



RIVER EDGE MASTER PLAN

JUNE, 1995

*A Plan for Enhancing Public Use and Enjoyment
of the Wisconsin River in the City of Wausau*

*Adopted by: River Edge Commission, on May 22, 1995
City Plan Commission, on May 25, 1995
Wausau Common Council, on June 13, 1995*

CITY OF WAUSAU

407 Grant Street
Wausau, WI 54403

RESOLUTION: River Edge Commission and Plan Commission
Re: Adoption of River Edge Master Plan

FILE NO. 95-0617

Introduced June 13, 1995

Referred

Reported Back

Adopted June 13, 1995

Other

Committee Action

Plan Comm. Approved 5-0

River Edge Comm. Approved

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the River Edge Commission was created to study, prepare and implement proposals, plans and recommendations for the Wisconsin River; and

WHEREAS, the River Edge Commission has prepared a Master Plan for enhancing public use and enjoyment of the Wisconsin River in the City of Wausau; and


WHEREAS, said plan was carefully developed over a period of several years with substantial input from citizens, local businesses, and government agencies and officials; and

WHEREAS, the River Edge Commission recommended adoption of this plan at its May 22, 1995 meeting; and

WHEREAS, at its May 25, 1995 meeting, the City Plan Commission completed its review and adopted said River Edge Master Plan as a component of the City Master Plan as authorized under Wisconsin Statute Section 62.23; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the Common Council of the City of Wausau hereby certifies adoption of the River Edge Master Plan as a component of the City's Master Plan.

Approved:



John D. Hess, Mayor

Prepared by:
Joe Pribich

cjs428

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NOTE: The initial draft of this plan was prepared by Joe Pribanich, City Planner, with review assistance by Phil Valitchka, River Edge Commission Chairperson, and Bill Duncanson and Peter Knotek, Wausau/Marathon County Park Department.

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RIVER EDGE MASTER PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION

This report is intended to identify long and short-term strategies for improving public access to the City's most important natural resource—the Wisconsin River. This Master Plan provides a framework for protecting and enhancing the scenic beauty of the river corridor and outlines activities, programs and projects that improve the public's ability to enjoy this resource. Thus, this master plan addresses many management and use issues related to the Wisconsin River, with a focus on continuing development of a river edge parkway. This parkway will link the parks located along the river, improve pedestrian and bicycle transportation facilities, and enhance recreational opportunities.

This plan was drafted by the City Planning Office and the Wausau River Edge Commission. The recommendations contained herein are intended to protect and enhance our community's river. Most center on continued development of a river edge parkway along both banks of the Wisconsin River. Other recommendations have been developed which, if implemented, would improve the scenic quality of the river corridor through enhancement of the view of the river and protect natural features and vegetation as well as improve management of man-made structures. Surface water use recommendations are also presented in this plan to identify safety concerns and potential water user conflicts on Lake Wausau and other sections of the river.

To provide a conceptual framework for this planning effort, a vision was developed of what the Wisconsin River corridor might be like in 20 to 30 years. This vision is described below:

The corridor would be that portion of the City bordering both banks of the Wisconsin River, up to three city blocks deep in some cases, set off by purpose and design to make the natural resource its most important element and feature. An overall impression is that the natural qualities, expressed through trees, vegetation and both visual and physical access to the water, stand out.

Building development fits in and complements the natural elements. Some centrally located commercial properties have been converted to public ownership. Manufacturing and some commercial properties have evolved to retail and professional office enterprises and housing.

Central to the concept is a web of walkways, a network that reaches from City limit to City limit through the corridor and along the river wherever physically possible, including across bridges and islands. The walkway network is a transportation alternative allowing bicycle, pedestrian and other non-motorized modes of travel access to and from residential and commercial segments throughout the corridor and connects existing parks along the river edge. This walkway or parkway brings people to the river corridor.

A new central downtown bridge brings people to a view of the new Library and Wausau Century development. Recently landscaped and remodeled County buildings compliment the entryway on the south. A segment of the parkway reaches from the heart of downtown at Oak Island all the way north along the river to Gilbert Park on the east side. Another high-bank, parkway segment brings people from northwest residences near Schofield Park to Bridge Street on the west side. Renovation and relocation plans are being implemented for both sides of the river edge between Scott Street and Bridge Street, the river corridor's commercial heart.

To bring this vision into reality, expansion of the parkway should be the central focus for public and/or private expenditures within the corridor. Generally speaking, development of walkway segments should

proceed in a planned manner with minimum capital costs until segments can be linked or terminated at logical points such as bridge crossings or intersections with arterial streets. To do so, acquisition of land along the river corridor must be the top priority. After land is purchased, it can be developed at any time; however, delay in land acquisition could result in the establishment of a use that is not compatible with the walkway. For example, a large commercial or manufacturing building might be constructed right on the river bank which would prevent or severely hamper linking two sections of the walkway.

This plan is intended to be a dynamic document that is reviewed by City officials and staff as land use and development activities proceed within the river corridor. Where necessary and deemed to be in the public interest, the plan should be modified to reflect changing conditions, general changes in the public's attitude toward the programs, projects, and recommendations in this plan and to capitalize on technological and funding opportunities.

This report was developed over a period of several years by the River Edge Commission with substantial input from many private and public interests. However, certain elements of the plan have been worked on by City officials, community service organizations, and dedicated individuals for decades. This plan is an attempt to document the widespread community interest in our Wisconsin River and detail some of the efforts that need to be put forth to improve it.

A draft of this Master Plan was completed in March, 1995 and distributed to many agencies and organizations including: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wausau's State Senator, Wausau Volunteer Exchange, Wausau/Marathon County Park Department, City Plan Commission, UW-Extension Agent, City Capital Improvements and Street Maintenance Committee, Wausau Daily Herald, City Pages, Citizens Advisory Committee for Long-Range Planning, and several property owners along the river. In addition, a public informational meeting was held on May 8, 1995 to solicit other comments. As a result of this review, the Commission made numerous revisions which improved the draft plan.

This report describes some of the past planning and development efforts of the community as well as the River Edge Commission's visions, goals, and recommendations for improved public use of the resource. The Park Commission has adopted this plan and the City Plan Commission has reviewed and adopted the plan as a component of the City's Master Plan. The Common Council certified the Plan Commission's action on June 13, 1995.

This report is arranged to provide background information on the River Edge Commission's recommendations, presents a detailed program for expanding the river edge parkway, and suggests a brief action program for carrying out some of these recommendations.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historical Perspective

Historically, the Wisconsin River has been the focus of many cultural, economic and social activities. Native Americans, fur traders and loggers used the river for transportation. Later, saw mills relied on the river for power as well as moving logs and finished products to markets. As the sawmills were replaced by paper mills, the transportation use diminished and the river became a source for hydroelectric power. A by-product of commercial and residential development was the discharge of pollution to the river.

Throughout most of the river's history, it provided sport and recreational opportunities for the people who lived along its banks. However, when pollution reached extremely high levels in the 1950's and 1960's, residents were repelled by dirty water and noxious odors. Few sought out the river for recreation. After the paper mills and municipalities developed pollution abatement systems in the late 1960's and early 1970's and water quality showed dramatic improvement, interest in the river's recreational potential returned. Out of this interest, the City established the Wausau River Edge Commission in 1974. The ordinance creating the Commission identified the following purpose:

The Commission shall study the river within the City, with particular emphasis on its immediate edge and islands. The Commission shall include in its studies present and projected future uses of the river within the City, including but not limited to industrial, mercantile, recreational and aesthetic.

It shall, after such study, prepare and where permitted by law implement its proposals, plans and recommendations for the river.

In establishing the Commission's duties, the Common Council made an important observation about the river which is noteworthy:

"The Common Council finds the river to be a natural resource of great value, present and future, to the City and its citizens."

Thus, formal groundwork for focusing more extensive municipal attention on the importance of the Wisconsin River was established in 1974.

Wausau has historically shown a strong interest in providing public use areas adjacent to the Wisconsin River. Prior to creation of the River Edge Commission, the City of Wausau or Marathon County Park Commission had responsibility for public recreational and public access improvements to the river. Both were responsible for overseeing the establishment and development of many of the most important parks and recreational facilities with frontage on the Wisconsin River. (See Table I). Many of these parks will provide parkway user facilities and offer recreational opportunities for parkway users. These parks will be the activity nodes that will be linked by the river edge parkway. For example, some of these parks have drinking water and toilet facilities that could be used by people walking on the parkway trail. Conversely, the picnickers in these parks will have an opportunity to engage in another activity as part of their outdoor recreation experience—walking on the parkway trail.

Since the mid 1970's a number of conceptual and some detailed plans have been prepared for public and private sector enhancement of short sections of the river edge area. Several of these efforts are briefly discussed below:

- In the mid 1970's, conceptual plans were prepared by the Wausau/Marathon County Park Department for recreational development along part of the river edge in the Central Business District including Barker-Stewart Island. Contrary to what will eventually follow in this report, these early ideas suggested intensive recreational development and use of Barker-Stewart Island.
- As a follow-up to the Barker-Stewart Island proposal, in 1974 the City Community Development Department requested federal funds to develop a bicycle trail along the river edge from Bridge Street south to Washington Street. This conceptual plan, although not funded by the federal government, stimulated further discussion about the possibilities for establishing pedestrian and/or bicycle facilities along the river edge which would connect many of the extensive public use areas such as the City's parks which are located along the river.
- In 1978, a comprehensive program was initiated for development of the downtown Wausau kayak course. Since completion of the plan, the course has been upgraded on a continuous basis with improvements to the hydrologic resource as well as the adjacent facilities for spectators and pedestrians. This effort has involved several community service organizations and private firms such as the Wausau Kayak/Canoe Corporation and Wisconsin Public Service Corporation.
- In the City's Comprehensive Park and Recreation Area Plan which was adopted by the Common Council in December, 1990, the following background information and several recommendations regarding river edge use for recreational purposes are made:

City officials and local interest groups, including the River Edge Commission and Wausau Kayak/Canoe Corporation, have encouraged further development of the River's resources for public use. Several goals of the public use program that have been identified include:

- (A) *Linking the various publicly owned lands along the River by way of a walking and/or bicycling trail system. This system would allow pedestrians, joggers, and possibly bicyclists to enjoy the scenery of the water and not have to compete with motor vehicles when travelling along the River or enjoying its shores.*
- (B) *Acquiring additional property along the River to accommodate major public use events, better distribute public use along the River's shore lands and abutting areas, and provide a wider range of recreational activities in the area.*
- (C) *Improve the aesthetics of the shore lands and Wausau Central Business District by maintaining or converting shore areas into urban green space.*
- (D) *Helping to maintain surface water quality by keeping the banks in a vegetated, park land condition.*
- (E) *Managing certain portions of the River and Lake Wausau for specific types of recreation activities.*

In the mid-1970's, the City developed a plan for constructing a jogging/pedestrian/bicycle facility along the river banks from Bridge Street south to Thomas Street. This project was also reviewed by the River's Edge Commission and discussed extensively by various civic and special interest groups within the community. Only one segment of the trail has been completed, from Thomas Street north to Washington Street on the east banks. Currently, the City is in the process of acquiring property which abuts the river from Washington Street north to Franklin Street. Most of this area is owned by the railroad companies which serve Wausau. This additional property will provide improved user and viewing facilities for the City's kayaking course as well as extending the trail system north approximately 1800 feet.

There are a number of other opportunities along the river bank for continuing development of the trail system and expanding park opportunities. One involves the Able Distributing Company property which is located north of Washington Street, along the east channel. The City has shown its commitment to improving access to the River and the scenic quality of the area by purchasing this blighted property and scheduling it for demolition.

