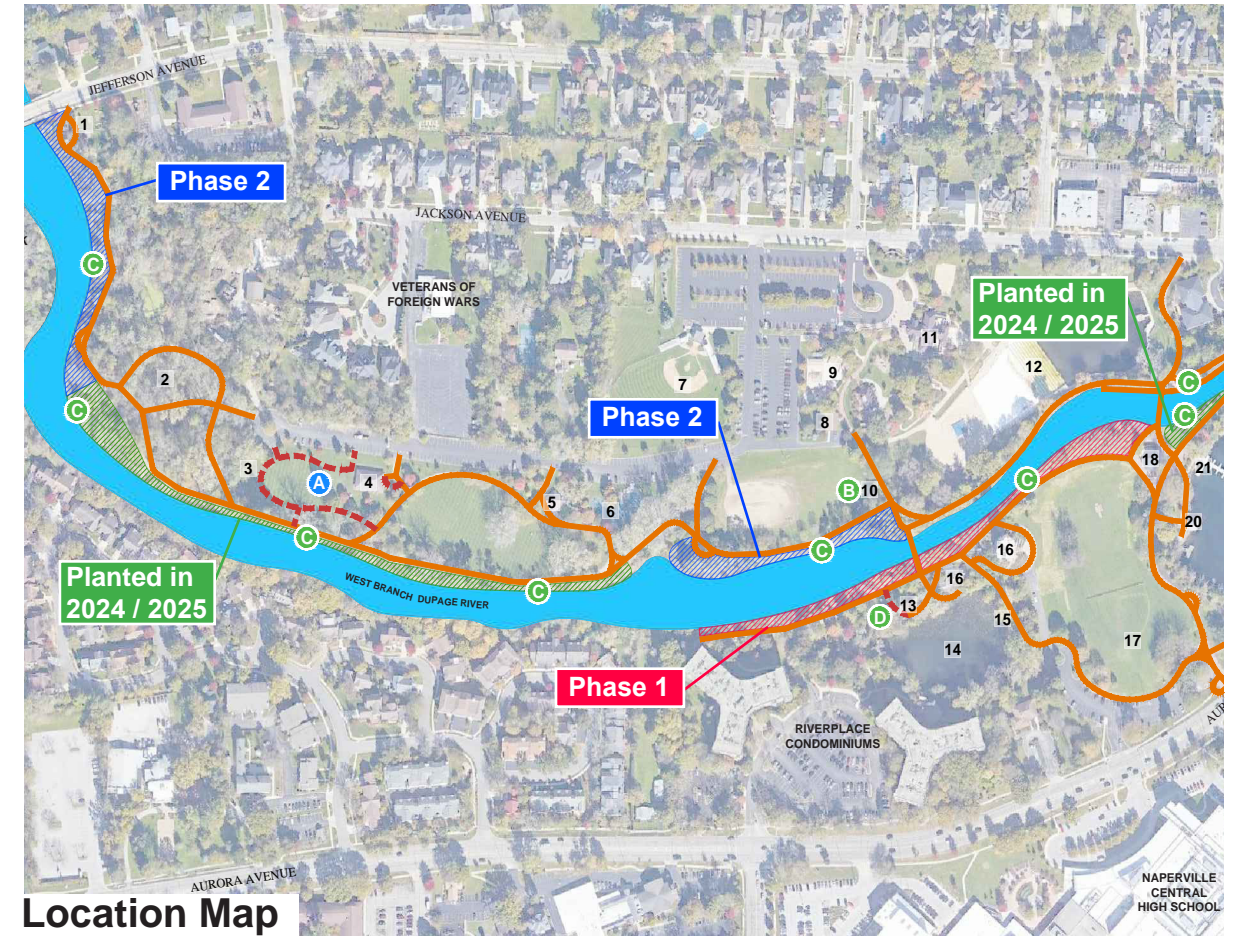
Dating back to the 1930s, much of the downtown Riverwalk is armored with concrete and stone to prevent erosion. The steeply sloped riverbanks upstream and downstream of downtown are stabilized with a combination of walls and ornamental and native plants that each require very different kinds of maintenance. Increased off-trail pedestrian “short cuts” compound maintenance challenges associated with the hybrid ornamental/native landscapes resulting in inconsistent outcomes that compromise operations, safety and appearance.

2031

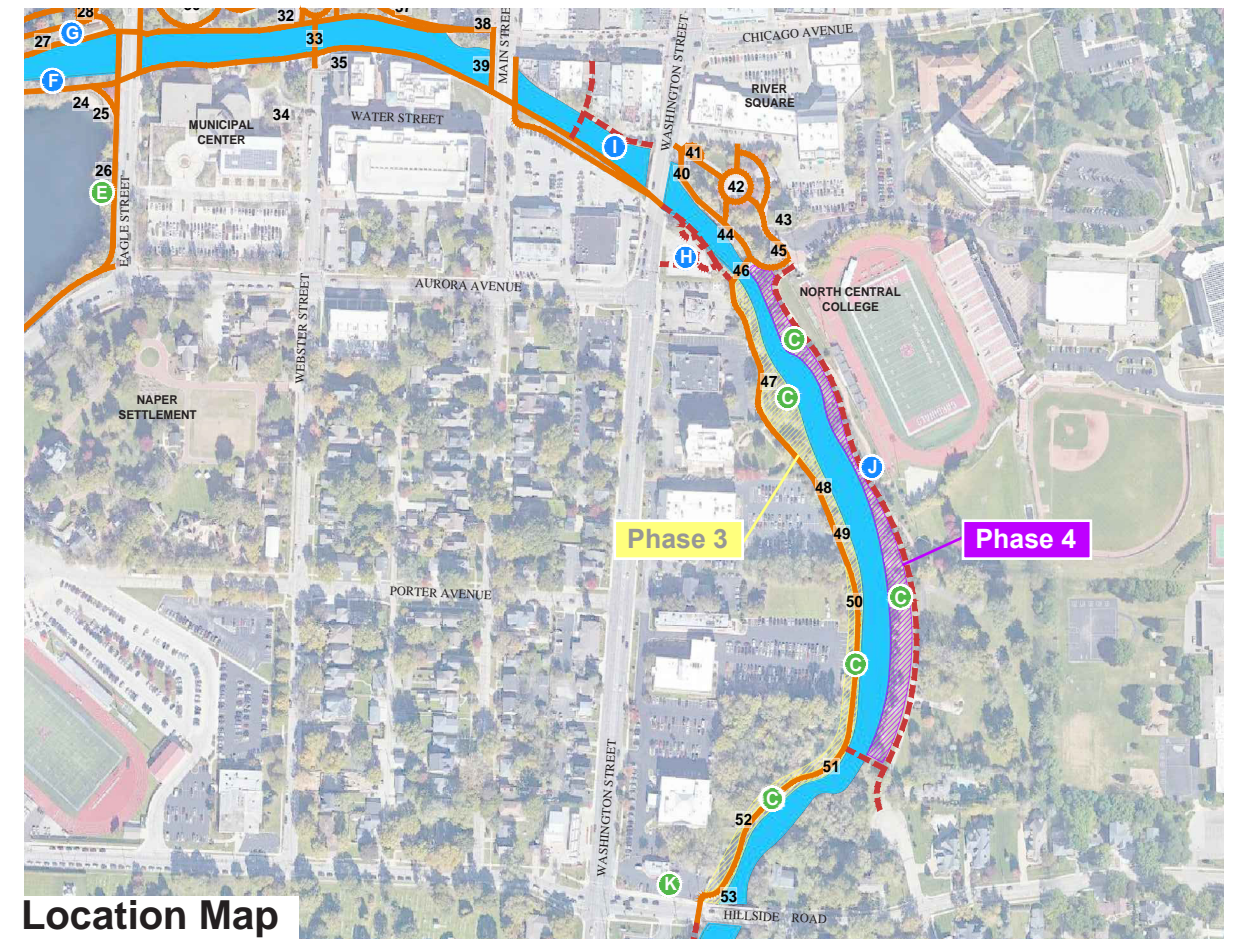
In high traffic areas, lateral connections between the upper and lower level walkways will be expanded and improved to accommodate easier vertical circulation and reduce erosion. Throughout the Riverwalk, non-native plants will be removed or limited to very restricted applications, and a more resilient landscape will be nurtured that features woody and herbaceous native plants that when fully established will be naturally attractive, improve habitat and require less intensive day-to-day maintenance. Because of its scale, riverbank restoration is ideally suited for phased implementation. Portions of Sindt Woods have already been completed.

Potential Project Cost: \$50,000 per year: 2026-2030

Anticipated Annual Maintenance Cost: \$500 - \$600 per 100’ segment



Location Map



Location Map



Conceptual Illustration

Netzley Overlook

Today

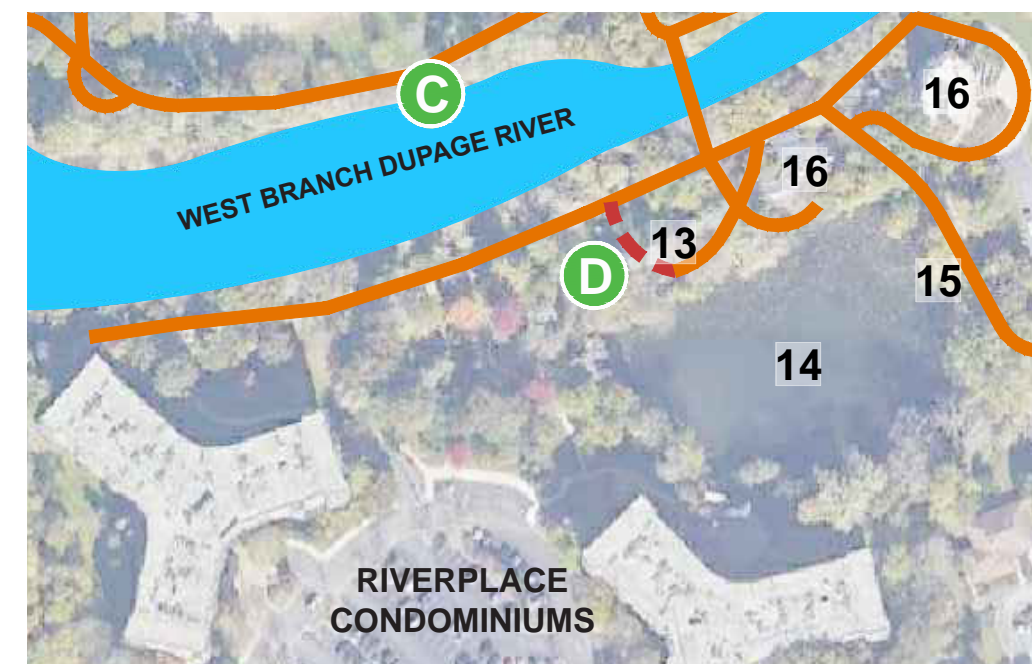
When the RiverPlace Condominiums were developed in 1988, the developer deeded the distinctive stone house (now the Carillon Visitor Center), a water body created by past quarry operations (the Little Quarry), and the property between the Little Quarry and the river to the Park District. When the Riverwalk improvements were subsequently constructed, a small plaza, perched alongside the Little Quarry, was dedicated in honor of Clyde C. Netzley, the former property owner and local businessman. The existing overlook provides an unusual and attractive vista, but it is uncomfortably small and secluded.