Initially, the City should pursue acquisition or easements for a 60-100 foot wide strip of land along the river's edge from Bridge Street south to Thomas Street on either side of the river. The ultimate trail system would continue farther north to Gilbert Park and south to Wausau Municipal Airport. In some places, especially on the west side of the river near Prangeway and the Wisconsin Public Service Corporation's hydro-electric dam, steep slopes will probably prevent development of the trail. However, on the eastern banks of the river there are abundant opportunities for land acquisition and development. It is important to take advantage of these opportunities before they are lost to alternative land uses.

North of the Wisconsin Public Service Corporation's dam, the City will need assistance in acquiring land for developing the pedestrian/bicycle way along the river's edge. Again, Wisconsin Public Service Corporation could provide assistance in this endeavor. Benches, fishing piers, and pedestrian bridges to the Barker-Stewart Island could be developed with the assistance of Wisconsin Public Service Corporation. A plan for overall acquisition and development of the shoreline area should be developed and completed in 1991.

In addition to the trail system, the potential for swimming areas on the river should be carefully investigated. This need has been identified by area residents as well as local officials. The City should work with Park Department staff, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources personnel, the University of Wisconsin Extension, and private consultants, if necessary, to identify feasible locations for swimming beaches along the Wisconsin River and Lake Wausau. Although current can be a concern in the river, public beach facilities are located along the Wisconsin River at Council Grounds State Park and in the Eau Claire River at Eau Claire Dells County Park and Big Sandy County Park. It is important to identify and secure public ownership of these potential swimming areas as soon as possible before they are put to alternative uses.

It may be desirable to limit or restrict high speed boat traffic in certain segments of the River such as the portion upstream from the Wisconsin Public Service Corporation dam. This area could be used for passive boating, canoeing, fishing and other on-water activities that do not interface well with power boats. This issue should be further studied and public input should be solicited."

- In October 1992 the River Edge Commission executed a plan to clean up the river banks north of Big Bull Falls. Over 700 people volunteered time and efforts on Saturday, October 26, to collect litter and other debris. At the time of this clean-up, Wisconsin Public Service Corporation had lowered the water level behind the hydro-electric dam to natural stream flow levels. This allowed volunteers to gain access to many previously inaccessible parts of the river banks. Thus, not only were the river banks cleaned but litter from the bottom of the river was also removed.

Some participants in the effort were asked to complete a survey about the clean-up program and other riverfront issues. A summary of the survey results is in Appendix III. Overall, the clean-up project was categorized as a tremendous success.

The reservoir drawdown also provided insight into how much public use a river edge parkway might generate. During the weeks that the water levels were lowered, children and adults could often be observed in the evening and on weekends walking along the exposed river bottom, enjoying the new, but temporary, area exposed for public use.

Current River Edge Commission Planning

As discussed earlier, the River Edge Commission was created to prepare plans and make recommendations for use of the river corridor. In early 1991 the Commission adopted the following mission and vision statements and were later adopted by the Common Council in July, 1991:

Mission Statement—It is the mission of the Wausau River Edge Commission to maximize the aesthetic and natural benefits of the Wisconsin River edge in the City through study, planning and cooperative programs with all public and private interests for recreation and other uses.

Vision Statement—The Wisconsin River edge in the City of Wausau will be a showplace of natural beauty for public enjoyment with a system of walks, recreation areas, and commercial sites which utilize the natural resources and beauty of the river and its islands; it will be aesthetically pleasing, ecologically and environmentally sound and safe; it will provide enjoyment to area citizens and visitors and profit the City; the river edge will attract tourists and increase the value of the river corridor and surrounding areas.

Presently, the Commission's most important goal is to establish a river edge parkway from City limit to City limit on both sides of the Wisconsin River wherever physically possible.

Other goals include:

- Bring people back to the river for recreation and other benefits.
- Participate cooperatively with others developing compatible river related projects.
- Complete development of master plan.

- Complete development of a 20 to 50-year vision for the river corridor.

The most recent parkway development has occurred on the east side where construction of the demonstration segment from White Water Park to Oak Island Park was completed in 1993. Cooperatively, the Wausau/Marathon County Park Department, Wausau Community Development Authority and River Edge Commission have engaged other City departments and community interests to begin improving segments of the river corridor in the Central Business District. These activities have stimulated renewed public interest in river space planning, parkway planning and development, and have demonstrated the magnitude of success that can be realized when diverse interests cooperate for a common goal.

Plan Process

Preparation of the River Edge Master Plan began with gathering information, presenting ideas, and asking for public comment. The Commission reviewed and analyzed numerous options for river corridor development since it was created and this plan emerges from those early meetings and discussions and most recently, since 1990 when the Commission renewed its planning efforts.

In October, 1991, the River Edge Commission held a public forum to solicit ideas and input on development of a Master Plan for the River Corridor. In addition to the Commission members, 35 people attended the meeting and provided valuable ideas for improving the natural assets of the river, as well as public access. Comments from the people attending the meeting were very positive about the Commission's efforts to develop a river edge trail system for public use. A number of comments suggested that the trail be used for multiple purposes to include walking, bicycling, cross country skiing in the winter, jogging, and even rollerblading. Attached as Appendix I are the minutes from this meeting.

At the time of this forum, the Wausau Daily Herald wrote an editorial about the Commission's vision for the riverfront and asked residents in the community to provide their views. Twelve written comments regarding this vision were received by the Herald and forwarded to the Commission for its review. These comments are reproduced in Appendix II.

An important concern that was raised by several individuals is the compatibility of bicycles and pedestrians on the same walkway. This issue will be addressed in the design standards section of the plan where a paved surface wide enough for good visibility and joint use by bicyclists and pedestrians is recommended for construction.

Master Plan Goals

The purpose of this study was to document the activities and facilities needed to enhance the river corridor. To guide this process and other public and private sector activities that might influence the public's use and enjoyment of the river edge, the Commission identified a number of goals that should be considered as the public and private sectors carry on activities that might influence the river edge. It is hoped that these goals will be reviewed and consulted when issues that might effect the river arise and attempt to resolve these matters in a way that the public's use of the river edge is enhanced.

The following goals regarding the river edge are an important integral part of this master plan and should be considered by the City Plan Commission, Common Council, City, and State and Federal agencies when undertaking activities related to the river edge:

Goal #1: Enhance the public's ability to gain visual and physical access to the Wisconsin River.

Goal #2: Improve the scenic quality and ecological diversity of the river corridor.

Goal #3: Encourage land use practices which contribute to the natural and aesthetic values of the Wisconsin River.

Goal #4: Encourage a balance between active and passive recreational uses within the river edge area.

Goal #5: Segregate surface water uses that create user conflicts or pose excessive safety risks.

Goal #6: Establish Barker-Stewart Island and other island as nature conservancy areas with passive public uses if appropriate.

III. PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The following activity, program and project recommendations are being made in an effort to support accomplishment of the goals listed above and to meet the needs and capitalize on the opportunities uncovered during the plan preparation process. These recommendations provide a framework for creating a river edge environment that supports the Commission's overall long-term vision for enhancing public use of the Wisconsin River.

- (1) Continue to develop the river edge parkway for recreation and where appropriate, transportation purposes:

- A. Development of the river edge corridor should incorporate features which would add to its scenic, cultural, historic and recreational variety. For example, historic markers and memorials would add to the interest and variety.

Parkway design should allow for use by walkers, joggers and cross country skiers. No motorized recreational vehicles should be allowed on the parkway. In areas of low pedestrian use, use by persons with rollerblades may be appropriate if physical and structural constraints do not pose a safety problem.

Bicycle traffic should be encouraged especially where the walkway provides a safer alternative than existing corridors. For example, crossing the Wisconsin River by way of Barker-Stewart Island may be much safer than via Bridge Street or Stewart Avenue. On these bridges, where space is at a premium, pedestrians will need the right-of-way. Signs should be placed telling bicyclists to yield/slow/walk around pedestrians.

Where use conflicts might develop, use by pedestrians and joggers should be given a higher priority than bicycles and rollerbladers. To avoid such conflicts in high traffic areas such as downtown, a 12-foot wide paved area should be developed where possible. Through education, signs and enforcement of rules, bicyclists will need to adopt courteous behaviors on the parkway. For example, speed limits may need to be developed, horns may be required equipment, and cyclists may be forced to ride single file on one side of the parkway.

- B. Where appropriate, the river edge parkway should be a component of the City or metropolitan area transportation system. The parkway should be integrated into a bicycle and pedestrian network which supports linkages to mass transit facilities and automobile modes of travel. The parkway should stimulate modes of travel which are an alternative to automobile use.
- C. In the long run, some of the facilities and programs developed for the Wisconsin River edge corridor should be considered for extension to the Eau Claire River, Big Rib River and Jim Moore Creek areas. Along these waterways, hiking trails may be a more appropriate use. In addition, the parkway should be linked to the planned Mountain Bay Trail in eastern Marathon County and to other City and County bike routes where appropriate.

- (2) In order to protect the public health, safety and welfare, the Common Council should establish a policy and adopt official map amendments which will require that new buildings or additions to existing buildings along the river edge be constructed with adequate setback from the high water mark of the river to allow for development of the parkway. Generally, this setback will provide an

adequate amount of relatively flat land to allow for construction of a hard-surfaced travelway between eight and twelve feet wide. In addition, side clearance space of three to four feet on either side of the hard-surfaced area will be needed for safety reasons.

As discussed in several other sections of this report, in some river edge locations buildings have been constructed close to the bank which makes it very difficult or impossible to establish the river edge parkway between the building and the river bank. For example, the building currently occupied by Marathon Box Company is located on the river edge and will pose an obstacle to parkway development. Reserving a strip of land now will keep buildings out of the area needed for the parkway and facilitate the acquisition or dedication of land or easements necessary to construct the river edge parkway.

- (3) Land adjacent to the river for parkway development should be acquired by the City or accepted through dedication or donation. Use easements for the parkway are not as desirable since the City does not have complete control of the property. If, however, suitable long-term easements can be obtained from a property owner at no cost to the City, this may be a suitable means of obtaining area for the parkway. In either case, care must be exercised to insure that land for the parkway does not present the City with a liability problem due to contaminated soil or groundwater.
- (4) Removal of vegetation adjacent to the river edge corridor should be closely regulated to protect the public interests related to reducing soil and stream bank erosion and maintaining or improving the scenic quality of the river resource. Protecting vegetation will improve the river's scenic quality for pedestrians, people in watercraft on the river, and motorists crossing the river on one of its three bridges. An ordinance should be considered for adoption which could be similar to the State's shoreland protection requirements in rural areas contained in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Administrative Rule NR115. This rule stipulates that, "In the strip of land 30 feet wide inland from the ordinary high water mark, no more than 30 feet in any 100 feet shall be clear cut." The City's ordinance would need to address issues such as establishing and maintaining a landscape theme for the river edge; granting variances from the ordinance which are deemed to be in the public interest; and allowing for the reintroduction and expansion of native species such as white pine trees.

Since vegetation is such an important natural element of the river edge experience, a good deal of thought and effort should be devoted to the development and enforcement of this type of ordinance.

The ordinance should provide enough flexibility to allow for clearing areas where scenic vistas are desirable for parkway users or in redevelopment areas of the Central Business District. For example, along the river bank where a hotel/civic center is proposed, minimizing the amount of vegetation should improve the view from these facilities. In other places along the parkway river bank, it may be desirable to remove all vegetation in order to construct a stone or masonry wharf for fishing and other activities.