2031

The western portion of the overlook will be opened to the lawn and the Riverwalk path directly north of the plaza, with natural flagstone steps providing a secondary ingress/egress route to improve hospitality and circulation. The existing standard limestone walls and landscape beds will be renovated to complete and enhance the overall design, creating a more welcoming and cohesive connection between the plaza and surrounding Riverwalk open space.

Potential Project Cost: \$275,000

Anticipated Annual Maintenance Cost: \$1,290 - \$1,675



Location Map



Site Photographs



Paddleboat Quarry Overlooks

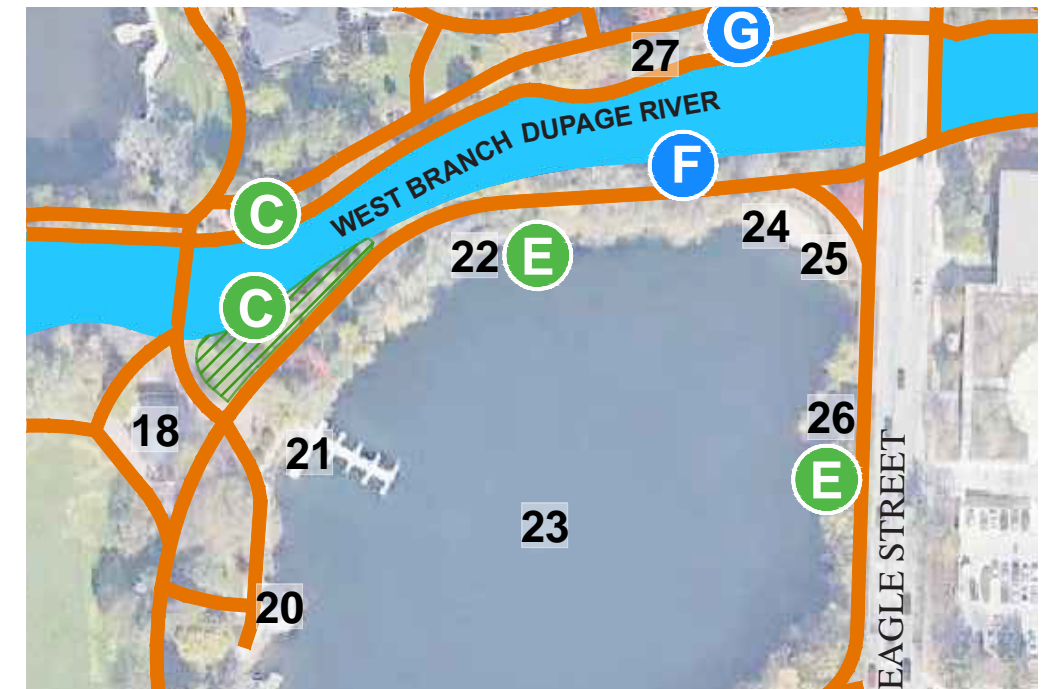
Background

One of three former stone quarries along the river, the water at the Paddleboat Quarry is enjoyed by thousands of paddleboat enthusiasts. Two small shelters, which incorporate stanchions repurposed from the downtown Metra platform, were funded by local businesses and built in 1982 to overlook the water. Despite their choice locations, the vistas from each shelter were compromised by overgrown vegetation.

Implemented

To substantially enhance the bucolic views, overgrown and invasive plants were removed, and the steep slopes were stabilized using a combination of structural and vegetative methods. The new landscape is being maintained to provide unobstructed, curated views of the Paddleboat Quarry.