- (5) Private sector participation will be an important ingredient in many phases of implementation of this master plan. Commercial interests should be contacted to discuss development of retail facilities which draw upon the river corridor's natural values as an attraction. Residential uses would also be compatible with the natural features of the river and could help stimulate related commercial activity such as restaurant and grocery store development.
- (6) Barker-Stewart Island and other undeveloped islands in the river should be maintained as green space areas and wildlife sanctuaries with limited public access and use. The existing developed portions of Isle of Ferns, Picnic Island and Clark Island should continue to be used for relatively intensive

outdoor recreation activities. Keeping development at a minimum on islands will enhance the available wildlife habitat and improve the scenic quality of the area by providing green spaces for parkway users, boaters, and others able to view the river.

Due to its size and ecological diversity, it may be desirable to construct a rustic, vandal-proof interpretive center on Barker-Stewart Island. This center could provide educational exhibits related to the river's ecology as well as the City's historic development.

- (7) South of the Wausau hydro dam, Lake Wausau should be managed and regulated for many diverse water recreation uses including power boats, water skiing, fishing, sail boarding, and personal watercraft. As conflicts between these uses escalate, creative management and regulatory programs will be needed to provide an acceptable recreation experience and protect the public safety. For example, jet skiers and fishermen generally do not get along well. Similarly, power boaters and sailboard operators in close proximity can create safety problems and diminish the quality of the recreation experience.

North of the hydro dam, which includes the water north of Gilbert Park, regulations should emphasize water uses of a more passive nature such as fishing, canoeing and kayaking. Reduced speed limits and low horsepower boating should be integrated into a management plan for this section of the river. In this area, the river is quite narrow and there are a number of rock hazards just under the surface of the water. Both of these conditions present safety hazards for river users traveling at a high rate of speed. In addition, wave action from high powered boats results in considerable shoreline erosion and water quality degradation in this area.

- (8) Consideration should be given to development of an ordinance which would govern building activity in the river edge corridor. Similar to the Historic Landmark Commission ordinance, the Common Council could adopt special building design regulations within a certain area along the river to insure that public utilities, billboards, outside storage areas, parking lots, fences, new and remodeled buildings, and other structures do not unnecessarily detract from the scenic resources of the river corridor.
- (9) A Wisconsin Public Service Corporation utility corridor north to the City of Merrill may provide an excellent opportunity for extending the river edge parkway north into Lincoln County. In the rural area, this facility would probably be more readily accessible and used by people on bicycles and snowmobiles. It would, however, provide an excellent extension of the City's facility and could attract tourists and avid bicyclists from throughout Wisconsin and other states. The utility corridor is located on the east side of the Wisconsin River adjacent to the Wisconsin Central Ltd. railroad line. Planning for this extended pedestrian/bicycle facility should continue to be coordinated by the Wausau/Marathon County Park Commission. Since this is a large project, interests from Lincoln County, the City of Merrill, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the City of Wausau should be encouraged to cooperate in planning this project.
- (10) Similar to the preceding discussion, the Wausau/Marathon County Park Commission should be contacted to consider linkages that might be made between the Mountain Bay Trail in eastern Marathon County and the City's river edge parkway. The Mountain Bay Trail will be established for bicycling and other recreational pursuits on a former railroad grade. It will extend from the Town of Weston in Marathon County to just west of Green Bay. The total length of the trail is almost 84 miles. One of the objectives identified in the Mountain Bay Trail Master Plan is, "To extend the trail to connect with the City of Wausau bicycle paths and routes." This connection would enable

Mountain Bay Trail users to gain access to user facilities in the City of Wausau and allow Wausau residents to have easy access to a different type of bicycling experience.

In addition to the Mountain Bay Trail, there may be opportunities for hiking trails in the Big Rib River Valley along the Eau Claire River flowage, and Jim Moore Creek areas which could be linked to the river edge corridor. Here, too, the City should cooperate with the Park Department to establish a program to extend the parkway and trail system into these other areas.

- (11) At some point during the river parkway development process, a cleanup event or program for Barker-Stewart Island should be organized. Similar to the river bank cleanup in 1992, this effort should focus on removing litter and other debris such as railroad ties and rail from the island. In addition, a wildlife management program for the island should be considered for development by the Park Commission with assistance from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, University of Wisconsin, and interested non-profit groups such as the Audubon Society.
- (12) The City should acquire the other islands in the river. These islands are scattered in several areas north and south of the Wausau hydro dam. If these islands can be placed in the City's domain, they too should be cleared of litter and a wildlife management plan should be implemented by the Wausau/Marathon County Park Department.
- (13) The City should not dispose of any riverfront or river edge property at any time. This general recommendation is being made to provide some additional assurance that the scenic quality and vegetation located in these areas are managed for the benefit of the general public.
- (14) The City should continue its efforts to improve the surface water quality of the river. Public education programs about handling waste engine oil; use of fertilizers and urban run-off; enhanced erosion control measures; more frequent street sweeping; and continued cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources are examples of the City's water quality improvement efforts that have paid dividends thus far.
- (15) The City should closely monitor activities of the Chicago and North Western Transportation Company railroad and the Wisconsin Central Ltd. railroad to position itself to acquire any right-of-way which might become available in the future. Of particular interest are the rail corridors near or adjacent to the river as well as the bridges crossing the east channel of the river and the main channel to Barker-Stewart Island. The City should inform the Wisconsin Department of Transportation as well as railroad officials of its long-term interest in these corridors to insure that any of these facilities are first offered to the City before they are sold to another third party.
- (16) Strict standards for business and advertising signs which are located within view from the river edge walkway should be developed. These guidelines should help promote the scenic qualities of the river edge corridor and protect views from intrusion by business and advertising signs which are out of character with the aesthetic quality of the river resource.
- (17) City officials should continue to work with representatives of Wisconsin Public Service Corporation to relocate some of the electric power lines now found in the river corridor. This cooperative effort may merely involve the City's support for Wisconsin Public Service Corporation's plan to move existing lines. On the other hand, in certain locations it may be necessary for the City to help fund power line relocation activities.

- (18) To implement the recommendations contained in this master plan, the City should seek financial assistance from various Federal, State, and local funding sources. In addition, the City should seek technical assistance and cooperate with other agencies and land owners in order to develop and carry out the projects and programs recommended in this plan. For example, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and University of Wisconsin Extension may be able to provide technical services for developing habitat management plans for the river islands.
- (19) This plan should be used as a resource for carrying out the programs and projects identified herein. It should not, however, be viewed as a static document. Changes in State, Federal, and local laws as well as changes in local attitudes and values need to be reflected in the master plan. As such, this document should be amended when appropriate and reviewed and updated at least every five years by the River Edge Commission, City Plan Commission, Park Commission, and Common Council.

To insure that the proposed work program represents current priorities, the River Edge Commission and the Park Commission should annually review and affirm or modify the parkway development priorities.

- (20) The Community Development Authority should continue to concentrate its redevelopment activities in some of the aging manufacturing areas located along the river. These manufacturing sites might be more suitable for commercial and residential uses. The industrial uses presently located there might find the City's Business and Industrial Park more appropriate for their activities.
- (21) When a new bridge is designed to cross the Wisconsin River near the north City limits, the river edge parkway should be integrated into this facility in order to provide another connection for the parkway across the Wisconsin River.
- (22) A river edge parkway logo should be developed for promotion and marker purposes. This logo could be placed on signs along the parkway to reassure users that they are still on the designated river edge parkway.
- (23) The priorities for parkway development should be annually reviewed by the River Edge Commission and Park Commission in May or June of each year and, if necessary, new priorities should be established for the next year.
- (24) During the Master Plan review process, several residents of the Island Place apartment complex expressed concern about parkway use conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists. To mitigate these conflicts, the Wausau/Marathon County Park Commission should consider upgrading and designating the trails on Isle of Ferns Park for exclusive use by pedestrians and joggers, bicycles should be prohibited.

IV. PARKWAY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A. STANDARDS FOR PARKWAY DEVELOPMENT

There are a number of physical elements that need to be considered during the design and construction phases of developing the six segments of the river edge parkway. These elements are briefly listed below and discussed in greater detail in the following paragraphs. These elements include:

- (A) Types of surface material for parkway construction.
- (B) Width of the paved portion of the parkway.
- (C) Grade and slope of walkway.
- (D) Design of stairways.
- (E) Storm water drainage facilities.
- (F) Lighting.
- (G) Vertical and horizontal clearances adjacent to the trail.
- (H) Sight distances.
- (I) Landscaping.
- (J) Fencing.
- (K) Scenic views and overlooks.
- (L) Signs.
- (M) Accessibility for handicapped people.
- (N) Location of user facilities.
- (O) Access to parkway.

Following is a more detail discussion of each of the walkway design considerations listed above and how these design features may need to be varied in order to safely and efficiently accommodate the needs of river edge trail users.

- (A) Types of surface material for parkway construction**—In the long run, the entire river edge parkway should be constructed of a bituminous concrete (asphalt) surface except in those areas where brick pavers or Portland cement have been used. In low volume areas or along those sections of the trail that are awaiting further improvement, a decomposed granite surface should be suitable for the short term. The bituminous concrete, brick, or Portland cement will provide a durable, dust-free, surface that is suitable for jogging, walking, and bicycling. Although decomposed granite can be used on an interim basis, it presents a number of problems for the users listed above and is difficult to maintain.

In most places a 2-inch thick bituminous surface on a prepared base should be sufficient to accommodate all users and support light maintenance vehicles on the trail.

- (B) Width of the paved portion of the parkway**—The minimum width for the paved portion of the parkway should be 8 feet, however, 10 feet is preferred. To reduce user conflicts between bicycles and pedestrians in areas of heavier traffic, such as the Central Business District loop between Thomas Street and Bridge Street, a 12-foot wide paved area should be constructed.

Due to physical constraints in some locations, it may be necessary to narrow the pavement to less than 8 feet. In these narrower areas, it may be desirable to prohibit use by bicycle riders and post signs indicating that bikes must be walked in these areas.

Figures A through E show different types of parkway cross-sections. As these figures show, the parkway location and design will need to be modified to conform to the slope of the abutting river bank. As illustrated in Figure E, a raised boardwalk may be needed in some locations to continue the parkway in areas of extremely steep slope.

The location of the floodplain and any State and Federal regulations covering land uses in this area need to be considered very early in the design process. Special construction or drainage might be needed or it might be necessary to move the trail out of the floodplain area. The City Zoning Administrator can assist with floodplain delineation and review current regulations.

- (C) **Grade and slope of parkway**—In order to achieve proper drainage, the parkway must be constructed with proper cross slope. Generally, a cross slope of 2 percent should be used on all pavement types. Where adequate drainage exists on either side of the trail, the parkway can be sloped in either direction. Where drainage exists on only one side of the parkway, the parkway should be pitched to drain water toward the culvert or storm sewer facility. Without proper drainage, the life expectancy of the parkway surface will be reduced due to frost action and standing water.

Efforts should be made to design the trail with slopes less than five percent. The grade of the parkway should not exceed 8% where wheelchair users are encouraged. In locations where grades from 5% to 8% exist, a 5-foot level platform every 30 feet should be provided for the wheelchair users to rest. Handrails must also be considered in certain ramped sections. Where the parkway exceeds five percent, signs on posts or pavement marking should be used to alert people, especially wheelchair users, to this steeper grade.

The parkway grade is an important design feature for bicyclists. Bicycle speed can increase dramatically on a downhill slope and create safety problems where pedestrian traffic is also present. In sloped areas, sight clearances for bicyclists need to be maintained and curve radiuses near the bottom of hills should be great enough to avoid bicyclists losing control.

- (D) **Design of stairways**—In certain locations, where a ramp cannot be constructed because the existing slopes are so steep, stairways will be needed. These stairways should be designed with adequate handrails to accommodate various users including young children as well as older adults.
- (E) **Storm water drainage facilities**—In order to protect the base and surface material of the trailway, adequate drainage facilities must be installed at the time the parkway is constructed. Where necessary, culverts under the parkway should be sized to accommodate a particular water run-off event such as the 10-year storm. Without adequate drainage, the parkway may be subject to excessive erosion as well as damage from frost action, standing water, and flooding.