Project Completed by the Park District in July 2023



Location Map



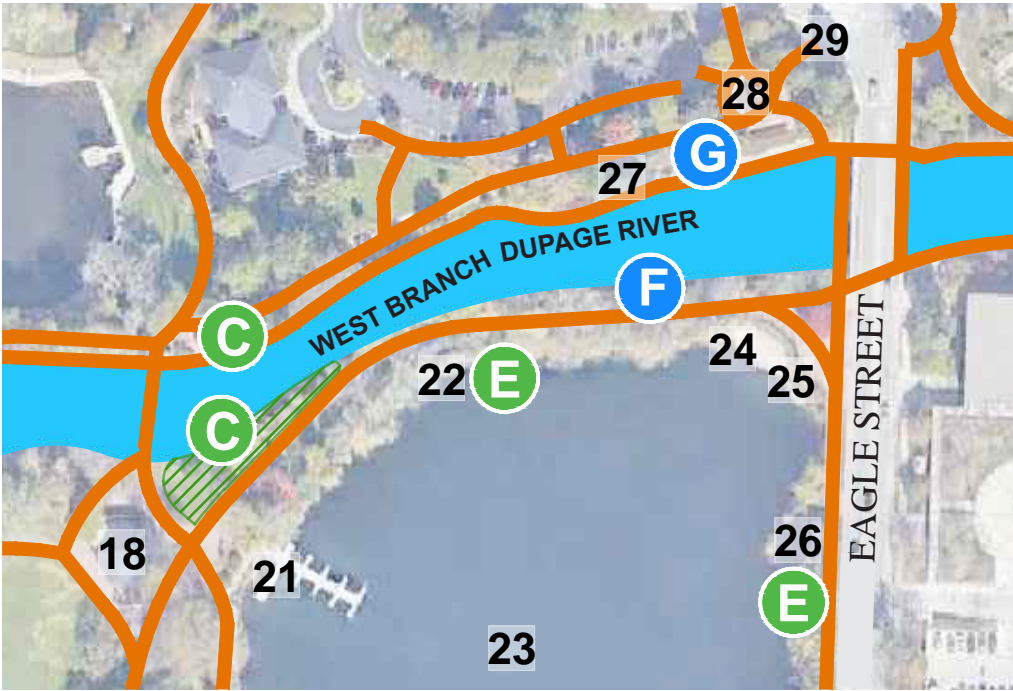
Conceptual Illustration

Eagle Street South Bank Improvements

Today
The South Bank of Eagle Street faces the newly constructed gateway and separates the Paddleboat Quarry from the West Branch DuPage River. This is one of the original components of the Naperville Riverwalk completed during the 1980s. This 361 linear foot portion of the Riverwalk is in the center of everything, with the upper walk providing views of the Landforms Sculpture, Paddleboat Quarry, Carillon, Farmers Plaza and Cliff Preston Memorial. The lower walk lacks barrier-free river level connectivity and should be rebuilt to modern standards to ensure proper width and slope for safety and ADA purposes.

2031
When complete, the vegetated slope between the upper and lower walks will be restored with native prairie species selected to enhance local biodiversity, improve soil structure, and provide natural erosion control through deep-rooted, pollinator-supportive plant communities. The lower walk will be reconstructed or replaced with appropriate bank-stabilization measures designed to increase resilience during flooding events, ensuring the long-term integrity and functionality of this prominent and historic segment of the Riverwalk.

Potential Project Cost: TBD
Anticipated Annual Maintenance Cost: TBD



Location Map



Site Photograph

Eagle Street Gateway

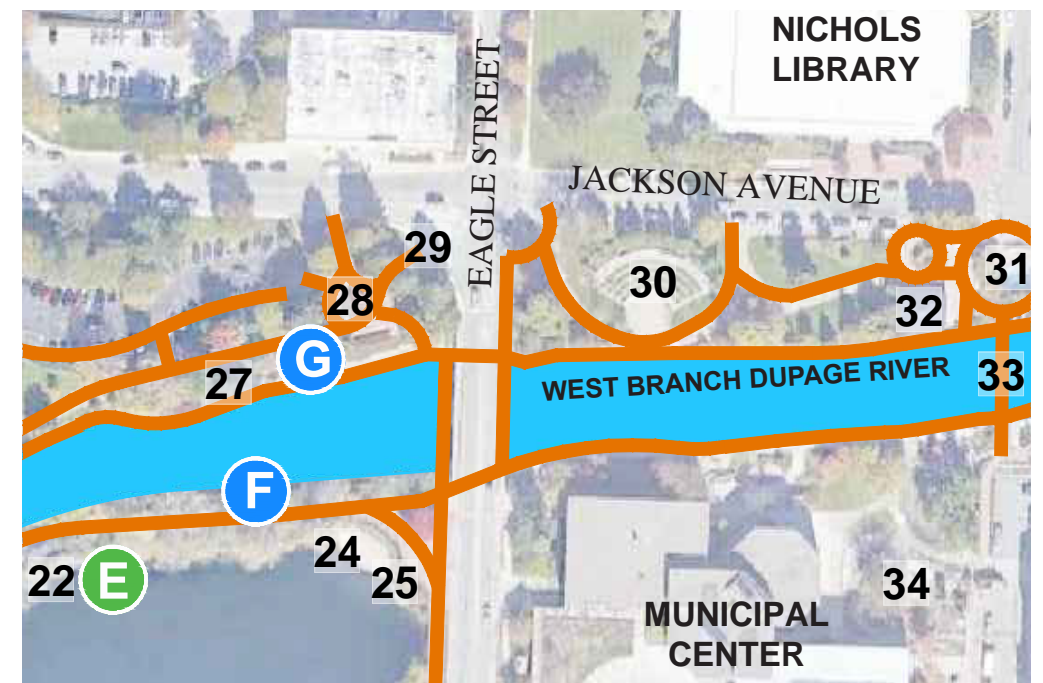
Background

Anchored by the colorful Landforms sculpture, this half-acre segment, constructed in 1982, is one of the most iconic street-level locations on the Riverwalk. Despite its signature feature, prime location, expansive 170-foot river frontage and south-facing exposure, the north riverbank lacked barrier-free street/river level connectivity and its stark appearance detracted from the ambiance of the Riverwalk. Patrons with mobility challenges who would traverse the lower bulkhead walk from east to west, would discover that they needed to retrace this 1000-foot-long dead-end to return to street level.