The floodplain of the Wisconsin River needs to be identified during design of the parkway to insure the facilities are located and constructed in a manner that will minimize damage.

- (F) **Lighting**—In the highest use areas, lighting for the trail should either be installed at the time the parkway is constructed or electrical conduit and the bases for lighting fixtures should be installed and the lights placed along the parkway later when funds become available. Those segments of the trail that are likely to receive the lowest amount of use may not need to be lighted. Lighting along the Wausau Municipal Airport property may be prohibited because of conflicts that might result with airport traffic.

Although lighting can be costly to install and maintain, it can greatly increase safety and use of the trail for cross country skiing and use in spring and fall when the period of natural light is considerably less than in the summer.

- (G) **Vertical and horizontal clearances adjacent to the trail**—Signs, benches, waste receptacles, and other fixed objects that might pose a safety hazard to bicyclists, cross country skiers, and even people on rollerblades should be placed at a sufficient distance from the pavement edge so as not to pose a safety hazard. Similarly, the height of signs, tree limbs, and other natural and man-made items that might overhang the trail need to be sufficiently high to allow maintenance vehicles to pass and to prevent these items from posing a safety hazard for people on bicycles.
- (H) **Sight distances**—Since some bicycle users may be riding fast on the trail, it will be important to provide adequate sight distances to enable these bicyclists to see pedestrians and take appropriate action as they approach. Similarly, pedestrians will need to be able to see bicyclists approaching. Sight distances are especially important at the base of steep grades where bicyclists are likely to reach high speeds. The radius of curves in the parkway should also be sufficient to provide adequate sight distance. In some places, it may be necessary to remove landscaping or other objects which obstruct safe visibility along the parkway or post speed limit or caution signs. Another option involves splitting the trail; bicycles would use one side and pedestrians would use the other.
- (I) **Landscaping**—Landscaping along the parkway can serve many purposes including controlling erosion, providing a visual buffer between the parkway and adjacent, unsightly uses, providing food and habitat for various types of wildlife species, and contributing to the overall scenic quality of the parkway experience. In some cases, landscaping can also be utilized to discourage people on the parkway from leaving the trail. For example, bushes with thorns or sharp needles can be used to prevent parkway users from shortcutting areas or trespassing onto property where they are not welcome. This type of landscaping will be most helpful to control users where fencing would be undesirable.
- (J) **Fencing**—Fencing needs to be constructed to protect the public safety along portions of the parkway where steep or very abrupt slopes are encountered. For example, along South 1st Avenue near the north end of Riverside Park, it may be necessary to fence a portion of the walkway in order to keep users from falling down a very high, steep bank. Similarly, when the City gains access to the railroad bridges leading to Barker-Stewart Island, it may be desirable to fence a portion of the bridge to keep parkway users from strolling onto the railroad tracks. Fencing may be required to separate the trail from adjacent properties for safety or trespass concerns. A railing may be used instead of fencing where bicycle traffic is a concern. For example, on bridges a safety railing for bicycles should be at least 54 inches high.

Fencing may also be appropriate where a high level of security is needed for private property which abuts the parkway. For example, along the Hammerblow manufacturing plant, it may be necessary to fence the parkway in order to keep users from entering the manufacturing area used by the Hammerblow Company.

- (K) **Scenic views and overlooks**—The parkway needs to be located and designed to take advantage of scenic views and overlooks. Selectively removing vegetation, placing the parkway near the edge of steep bluffs, and minimizing views of billboards and blighted property will greatly enhance the aesthetic elements of the parkway. Views need to be considered very early in the design process. The appearance of trail improvements should take into consideration their appearance when viewed from other areas of the parkway and the river.

- (L) **Signs**—There are several types of signs that need to be utilized in developing the parkway. These include location and directional signs which will identify the parkway and provide some indication of where people are relative to other elements of the parkway system; warning signs which will identify steep areas, curves in the trail, steep slopes and other areas where a higher level of caution should be exercised; regulatory signs where people will be informed not to walk animals on the parkway or to dismount from a bicycle in a particular area; and information/education signs which will be part of an interpretative program along the parkway. The different types of signs need to be carefully designed and located to maintain the aesthetics desired along the parkway yet still provide the information needed to make the parkway a safe, enjoyable facility.
- (M) **Accessibility for handicapped people**—The river edge parkway will be open to all people without discrimination. Generally speaking, not all facilities which are part of the river edge parkway have to be accessible. However, a representative experience and reasonable accommodation must be provided in order to meet the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act. With this in mind, the parkway will be developed in such a fashion as to accommodate many types of disabilities. However, the physical constraints of certain parts of the trail will preclude accessibility by people with certain disabilities. Generally speaking, the parkway in the most densely developed portion of the City, the Central Business District, either currently meets or can be easily modified to meet mandated accessibility standards.

For design purposes, the City will accommodate disabled users in all sections of the trail as long as the accommodation is not unduly burdensome on other users or represents a cost that could have a significant impact on development of other portions of the parkway system.

Those parts of the parkway which will not be accessible should have advisory signs placed at the head of the segment to inform users of the ability level required.

- (N) **Location of user facilities**—Generally, the facilities needed by parkway users should be made available at the community or neighborhood parks which the parkway system links. These facilities would include such items as restrooms, drinking fountains, picnic tables, park benches, garbage and recycling receptacles, and parking lots. Clustering these facilities in the parks or at nodes will minimize capital costs for the parkway and make the facilities available for several different user groups since the facilities will be available to a wide spectrum of the population that frequents City parks. Exceptions may include improved shore fishing opportunities, vistas, and interpretive sites.
- (O) **Access to parkway**—The portion of the parkway within the Central Business District should have the highest level of access to abutting property since use of the trail is likely to be highest here. Along its entire length, access should be provided wherever there is a reasonable opportunity such as at City parks and where the parkway crosses City streets or other public lands.

B. CONSTRAINTS/OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SEGMENTS OF THE CITY OF WAUSAU RIVER EDGE PARKWAY SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

As outlined earlier, the River Edge Commission envisions a parkway which will be located along both banks of the Wisconsin River from the north end of the City to the south end. For discussion purposes, the proposed river edge parkway system has been divided into six segments. The six segments are shown on Map I and listed below:

- I. Thomas Street to Bridge Street, on the east side of the Wisconsin River.
- II. Thomas Street to Bridge Street, on the west side of the Wisconsin River.
- III. Bridge Street to the north City Limits, on the east side of the Wisconsin River.
- IV. Thomas Street to the south City Limits, on the east side of the Wisconsin River.
- V. Bridge Street to the north City Limits, on the west side of the Wisconsin River.
- VI. Thomas Street to the McCleary Bridge, on the west side of the Wisconsin River.

Maps II through VII provide more detailed street and park boundary data and illustrate the location of most buildings relative to the water's edge. It should be noted that where high banks are located along the river, the distance between the top of bank and adjacent buildings may be quite small.

In the analysis that follows for each of these segments, four general topics are explored:

- A. **Existing Public Ownership**, which describes the land area currently held by various public organizations. Generally, these areas are presently open to the public and should be easily developed for parkway use.
- B. **Opportunities**, describes some of the conditions that could be capitalized upon or may present challenges to meeting some of the parkway development objectives.
- C. **Constraints**, lists some of the problems that will be encountered with development of that particular trail segment. Three general constraints seem to be most prevalent: slope and elevation to the river edge; existing development along the river edge which does not allow adequate room for the parkway to follow the riverbank; and multiple small lot ownership of the river edge, such as in areas of residential subdivision.
- D. Finally, some parkway system design and development issues are described for each of the segments.

Segment I - Thomas Street to Bridge Street, on the east side of the Wisconsin River

- A. **Existing Public Ownership** - The river edge from Thomas Street north to Franklin Street is presently in public ownership, and a nine-foot wide paved walkway has been developed along most of the area. This trail segment consists of public parkland, public ownership of former railroad land, and easements through Wisconsin Public Service Corporation land and Island Place Apartments. Trails also exist on Isle of Ferns Park, and walking opportunities are available on the northern portion of Clark Island, which is public parkland. Barker-Stewart Island, which is owned by the City, is located adjacent to this river edge segment; however, access to the island is possible only over existing railroad bridges that have signs which indicate that the bridges are to be used for railroad purposes only. The parkway borders the east channel of the river which is also the Whitewater Kayak Course. Through operation of its dam, Wisconsin Public Service Corporation will be providing some continuous water flow in this channel which will improve wildlife habitat and aesthetics, especially for parkway users in this segment. Prior to 1994, stream flow in the channel was only provided during flood and kayak events.
- B. **Opportunities** - The end of the trail at Oak Island Park, near its intersection with Thomas Street, needs some type of terminus or junction with Thomas Street or River Drive. Presently, the walkway ends north of Thomas Street, and there is no marked pedestrian access through the park up to Thomas Street. This access, however, will be difficult to complete because of the elevation difference between Thomas Street and the park. Because of this elevation difference, it may be desirable to route the trail from Oak Island Park along River Drive to Thomas Street. In the long term, the State will be reconstructing the Thomas Street bridge, and that project may provide an opportunity for improving the pedestrian linkage between Thomas Street and the walkway.

It may be desirable to develop a river edge logo for promotion and marker purposes. Some type of trail marker system and maps should be prepared and posted along the existing river edge walkway. The trail map could also be distributed to community visitors who are looking for recreational opportunities in the City, as well as to local people who are not familiar with the river edge development. The map could highlight the existing river edge trail and also indicate that it extends onto Isle of Ferns Park. The brochure or map could point out some of the historic, archaeological, geologic, and cultural elements of interest along this segment of the trail. The type and location of fishing opportunities might also be explained in the brochure.

The railroad bridges to Clark Island and Barker-Stewart Island which extend from Washington Street will probably be abandoned in the near future, since the Chicago and North Western Railroad apparently no longer utilizes this track. Similar to Isle of Ferns Park, additional hiking trails could be developed on Barker-Stewart Island, and eventually, the trail could be used to link the east side river trail segments with the west side segments. The railroad bridge which connects the east bank of the river to Clark Island presents a special opportunity, since the bridge may be suitable for providing additional viewing stands for the whitewater kayak course. The City should contact representatives of the Chicago and North Western Railroad regarding the southern bridges and representatives of Central Wisconsin Limited regarding the northern bridges. The railroads may be interested in selling the bridges or allowing the City to construct pedestrian facilities on these bridges. If the railroads indicate there is no likelihood that the bridges would ever be sold to the City or the structural condition of the bridges is such that they would not warrant purchase, the City may be able to secure "used" bridges from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to link the river's edge and islands. For example, when the bridge across the Eau Claire River on Grand Avenue is replaced, it may be possible to relocate the existing bridge to help connect the islands. This opportunity should be further investigated.

Barker-Stewart Island presents a unique opportunity for providing wildlife habitat, natural open space, and a bird watching area in a developed, urban setting. It may be desirable, assuming that the island will be committed to a natural area use, to contact the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, UW-Extension, or the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for ideas on how wildlife habitat could be enhanced on this island. In addition, efforts should be made to encourage the Wisconsin Public Service Corporation to relocate or, if possible, eliminate the electric transmissions line located on the island.

With the proposed hotel and convention facilities planned for this area and other regional activities occurring downtown, this segment of the river edge walkway is likely to receive the most year-round utilization and should be the focal point for development activities.