Implemented

The new Eagle Street Gateway does not only correct circulation shortcomings, but it has become a dramatic new Riverwalk attraction that retains its iconic sculpture and exemplifies the master planned connectivity, capacity, hospitality and appearance objectives. The stark retaining wall has been replaced with a series of broad steps and terraces, ideal for soaking up the views and sun, diagonally bisected by a spacious, gently sloping Riverwalk path gracefully connecting river and street-level paths. The striking views to and from the sculpted riverbank are enriched with swaths of native and ornamental landscaping, well-scaled stone accents and other signature Riverwalk amenities.

Project Completed in October 2025



Location Map



Design Rendering

430 South Washington Street

Today

This triangular property, along the east side of Washington Street across the river from Fredenhagen Park, was purchased by North Central College in 2011 to create a campus gateway. Since then, in close collaboration with North Central College, City of Naperville and Riverwalk officials, the site has been cleaned and plans have been finalized for construction of significant Riverwalk improvements and college monument signage. State funding has been secured and construction of the Riverwalk improvement is planned for 2026.

2031

When complete, this stunning new Riverwalk attraction will serve as a gateway to both downtown and North Central College. The elegantly sculpted riverbank, stabilized with structural and vegetative techniques, will provide panoramic views to Fredenhagen Park and the adjacent college campus. The Riverwalk path, complete with its signature amenities, will connect the river, Washington Street, Fredenhagen Park and the campus via the Moser Bridge. Complete with ornamental and native landscaping, two large plazas will showcase college history and offer visitors attractive options for relaxing, studying and socializing.

Potential Project Cost: \$2,250,000

Anticipated Annual Maintenance Cost: \$17,473 - \$22,716

430 South Washington is funded and scheduled for completion in 2026!



Location Map

Main Street to Washington Street Riverwalk

Today

A 420-foot Riverwalk connects Main Street and Washington Street along the south bank. The narrow, steeply sloped segment includes simple signature pathway improvements at the top of the bank and a concrete, river-level bulkhead walk, which provides safe, utilitarian, barrier-free connections under both the Main Street and Washington Street bridges. The privately-owned north bank, with its excellent southern exposure, is used for seasonal restaurant seating, loading and other back-of-house functions. Despite its prominence and often-discussed potential, the multiple ownership interests, structural challenges and steep grades make a public, north bank Riverwalk improvement complicated.

2031

When complete, this block-long transformation will dramatically exemplify every master plan objective and become a signature downtown attraction. The new Washington Street bridge includes river-level, below grade pedestrian crossings that will greatly improve pedestrian safety and three-dimensional hospitality at this key Riverwalk gateway. A new, mid-block pedestrian bridge and arcade connection to Chicago Avenue will amplify pedestrian connectivity. A substantial portion of the north bank will be significantly improved to include a public Riverwalk while accommodating necessary loading and other back-of-house functions. When redeveloped, the new south bank, much like its Water Street neighbor, will logically include significant upper and lower level Riverwalk improvements and special features. Both shorelines in this constrained urban segment will be stabilized with a combination of structural and vegetative solutions; stormwater will be managed through a combination of mechanical and green infrastructures. Public art, and ornamental and native landscaping will animate this segment of Riverwalk.