- C. **Constraints** - The biggest constraint in this area is access along the Hammerblow property. An alternative access around the Hammerblow property should probably be sought in order to continue the trail north to Bridge Street in a timely manner. The railroad corridor up to First Street may be a suitable option. However, extending the trail along the Hammerblow property should remain as a long term goal, and the trail should be planned along the river edge in this area.
- D. **Design Considerations** - Many of the design considerations for this segment of the river edge trail have been discussed above under "Opportunities", and include items such as a trail system logo, brochure/map, walkway markers, connection at Thomas Street, bridges to Barker-Stewart Island, and the connection northward to Bridge Street. Passive recreational facilities such as park benches should be located on the riverbank across from Barker-Stewart Island. This would allow users to enjoy the green, open space area of Barker-Stewart Island from the east shore.

Fishing opportunities might be difficult to develop along this segment because of the general lack of motor vehicle access, with the exception of the opportunities currently available at Oak Island Park.

Segment II - Thomas Street to Bridge Street, on the West Side of the Wisconsin River

This segment could be developed to provide the second leg of a central area loop in the river edge corridor within the most densely populated and active area of the City. Ideally, a loop from Thomas Street north to Bridge Street on both sides of the river will provide recreational users, walkers, hikers, and joggers with a route in excess of three miles in length.

- A. **Existing Public Ownership** - Public ownership along this west side segment of the river is limited to a short section of right-of-way under the Bridge Street bridge and the river edge area occupied by Riverside Park. In addition to Riverside Park, Picnic Island provides an interesting diversion for many recreational uses.
- B. **Opportunities** - A Chicago and North Western Railroad spur line presently serves the Minnesota Mining & Manufacturing Company on South First Avenue. This rail line extends south and east of the 3M facilities and crosses Thomas Street at McCleary Street. This line, however, has not been utilized for several years and, at Thomas Street, was recently paved over by City crews. Acquiring this unused right-of-way from the railroad could provide a connection from the west end of Thomas Street to Riverside Park at Emter Street. This connection will be approximately 900 feet long and could include land at the far northwest side of the Thomas Street bridge which is owned by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

Similar to Segment I, when the Thomas Street Bridge is reconstructed, considerable thought should be given to pedestrian and bicycle facilities to link the east side of the walkway with this west side component.

There are relatively strong commercial redevelopment possibilities in the area between Stewart Avenue and Bridge Street that could allow for incorporation of the river edge trail into the redevelopment plans for the area. Present land owners should be contacted as soon as possible to discuss the river edge walkway plan for this area and explore their interest in participating in the parkway development effort. Public and private sector redevelopment plans for this area should integrate the parkway into any site designs prepared for the project.

Much of the land from Bridge Street south to Marathon Box Company is at a relatively low elevation and close to the water. Farther south, however, the river edge is high above the water. Near Bridge Street, opportunities for shore fishing and pedestrian benches are better than farther south near the Riverside Plaza Shopping Mall. Between Stewart Avenue and the north boundary of Riverside Park, development of the walkway adjacent to the river will be difficult because of the close proximity of First Avenue to the river's edge and the extremely high, steep bank from First Avenue down to the water. There is, however, a frequently utilized fishing access at the Wisconsin Public Service Corporation's hydro-electric dam facility. Fishermen on foot, as well as those in motor vehicles, take advantage of the opportunity to fish below the hydro dam.

- C. **Design Considerations** - Similar to Segment I, the opportunity for pedestrian use of Picnic Island, which is off-shore of Riverside Park, should be explained in the brochure which was discussed earlier. In addition, access to Barker-Stewart Island from the west side of the river may be possible via the railroad bridge which crosses the river near Maple Street. This bridge and the rail tracks on Barker-Stewart Island could provide excellent pedestrian access from the west side of Wausau into the Central Business District.

When First Avenue is reconstructed just north of Riverside Park, it may be possible to shift the street to the west in order to gain enough area on the east side to use for walkway purposes. Another possibility, but perhaps one that proves too expensive, is sheet piling and filling a short section along First Avenue to provide adequate area for the walkway. In either case, safety fencing will probably be needed to prevent pedestrians and bicyclists from spilling over this steep bank.

Segment III - Bridge Street to the North City Limits, on the East Side of the Wisconsin River

This is a very long segment of the river edge trail system that provides a number of interesting opportunities and some very challenging constraints. Most of the river edge is at a relatively low grade to the water, and there are opportunities for public access, except in the area north of Jim Moore Creek, where numerous residential lots abut the river edge.

- A. **Existing Public Ownership** - South of Jim Moore Creek there are several segments of public ownership along the river edge. These include the property owned by the Wausau Water and Sewerage Utility at Bridge Street and immediately north. This property is occupied by the Water Treatment Plant, but could be easily adapted for walkway use. In addition, a street right-of-way, River Drive North, is public property up to East Wausau Avenue. Between Devoe Street and Winton Street is public right-of-way and an island west of this unnamed street right-of-way is in public ownership. Farther north, Gilbert Park property forms a very narrow band from Jim Moore Creek, south and west approximately 2,100 feet along the river edge.

- B. **Opportunities** - Connecting the three sections of existing public land along this segment of waterfront provides a great opportunity for establishing a lengthy section of river edge trail. However, the land between the public ownership areas presents some substantial constraints which are discussed below. North of Winton Street, Wisconsin Public Service Corporation owns a small parcel of land which it utilizes for an electrical substation. This property should become available in the future when this electrical substation is abandoned and its functions are relocated elsewhere.
- C. **Constraints** - The biggest constraints to connecting the several publicly owned portions of river edge along this segment are the activities of Wausau Concrete Company. It may be very difficult to secure even a small segment of the river edge in this vicinity, since land is at such a premium for Wausau Concrete's operation. In addition, screening the walkway from Wausau Concrete's storage facilities will be extremely difficult.

North of Gilbert Park, the large number of single family residences that directly abut the river will probably preclude a trail in the back yard areas here. It may be possible, however, to utilize some railroad right-of-way and Wisconsin Public Service Corporation right-of-way to extend the walkway to the north City limits and eventually connect the river edge parkway with a trail system north to Merrill. This lengthier project should be further investigated by the County Park Department in conjunction with Lincoln County officials and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. This regional bicycle trail could provide a much-needed local, off-road bicycle riding facility as well as contribute to the area's tourism potential.

- D. **Design Considerations** - Along this segment of the trail system, walking would appear to be the primary activity. Gilbert Park presently provides fishing, picnicking, and boat launch facilities as well as a small parking area. It may be possible to provide another fishing opportunity along River Drive North, in the vicinity of the Water Treatment Plant.

Segment IV - Thomas Street to the South City Limits, on the East Side of the Wisconsin River

For the most part, the river edge along this segment follows a relatively high bank, except at Memorial Park where the riverbank is much closer to the river.

- A. **Existing Public Ownership** - Most of the area in this segment is currently under public ownership. Beginning at the southern City limits, Radtke Park is a part of the City of Wausau park system. Adjacent to Radtke Park is Wausau Downtown Airport. At the northern boundary of the airport is the North Central Health Care Facility, which is owned by Marathon County. North of the Health Care Center is a City street, Lillie Street, which abuts a high bank of the river. Farther north is Memorial Park, which provides access to the river edge for several thousand feet. Although there are almost three miles of riverfront in public ownership, there may be some major impediments to securing public access for a trail system along most of this area.
- B. **Opportunities** - Since most of this area is presently in public ownership, the urgency for the City to take actions to preserve this portion of the river edge from development is reduced. However, the Master Plans for the Airport, Health Care Center, and Memorial Park should be reviewed to ensure that future building development activities do not hinder further construction of a walkway in these areas. Furthermore, it may be advisable to directly contact the Airport Committee, Board of Directors of the Health Care Center, and Park Commission to request that they incorporate into their Long Range Facility Master Plans provisions for a river walkway. This may be difficult at the Airport and

Health Care Center, because of safety concerns. However, the proposed walkway could be used by patients, residents, and employees of the Health Care Center as well as the general public.

Use of the airport property may be more feasible under the Federal Intermodal Surface Transportation and Efficiency Act. This legislation encourages efficient and multi-modal use of transportation facilities.

There is also a possibility of connecting the Wisconsin River trail with pedestrian facilities that could be developed on the former Holtz-Krause Landfill and a 50 acre parcel of City land on the north shore of the Eau Claire River Flowage. This trail might also be connected with the County's Mountain Bay Trail.

- C. **Constraints** - It will be almost impossible to develop the parkway from Thomas Street to Sturgeon Eddy Road. The riverbank here is intensively developed with residential, commercial, and office uses. Several of the buildings in this area are literally built on the bank of the river, and the remaining portion of the sites contain parking or related improvements. Grand Avenue, which is the adjacent parallel street, is the only pedestrian connection between the end of the trail at Thomas Street and Sturgeon Eddy Road. However, Grand Avenue has very high traffic volume and may not be suitable as part of the recreational trail route.
- D. **Design Considerations** - Along the airport property, it may be necessary to build a fence between the airport property and the river parkway to prevent people from wandering onto the airport. The recreational facilities at Radtke Park and Memorial Park should be sufficient to serve trail users at either end of this segment of the walkway. Memorial Park offers drinking water, picnicking facilities, fishing opportunities, and a swimming pool. Although the facilities are more limited at Radtke Park, many are also available there.

Segment V - Bridge Street to the North City Limits, on the West Side of the Wisconsin River

Similar to Segment IV, most of the river edge in this area, except at Schofield Park, is located at a relatively high elevation above the water, along a steep bank.

- A. **Existing Public Ownership** - There are three areas of public ownership along this segment: the right-of-way immediately under the Bridge Street bridge, the area occupied by Schofield Park, and a small public area at the end of Brisbane Court, north of Schofield Park.
- B. **Opportunities** - Between Bridge Street and Schofield Park there are only three property owners who need to be contacted regarding construction of the river edge trail—Marathon Electric Corporation, MBX Corporation, and James River Corporation.
- C. **Constraints** - North of Schofield Park, the river edge is occupied by the rear yard of a number of homes which are located along the Wisconsin River. It would be very difficult to extend the trail north of Schofield Park to the City limits because the trail would be located in the back yard of these properties.

South of Schofield Park to Bridge Street, access to the trail from the adjacent residential area will be very difficult because of the manufacturing and other related land uses that are located between the river edge and the residential area. There are no public streets that extend to the river edge in this area. The aesthetics of this portion of the parkway might be difficult to enhance due to the

manufacturing nature of the abutting land uses. Because of the high bank along most of this portion of the river, access to the water for fishing will be difficult, except at Bridge Street and Schofield Park, where people now frequently fish from shore.

The parkway will also have to be routed around Bos Creek at Randolph Street. River edge hikers could not go directly from Schofield Park to Marathon Electric property, because the only crossing of Bos Creek is at Randolph Street. Although it is not unreasonable to route parkway users in this fashion, it is certainly less desirable.

- D. **Design Considerations** - Similar to the airport area, it may be necessary to place a fence between the abutting manufacturing uses and the trail. Although this fence would make it difficult for neighborhood residents to access the trail, it would prevent people from trespassing through some of the manufacturing facilities and could mitigate concerns that abutting property owners might have. Consideration should also be given to constructing a bridge over Bos Creek to provide trail continuity from Schofield Park to the river edge below Marathon Electric Corporation.

Segment VI - Thomas Street to the McCleary Bridge, on the West Side of the Wisconsin River

Most of this area is relatively low to the water and provides a variety of interesting views of the river and Lake Wausau.

- A. **Existing Public Ownership** - The City owns property at two locations along this segment. The Wausau Wastewater Treatment Plant and City garage and storage area are located south of Adrian Street and occupy approximately 2,000 feet of shoreline. Farther south, Marathon County owns D. C. Everest Park.
- B. **Opportunities** - Along the river edge, from Adolph Street to D. C. Everest Park, is a manmade levee, or dike, which was constructed a number of years ago for flood protection purposes. This dike may be a suitable location for construction of a trail which would connect D. C. Everest Park to the other City property. Because the dike is quite narrow in places, this route may not be suitable for bicycling. A number of issues regarding the dike need to be further investigated regardless of its use for the parkway including: who owns the dike; who is responsible for maintenance; is the existing elevation high enough to provide adequate flood protection; has settlement or erosion occurred; and are there breaches in the dike that should be repaired?

This segment of the river edge is also located within a predominantly residential area, thus providing good access from the neighborhood. Most of the surrounding residential area, however, does not have public sidewalks.

There are also a number of vacant properties along the river edge that may be available for trail use, since they cannot be developed for residential purposes due to floodplain regulations.

- C. **Constraints** - Similar to a portion of Segment V, part of the river edge trail will traverse through the rear yard of a number of residential properties. This may be extremely undesirable from a homeowner's point of view and could severely hamper completing this trail segment. However, there are a few parallel streets that could be improved with sidewalks, which would allow alternatives to the walkway in areas where it remains impossible to gain public access.

- D. **Design Considerations** - D. C. Everest Park will continue to be the focal point for non-trail activities such as fishing, picnicking, and sitting on park benches. It may be desirable to further examine the grounds at the Wastewater Treatment Plant to determine if there are suitable locations here for fishing or passive recreational facilities.

C. PARKWAY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Development of individual sections of the river parkway will be a rather involved and lengthy process especially where the land needed for that section is in private ownership. Typically, the parkway development process will begin with preparation of a preliminary design plan for that section; proceed to official mapping; land will then be acquired; final design with cost estimates will be prepared; construction funds will then be secured; bids for the work will be received and awarded; and construction will begin. After a section is constructed, it must be managed and maintained. If adequate funds are not available to construct an entire section in a particular year, another round of fund raising and construction work will be required.

Each of the development process elements listed above are discussed more fully below.

- (A) **Preliminary Design**—In this development phase, the parkway location and width of the land area needed to establish a particular segment of the river parkway is determined. Detailed topographic maps at two-foot contour intervals are available in the City Engineering Department. In addition, river edge cross-sections, utility and building locations, and property boundary data is available for preparing base maps. Information from general field work can be transferred onto these maps for preliminary design. Locations for various amenities such as benches, fishing piers, public access sites from abutting streets, areas for back slopes or retaining walls, and other design features are located on the preliminary design maps. As indicated earlier, the width of the walkway and the amount of land needed to construct the walkway will vary depending upon certain physical constraints and the amount of use a particular segment is likely to receive.

Preliminary cost estimates are prepared and permitting agencies such as the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and City Inspections Department should be contacted to review and comment on the proposed design. Any potential design concerns which involve wetlands, floodplains or filling should be discussed with these agencies and mitigated at this stage. Staff of the Park Department should play a lead role in the preliminary design phase including regulatory agency coordination.

If private consultants are used during this phase, the Park Commission and staff should prepare the request for proposals and administer the design contract with the consultant.

The Park Commission should review and formally approve the preliminary design plans. The Commission should also recommend approval by the Capital Improvements and Street Maintenance Committee and Plan Commission and recommend that the segment of the parkway be formally identified on the official map.

- (B) **Official Mapping**—Using the preliminary design drawings, the exact boundaries of the property needed for parkway development in a particular area are then established in the field by survey crews. A legal description for each section is also prepared. It may be possible for the City Engineering Department staff to establish these boundaries and the necessary legal descriptions which are used to

place or extend the corridor on the Official City Map as a parkway [Section 62.23(6) of Wisconsin Statutes]. In order to place the property on the map, a public hearing must be held by the City Capital Improvements and Street Maintenance Committee. Before the public hearing is held, a legal notice is published in the Wausau Daily Herald. Following the public hearing, the matter is referred to the Plan Commission for a report. Both the Capital Improvements and Street Maintenance Committee recommendation and Plan Commission report are passed on to the Common Council. The Common Council makes the final decision as to whether or not a particular segment of the river edge parkway should be established or extended on the Official City Map. Affirmative action by the Common Council places that particular segment of the parkway on the Official Map and provides some assurance that the construction or enlargement of buildings in the area will not encroach upon the limits of the parkway corridor. Designation of the parkway on the Official Map will reserve the corridor for future acquisition by the City and minimize land acquisition costs by precluding significant private sector improvements within the parkway corridor.

- (C) **Land Acquisition**—This can be an extremely complicated and lengthy process. The procedures are governed by Chapter 32 of the Wisconsin Statutes which address eminent domain issues. Typically, land acquisition begins when the Common Council adopts a resolution indicating that it is necessary for the City to acquire certain property in order to establish or extend the river parkway. After the resolution is adopted, a legal description is prepared of each parcel needed for the project. In most cases, the legal description will be for a small portion of the entire property owned by each adjacent property owner. Much of the survey work for this phase should have been completed earlier. At this point in the land acquisition process, the City's Environmental Engineer should examine the site and review ownership records to determine if the land or the groundwater under the property is likely to be contaminated. If the potential for contamination is high, the City may wish to secure an easement for development of the parkway instead of acquiring the land.

After environmental issues are resolved, a certified appraiser is hired who uses the legal description of the property to determine the fair market value of the land which the City is proposing to purchase. After establishing a value, the City then makes a monetary offer to purchase the property and negotiates with the property owner based upon the appraisal information.

If the City is unsuccessful in negotiating a purchase, it may be necessary to condemn the land and have the Condemnation Commission or the Circuit Court award the monetary damages. Generally, the issue before the Condemnation Commission or the Circuit Court is the value of the land purchased by the City.

The City Attorney's office takes the lead on land acquisition including matters related to environmental contamination and should perform these duties for the parkway project.

- (D) **Final Design Plans**—During or shortly after the land acquisition phase, final design drawings and precise construction specifications should be prepared. The final design drawings are very detailed plans that address many of the elements discussed in the section entitled, "Standards for Parkway Development". The construction specifications provide written clarification of many of the materials, construction techniques and features shown on the design plans. Detailed construction plans and specifications are important to insure that the parkway is constructed according to proper engineering and environmental standards. These plans will also enable the designer to prepare relatively concise construction material and labor cost estimates. The Park Department and City Engineering Department should cooperatively develop these plans.

These plans and specifications will be used to apply for any needed State and Federal regulatory agency permits for filling, grading, dredging, or other construction activities near the shoreline.

An erosion control plan for construction activity should be developed and approved by the appropriate regulatory agency during this phase of development. This plan will identify the measures which will be taken to control erosion until the site is stabilized by vegetative cover or some other means.

- (E) **Fund Raising**—With the information developed above, a detailed budget for the project can be completed and various sources of funding can be sought for construction of the project. Funding sources, which are discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this report, include the City general fund, federal and state grant programs, donations from local foundations and organizations, and in-kind services provided by organizations such as the Army Reserve, service clubs, and the City of Wausau. The River Edge Commission and Park Commission will play a lead role in fund raising. It may be possible at this point to enlist the help of various community service organizations for fund raising and construction activities.
- (F) **Bids**—If the private sector provides material or labor for construction, bids for the items must be sought and processed according to State Statutes. The Public Works Department and Board of Public Works should handle this phase of development.
- (G) **Construction**—As discussed earlier, construction can be undertaken for a segment of the parkway in phases and in sections. For example, the section of parkway can initially be developed without lighting and landscaping and decomposed or crushed granite can be used as the surface material on the trail until more funding becomes available. This type of construction strategy has been followed in the section of the parkway from Oak Island to the Whitewater kayak course. Initially, this trail was extended on a decomposed or crushed granite surface and some years later bituminous concrete, lighting and a brick surface were constructed.

If private contractors are utilized in any of the construction activities, it will be necessary to prepare detailed plans, specifications, and bidding documents for the trail's construction. On the other hand, it may be possible to use City of Wausau and Park Department crews on many construction related activities if their normal workloads decline sufficiently to allow for their participation. The Park Department should be the lead agent for construction since that department will take the lead in the final phase of the parkway's development which is maintenance and management.

- (H) **Maintenance and Management**—Finally, after segments of the parkway have been constructed, maintenance of the walkway, benches, landscaping and parking areas, and disposal of litter should be the responsibility of the Park Department. It may be possible to enlist the services of one or more local service organizations to adopt segments of the river edge parkway for various types of maintenance activities. This adoption program could be similar to those underway by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, county highway departments for litter cleanup on rural roads, and the Wausau Adopt-A-Park Program. The City's existing Adopt-A-Park Program encourages families, individuals and groups to volunteer to oversee certain maintenance and anti-vandalism activities in the parks. This type of adoption program could even be used during the fund raising and construction stages by encouraging a particular community service organization to provide all or part of the funding and manpower needed to help construct a particular section of the river edge parkway. The Wausau Area Volunteer Exchange (WAVE) could play an important role in organizing and coordinating the human resources for these larger projects.

Enforcement of laws and regulations along the parkway will be the responsibility of the City Police Department and staff of the Park Department Visitor Protection Program.

The Park Department should be responsible for other management activities such as issuance of permits for community events (LogJam), planning and budgeting maintenance and improvement activities, coordinating the Adopt-A-Park Program, and dealing with certain aspects of emergencies such as floods.

D. PARKWAY DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

As indicated earlier, a great deal of time and effort will be needed to design and raise funds for construction of individual sections of the parkway. Based upon experience with development of the walkway from Washington Street south to Oak Island and from Washington Street north to Franklin Street, it could take several decades before the vision of a complete parkway on both sides of the river becomes a reality. Since the parkway project is an enormous undertaking that will require the commitment of substantial staff and financial resources, the actions and activities in the parkway development process need to be prioritized.

As indicated earlier, two of the most important elements of the development process are preliminary design and official mapping. These activities form the foundation for developing budgets and final design plans as well as preserving the parkway area for purchase and development by the City.

Therefore, in terms of overall project management, staff and financial resources should be allocated to the tasks of preliminary design and official mapping before other phases of the parkway development process are pursued. This prioritization of activities, however, should not be followed blindly since there may be intervening opportunities for constructing segments of the parkway that should not be ignored. For example, there may be grant funds available or foundation donations available which could assist in the purchase of land and construction of portions of the parkway. Donations of land and easements are also possible. Given these opportunities, it may be more desirable to delay design and mapping of some segments in order to purchase land and construct a portion of the parkway.

The preliminary design and official mapping process should be carefully scheduled and monitored to insure that progress is being made on these tasks. If City staff cannot meet the schedule developed by the River Edge Commission and Park Commission, it may be desirable to hire consultants to complete the design activities and to conduct the necessary survey work for placing segments of the parkway on the Official City Map.

As discussed above, because of the size of the project, priorities need to be established for design, mapping, and construction activities on each segment of the river edge parkway. Below is a prioritized list of parkway development activities for four segments. This list is for programming purposes only and should be reviewed and modified as unforeseen opportunities or potential problems surface:

- (1) Completing the preliminary design and official mapping work on Segment I, Thomas Street to Bridge Street on the east side of the Wisconsin River, will protect the several vacant parcels of land immediately south of Bridge Street from development and provide a logical extension of the existing parkway trail which presently ends at Franklin Street. Following design and mapping, this area lends itself well to land acquisition and parkway construction because of its proximity to the Central Business District and the linkage it provides between the major arterial streets in the City—Bridge Street, Scott Street and Thomas Street. If land acquisition and construction funds become available, this segment should be the top priority for those activities as well.