Potential Project Cost: \$2,000,000 - \$3,000,000

Anticipated Annual Maintenance Cost: \$15,000 - \$25,000



Conceptual Illustration South Bank facing West



Conceptual Illustration North Bank facing West



Conceptual Illustration from Chicago Avenue



Location Map



Conceptual Illustration

East Bank Riverwalk

Today

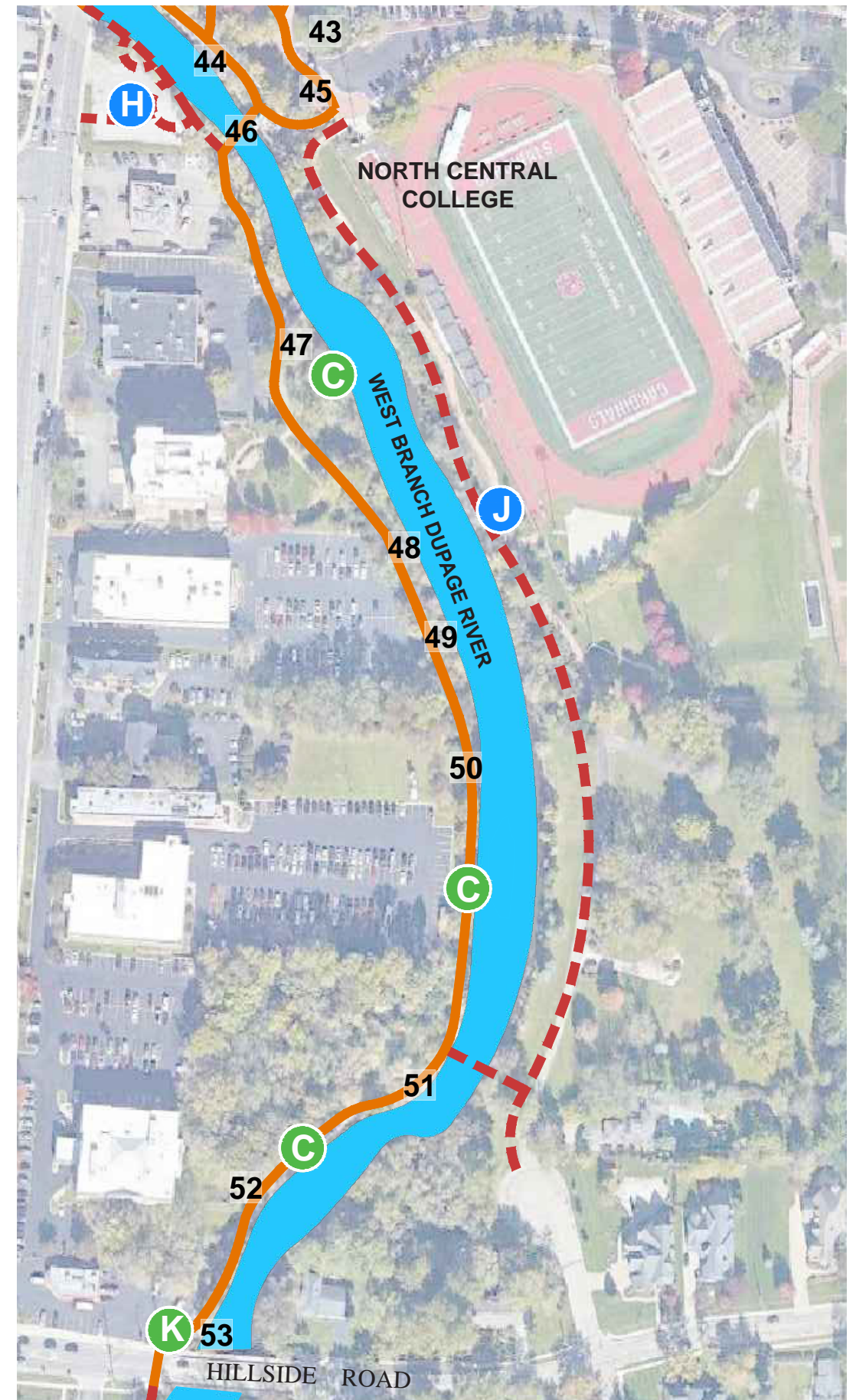
Constructed between 2000 and 2001 along the west bank of the river, the 1700-foot “East Extension” of the Riverwalk that connects the Moser Bridge to Hillside Road has no lateral connections to adjacent neighborhoods or properties. In 2012, North Central College, which owns shoreline adjacent to and south of its stadium, constructed a simple gravel path to connect its south campus gateway at Fredenhagen Park to a short cul-de-sac, Riverview Drive, near Hillside Road.

2031

This new 1400-foot segment will meet every master plan objective. When complete, it will showcase and improve exceptional natural assets, it will include traditional Riverwalk infrastructure and signature amenities, and it will feature a separate, parallel, 10-foot wide asphalt path for bicyclists. The bike path will safely extend the popular DuPage River Trail from Hillside Road to North Central College and Fredenhagen Park offering a first-of-its-kind experience for bicyclists along the Riverwalk. A new pedestrian bridge slightly north of the cul-de-sac will provide important lateral connectivity across the river and highlight a particularly attractive vista.

Potential Project Cost: \$1,200,000 - \$1,600,000

Anticipated Annual Maintenance Cost: \$14,175 - \$18,430



Location Map



Design Rendering

Hillside Road Gateway

Today

The Riverwalk currently and awkwardly terminates at Hillside Road. The trailhead, which was originally constructed in 2001, is not prominent and does not clearly convey that it is an important Riverwalk entrance. Fortunately, when the City of Naperville reconstructed the Hillside Road Bridge in 2001, they incorporated a river-level, below grade crossing, which has not yet been connected to the existing Riverwalk.

2031

The new and expanded plaza, complete with stone accents, native landscaping and other signature Riverwalk elements, will properly showcase this important gateway and provide a prominent, comfortable spot to rest and socialize. The plaza will also ramp down to the river-level/under-bridge connection to the South Gateway, facilitating safe pedestrian passage under Hillside Road.

Potential Project Cost: \$1,070,000

Anticipated Annual Maintenance Cost: \$6,718 - \$8,734



Location Map



Design Renderings

South Gateway

Today

This 1.8-acre segment includes William Friedrich Memorial Park, a City owned electric substation, and a narrow easement between the Dunkin restaurant and the river. Except for a community event sign and a narrow sidewalk, uncomfortably close to the busy street, the park is unimproved, uninviting and unused. However, because of its extensive river frontage, exposure to Washington Street (36,000 vehicles per day), proximity to the Edward Hospital Campus, and the opportunity to connect to significant Park District assets along Martin Avenue, the City officially expanded the Riverwalk boundary in 2014 to include this important riverfront.

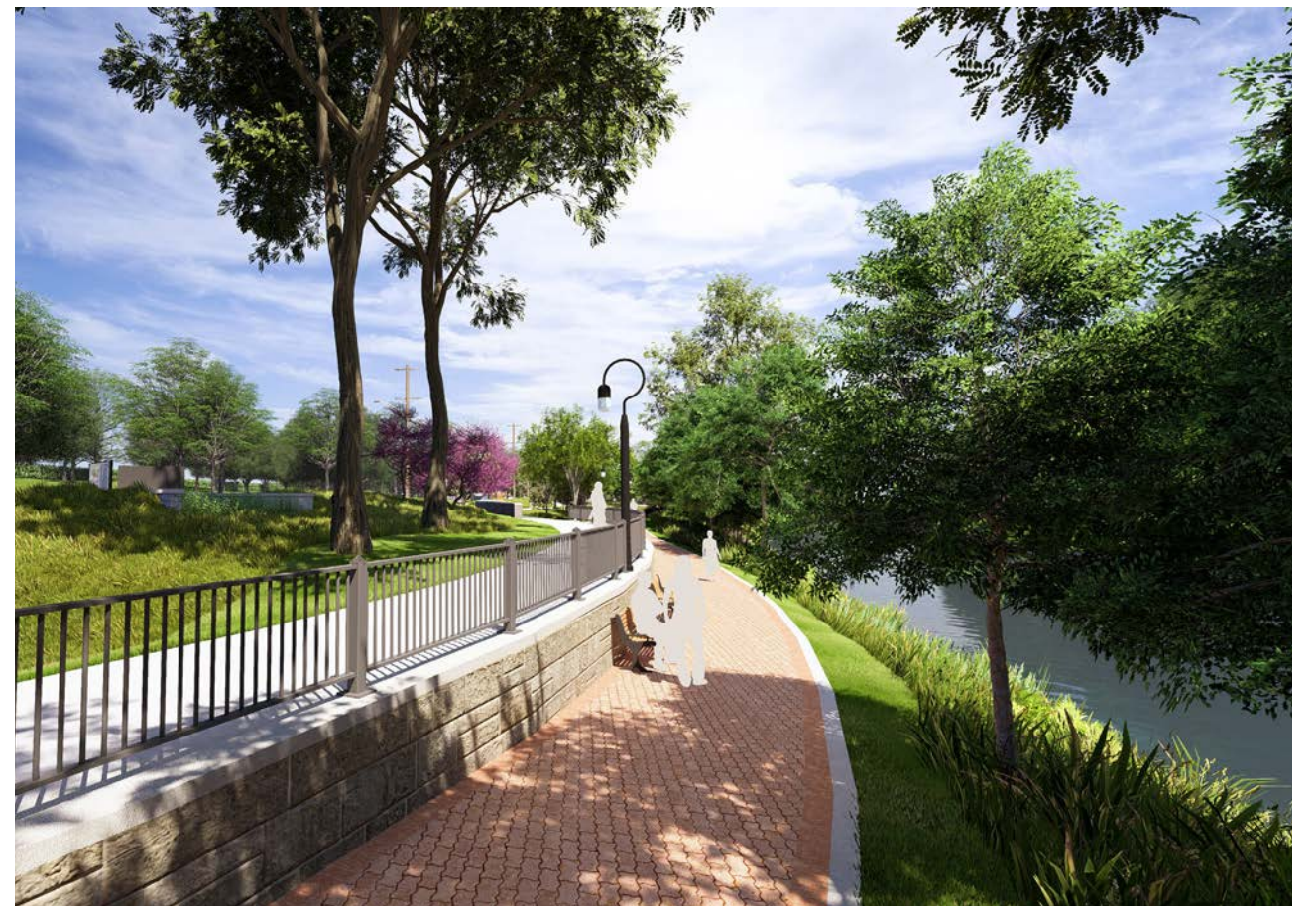
2031

When fully improved, this prominent segment will become the new South Gateway and showcase master planned ecology, connectivity, capacity, hospitality and appearance objectives. A spacious Riverwalk path will invite pedestrians to comfortably stroll from the Edward Hospital campus near Martin Avenue across a new signature pedestrian bridge/gateway feature over the existing tributary outlet, through the park, along the river, and under the Hillside Road bridge, where it will safely connect to the enhanced Hillside Road Gateway. In addition to the traditional Riverwalk amenities, the South Gateway will include a multipurpose pathway, attractive identity and informative wayfinding graphics, native landscaping, and a spacious setting for significant sculptural elements.

Potential Project Cost: \$5,150,000

Anticipated Annual Maintenance Cost: \$48,255 - \$62,731

The South Gateway is scheduled for construction in 2026!





South Gateway Aerial Rendering



Implementation

Riverwalk Evolution describes how enterprising citizens over generations captivated community spirit to create and implement incremental cultural, recreational and environmental investments uniting the residents and businesses in shared well-being. Decades of sustained efforts to enhance Centennial Park and Sesquicentennial Riverwalk demonstrate their value. **Riverwalk Today** summarizes how, thanks to systematic investment, the Naperville Riverwalk remains a treasured cultural centerpiece that requires our attention to sustain and improve it. **Riverwalk 2031 Master Plan** describes six Capital Projects and six Enhancement Projects that will correct deficiencies, seize fertile opportunities, and inspire a new generation of Riverwalk advocates and donors. This **Implementation** section describes how the Naperville Riverwalk Commission and other community leaders will execute a series of correlated engagement, endorsement, funding and construction initiatives to accomplish these ambitious and worthy goals.