- (2) The second highest priority should be on the west side of the Wisconsin River from Bridge Street to Thomas Street (Segment II). Initial design and mapping should be concentrated from Stewart Avenue to Bridge Street since there is a large parcel of vacant land that may be developed in the near future and an area that may be redeveloped for commercial activity. These two sites provide a challenge and an opportunity for the City to act to preserve the parkway corridor here before private sector development substantially reduces the suitability of this area for parkway use.
- (3) The segment of the walkway from Bridge Street to Schofield Park (Segment V) on the west side of the river should be the next highest priority for design. There has been some interest expressed by property owners in this area to cooperate and actively participate in development of the parkway in this area. If this cooperation level continues, this segment would provide a very good opportunity for establishing part of the parkway on the west side of the river that could eventually be linked with the east side of the river at Bridge Street.
- (4) A dialogue should be established with the Downtown Wausau Airport Committee and the North Central Health Care Facilities Board of Directors to discuss development of the parkway on land that each of these groups manages (Segment IV). The most important element of cooperation from these agencies is the commitment to prohibit construction of buildings or other improvements adjacent to the river edge area which might impair development of the parkway. This commitment is needed to insure that land adjacent to the river edge is available in the future for extension of the parkway onto these sites.

As indicated above, these priorities form a program which should be monitored and revised as new opportunities and challenges surface. To insure that the program represents current priorities, the River Edge Commission and Park Commission should annually review and affirm or modify the parkway development priorities. In order to coincide with the budget and program planning process, this review process should take place in May or June of each year.

E. FUNDING PARKWAY DEVELOPMENT

There are a variety of sources of funds which could be utilized for planning and development of the river edge parkway. These sources include:

- General City Revenues.
- Aids for the Acquisition and Development of Local Parks.
- Urban Green Space Program.
- Urban Rivers Grant Program.
- Wisconsin Public Service Corporation Assistance.
- Federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act Funds.
- Tax Increment Financing.
- Community and Corporate Foundations.
- Local Service Organizations.
- Community Development Block Grant Funds.
- Stream Bank Protection Funds.
- Special State Legislation.

Below is a more detailed discussion of each of these potential funding sources:

- (A) General City Revenue—The City Council could, as part of its annual budgetary process, allocate local revenue funds to design, mapping, land acquisition, and construction of segments of the river edge parkway. A request for these funds could be prepared by the Park Department staff and submitted to the City Capital Improvement Review Committee in late May or early June of the year prior to which funding is being sought. For example, a request could be prepared in late spring 1995 for development activities that might be proposed for 1996. If matching Federal, State, or other sources of funds can be made available to augment the City's contribution to the project, the proposal may receive a more favorable recommendation for the expenditure of local funds.
- (B) Aids for the Acquisition and Development of Local Parks (ADLP)—Funds from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources are available for parkland acquisition and development activities. Generally, the State provides grant assistance on a 50% cost share basis. Local park funds might be available for purchasing as well as developing the parkway and related facilities such as restrooms in existing parks. A major requirement for participation in this program is adoption of a local outdoor recreation plan. The City of Wausau adopted a park plan in December, 1990. This plan must be updated to extend the City's eligibility for State assistance beyond December, 1995. Adoption of the river edge master plan also helps the City meet the DNR's planning requirement.
- (C) Urban Green Space Program—Similar to the preceding program, the Urban Green Space Program is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and provides 50% cost share matching. The intent of the program is to provide natural space within or near urban areas; to protect scenic or ecological features; and to provide land for non-commercial gardening. This program may be appropriate for acquisition of the islands within the Wisconsin River. Unlike the ADLP program, no money is available for development activities.
- (D) Urban Rivers Grant Program—The purpose of the Urban Rivers Grant Program is to provide funds to municipalities to acquire land or rights in land on or adjacent to rivers that flow through urban areas in order to preserve or restore urban rivers or waterfronts for the purposes of economic revitalization and encouraging outdoor recreation activities. Similar to the two programs mentioned above, the Urban Rivers Program is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and funds are allocated on a 50% cost share matching basis. Funds are available for acquisition only; development costs are not eligible. Over half of the funds available in this program, however, for the next several years have been set aside for funding the Frank Lloyd Wright Menona Terrace project in the City of Madison. The funding application deadline for this program and the previous two is May 1 of each year. Strict DNR guidelines must be followed for any land acquisition activities which involve State funds.
- (E) Wisconsin Public Service Corporation Assistance—The Wisconsin Public Service Corporation holds the flowage rights for the water which is impounded by the Wausau hydro-electric dam located south of the Falls Bridge. Historically, WPSC has shown strong interest in participating in City efforts to enhance recreational use of the river and improve the quality of the resource. Specific requests for project assistance by WPSC should be directed to the District Manager in Wausau.
- (F) Federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991—As part of this Federal program, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation is allocated funds for State-wide multi-modal improvements. These funds can be used for transportation enhancement activities or for transportation discretionary programs. Eligible activities include providing facilities for pedestrians and bicycles. Over the last several years, a number of bicycle and pedestrian facilities have been allocated funds from this program. Applications for these funds must be submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation District offices by March 15 of each year. Grants for up to 80% of the

project's cost are available; the remaining portion is paid for by the sponsoring community. The Transportation Enhancements Program funds are intended to accomplish something "above and beyond" what is normally done on a highway project while discretionary program funds can be used to foster alternatives to single occupancy vehicle trips. The surface transportation discretionary program seems to be a viable source of funds to finance the commuting and transportation related objectives served by the parkway project.

- (G) Tax Incremental Financing—A portion of the parkway area has been included in Tax Incremental District Number Three and improvements to the parkway area have been identified as an eligible cost item in the tax incremental district project plan. As such, the City can, within the next six-year period (through the year 2000), spend funds for development of the parkway within the tax incremental district and pay for these improvements out of the tax incremental district account. If future tax incremental finance districts are created that include a portion of the parkway area, it may be desirable to pay for a portion of the construction costs in that segment of the parkway with tax increment revenues.
- (H) Community and Corporate Foundations—There are a number of foundations within the City of Wausau and some larger corporate foundations, such as 3M and Target stores, that may provide some of the funding needed to design and develop segments of the river edge parkway. Individual corporations, such as the Wausau Daily Herald, may be interested in funding acquisition or development costs for all or a portion of a particular parkway segment. It may also be possible to have businesses owning property along the river sponsor the section of the parkway which abuts their property.
- (I) Local Service Organizations—There are many local service organizations in the community, such as the Rotary Club, that may be interested in providing some of the funding, materials, or volunteer manpower necessary for development of segments of the parkway project. As part of a fund raiser it may be possible to "sell" benches, brick pavers, sections of bituminous concrete along the parkway, to civic groups, individuals or corporations.

Civic Work Day might also be helpful. Small groups of volunteers could engage in clean-up or landscaping projects along the river bank.

- (J) Community Development Block Grant Funds—If it can be shown that development of certain segments of the river edge parkway benefits low and moderate income families or eliminates blight, it may be possible to use some Community Development Block Grant funds for planning, land acquisition, and construction activities. Requests for use of these funds would need to be submitted to the Mayor's office or the Community Development Department early in the calendar year.
- (K) Stream Bank Protection Funds—This program provides funds to protect water quality and improve fish habitat on a 50% cost sharing basis. Land acquisition is the primary project funded. There may be opportunities to pursue this program for improvements along the river edge especially in certain industrial type areas where stream bank erosion is relatively high and the amount of pollutants entering the water at these industrial locations is also high.
- (L) Special State Legislation—Although the City of Wausau's parkway development project may not warrant consideration, the Wisconsin Legislature and Governor have approved legislation for funding some special recreation/transportation projects. As mentioned earlier, over half of the funds in the Urban Rivers Program have been allocated to a project in the City of Madison. If funding for

development of the parkway cannot be provided from other State sources such as those discussed above, it may be necessary to pursue special legislative action.

V. ACTION PROGRAM

Below is a brief summary of the projects and activities that should be undertaken during the next five years to help achieve the vision of the river corridor that has been discussed earlier. These efforts form an ambitious program that will help to achieve the overall river corridor goals established by the River Edge Commission planning process. Several of these activities were prioritized earlier and will not be prioritized here. This action program includes activities that are directly related to establishment of the river edge parkway and other work to improve conditions in the river corridor.

Similar to the parkway development priorities discussed earlier, this action program should be reviewed annually and modified as necessary to take advantage of opportunities and remedy problems that might arise during the year. The following elements should be included in the initial action plan:

- (A) Prepare a river edge master plan summary for general public education and promotional efforts.
- (B) Implement the planning and development activities for parkway Segments I, II, V, and IV as discussed in the previous section of the report.
- (C) Develop and implement a wildlife management program for Barker-Stewart Island.
- (D) Implement a litter and debris clean-up program for Barker-Stewart Island.
- (E) Investigate the ownership of all islands within the river corridor and acquire those islands which are not presently owned by the City.
- (F) Create a logo and sign design for the parkway. The logo could be developed as part of a publicity/design competition program.
- (G) Prepare a parkway user brochure that identifies some of the points of interest along the river edge corridor.
- (H) Prepare an ordinance which regulates surface water uses north of the Wausau hydro-electric dam.

Drafted by:
Joe Pribanich, City Planner
06/13/94; 12/12/94; 01/15/95; 03/29/95

ejs

WisRiver

TABLE I**Parks With Frontage On The Wisconsin River**

NAME OF PARK	ACRES	EXISTING PARKWAY SUPPORT FACILITIES
Barker-Stewart Island	15.0	
Big Bull Falls	2.5	Open shelter.
Brisbane	0.5	
D. C. Everest	3.0	Improved fishing site, open shelter, drinking water, restrooms.
Gilbert	6.4	Riverfront walkway, improved fishing site (fall 1995).
Isle of Ferns	12.1	
Memorial	23.4	Drinking water, improved fishing site.
Oak Island	15.1	Open shelter, drinking water, improved fishing site, restrooms, riverfront walkway.
Picnic Island	3.0	
Radtke Point	4.3	Open shelter, restrooms, drinking water.
Riverside	11.6	Drinking water.
Schofield	5.2	Drinking water.
White Water	0.5	Drinking water.
Woodson	1.05	Riverfront walkway (fall 1995).