Engage

The Naperville Riverwalk Commission, in collaboration with the Riverwalk Bicentennial Fund and the Riverwalk Foundation, will engage public officials, community leaders, and the next generation of Riverwalk advocates by publishing and actively promoting this Riverwalk Bicentennial Master Plan through all relevant communication channels:

- Print copies distributed to libraries and other public facilities
- Online; linked to City of Naperville, Naperville Park District, Naperville Riverwalk Foundation, Downtown Naperville Alliance, Riverwalk Bicentennial Fund, Naperville Development Partnership, Naperville Area Chamber of Commerce and other relevant websites
- In-person presentations to the Naperville Riverwalk Foundation, Naperville City Council and Naperville Park District Board of Commissioners, Downtown Advisory Commission, Downtown Naperville Alliance, Naperville Development Partnership, Naperville Area Chamber of Commerce, North Central College, Edward Hospital, Community Unit School Districts 203 and 204, local state and federal legislators, service and neighborhood organizations and adjacent property owners.
- Video presentations tailored for broadcast and streaming
- Periodic press releases

The Naperville Riverwalk Commission will actively publicize progress and celebrate noteworthy initiatives. It will also seek ways, through policy and operations, to keep past Riverwalk Commissioners and other valuable Riverwalk advocates productively engaged in this initiative.

Adopt and Endorse

This master plan was created and adopted by the Naperville Riverwalk Commission, and subsequently endorsed by both the Naperville City Council and the Naperville Park District Board of Commissioners.

The Naperville Riverwalk Commission will also actively advocate the Riverwalk 2031 Master Plan honoring Naperville's Bicentennial with the Downtown Advisory Commission, Downtown Naperville Alliance, Naperville Development Partnership, Naperville Area Chamber of Commerce, North Central College, Edward Hospital, Community Unit School Districts 203 and 204, local state and federal legislators, service and neighborhood organizations and adjacent property owners.

Fund

In 1981, most of the funding for the design and construction of the original (Main Street to Eagle Street) Riverwalk came from private sector donations of cash and in-kind services. Since then, Riverwalk funding has come from Naperville taxpayers and from private sector donors, channeled through the Naperville Riverwalk Foundation, an independent 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation. The Water Street segment, constructed in 2017, was built by a private developer using Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and enhanced through generous private sector contributions. Future Capital and Enhancement Projects can be funded through a creative combination of public appropriations, state and federal grants, and the same kind of private sector philanthropy that underscored the early success of the Riverwalk.

Recently, many of the most significant new riverfronts and parks in the United States, have been largely (sometimes exclusively) funded by individual, corporate and institutional donors, which like the early Naperville Riverwalk, provides increased creative flexibility and returns on investment. Similarly, the new Capital and Enhancement Projects are ideal candidates for private philanthropy, and the Riverwalk Bicentennial Fund, a 501c3 corporations, has been established to be the conduit for both large and small-scale charitable contributions.

Regardless of the funding source, goal alignment and project readiness are crucial factors when soliciting both public and private sector funds. Funding partners are far more likely to support so called "shovel ready" projects that meet their individual or organizational interests because they create and help sustain momentum for all parties.

Construct

Part of the Naperville Riverwalk's early success stemmed from the simple fact that it had consistent momentum – generated through a series of incremental construction projects that each had a distinctive personality and well publicized purpose. Similarly, the Naperville Riverwalk Commission will actively promote construction of the both the Capital and Enhancement Projects systematically and incrementally, until complete.

Project readiness and demonstrable accomplishments will increase the potential for both private and public sector funding. To generate valuable momentum, the Naperville Riverwalk Commission will systematically advance the design and engineering of the Enhancement projects to promote, fund and construct as many of them as possible.

Simultaneously, to increase exposure and funding opportunities, they will initiate the design of Capital Projects, as these more complex projects will often take considerable time to fund, design, engineer and permit.

Some Capital Projects, like the south bank of the Main Street to Washington Street Riverwalk, will be directly correlated with redevelopment of the adjacent property, and consequently, must wait for the right opportunity. And when that opportunity arises, the Naperville Riverwalk Commission will actively encourage City leaders to act decisively to engage the property owner/developer and accomplish the objectives and standards outlined in this Riverwalk 2031 Master Plan.

Regardless of the timing, type or scale of the project, the Naperville Riverwalk Commission will follow rigorous planning, design and construction standards that are:

- *Collaborative* (includes adjacent property owners, other stakeholders and organizations in the planning, design and construction and funding process)
- *Respectful* (of natural, structural and fiscal resources, and diverse stakeholders)
- *Fiscally prudent* (considers construction and maintenance costs including asset useful life)
- *Healthy* (comfortable, clean and safe, promotes positive physical and mental well-being)
- *Attractive* (engaging, stimulating, properly maintained)
- *Distinctive* (differentiated from other riverwalks)
- *Barrier-free* (accessible by all)
- *Sustainable* (environmentally, economically, culturally)

Emphasis on new Capital and Enhancement Projects will not be at the expense of existing assets. The Naperville Riverwalk Commission will collaborate with the City of Naperville and the Naperville Park District, through their intergovernmental agreement, to continue to maintain and rehabilitate, when necessary, the existing Riverwalk assets, consistent with the Riverwalk Asset Management Plan.

Update

These implementation initiatives are not intended to be rigidly linear or sequential. In fact, Riverwalk leaders should periodically review progress, update the Riverwalk 2031 Master Plan, and be prepared to adjust to unanticipated opportunities and challenges, just as they have done throughout the history of the Riverwalk.