Table I Prepared by:
Wausau/Marathon County Park Department

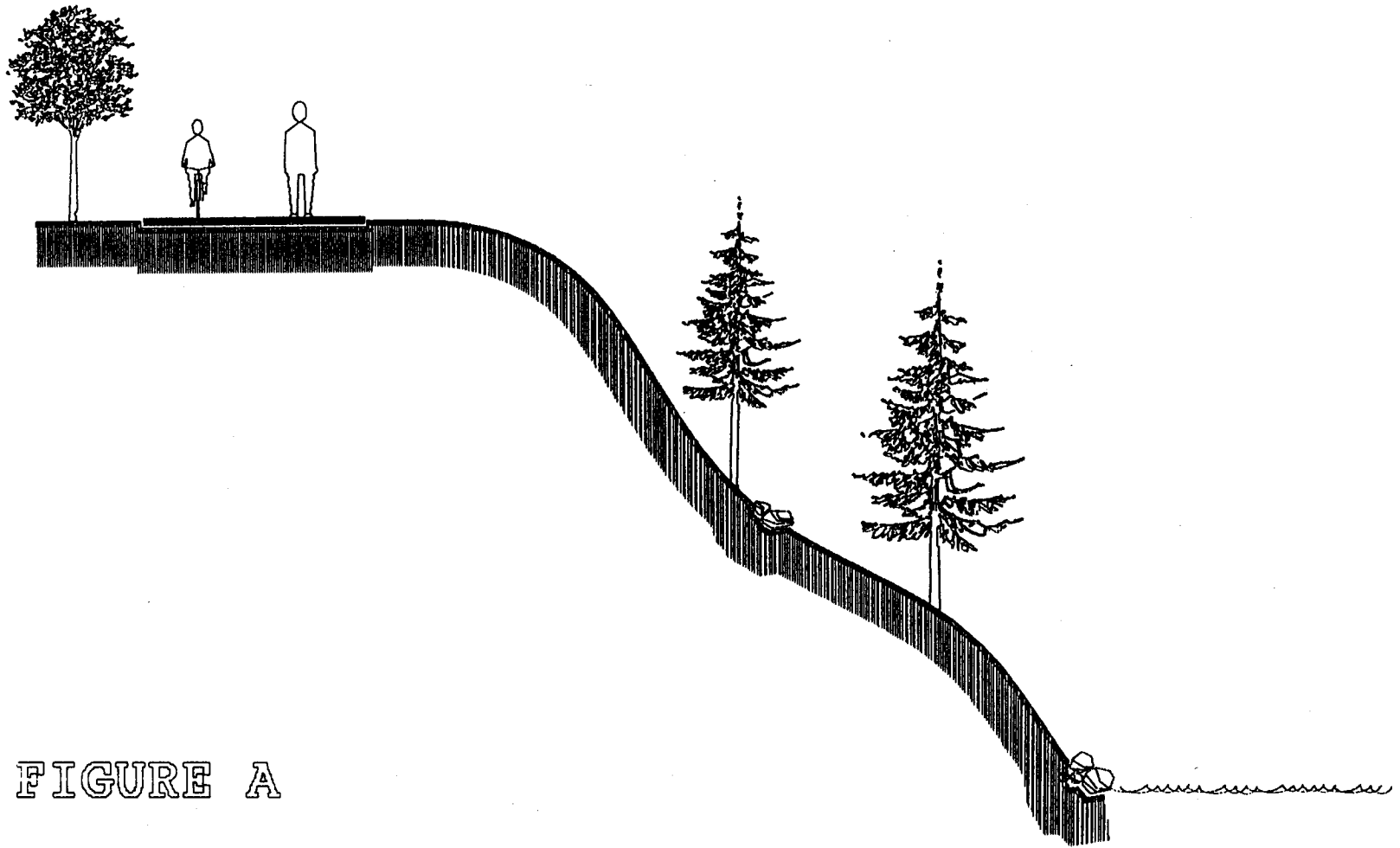


FIGURE A

TRAIL AT TOP OF RIVER BANK

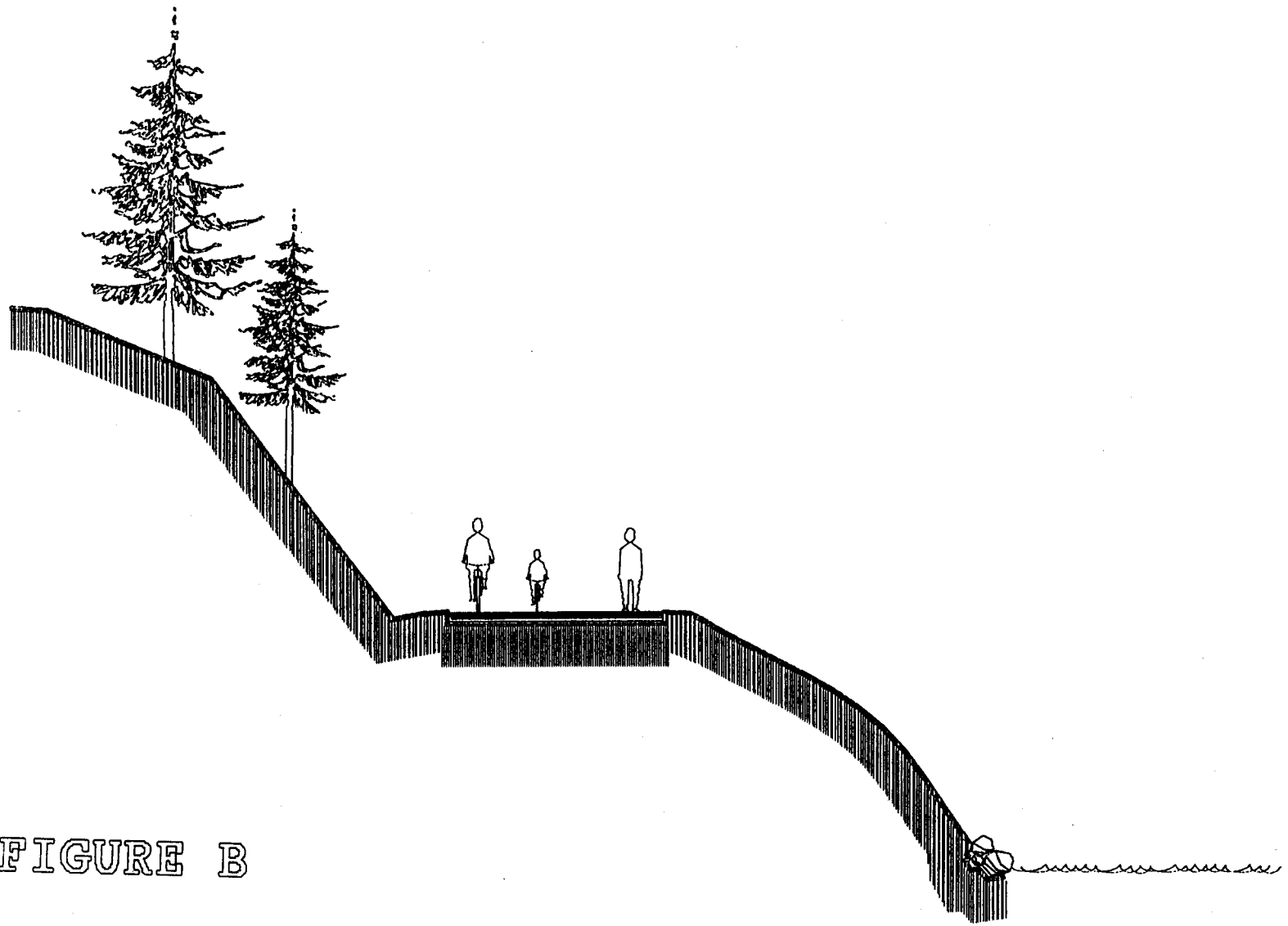


FIGURE B

TRAIL AT RIVER BANK SHELF

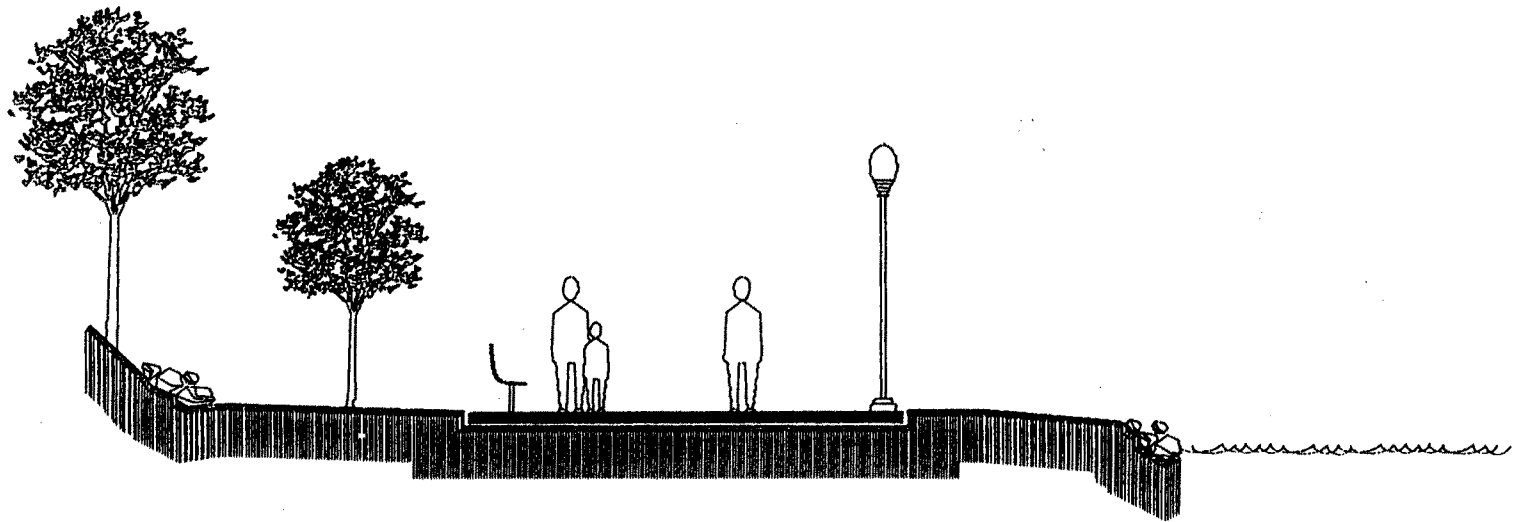


FIGURE C

TRAIL AT SEATING AREA

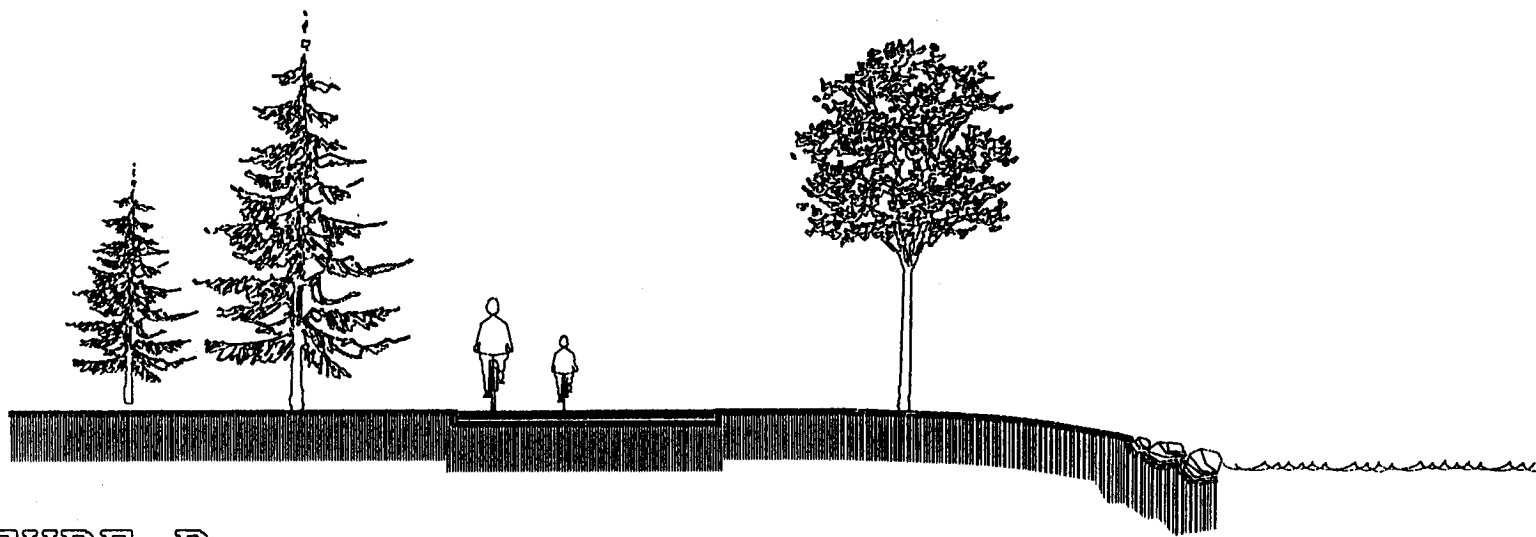


FIGURE D

TRAIL NEAR WATER EDGE

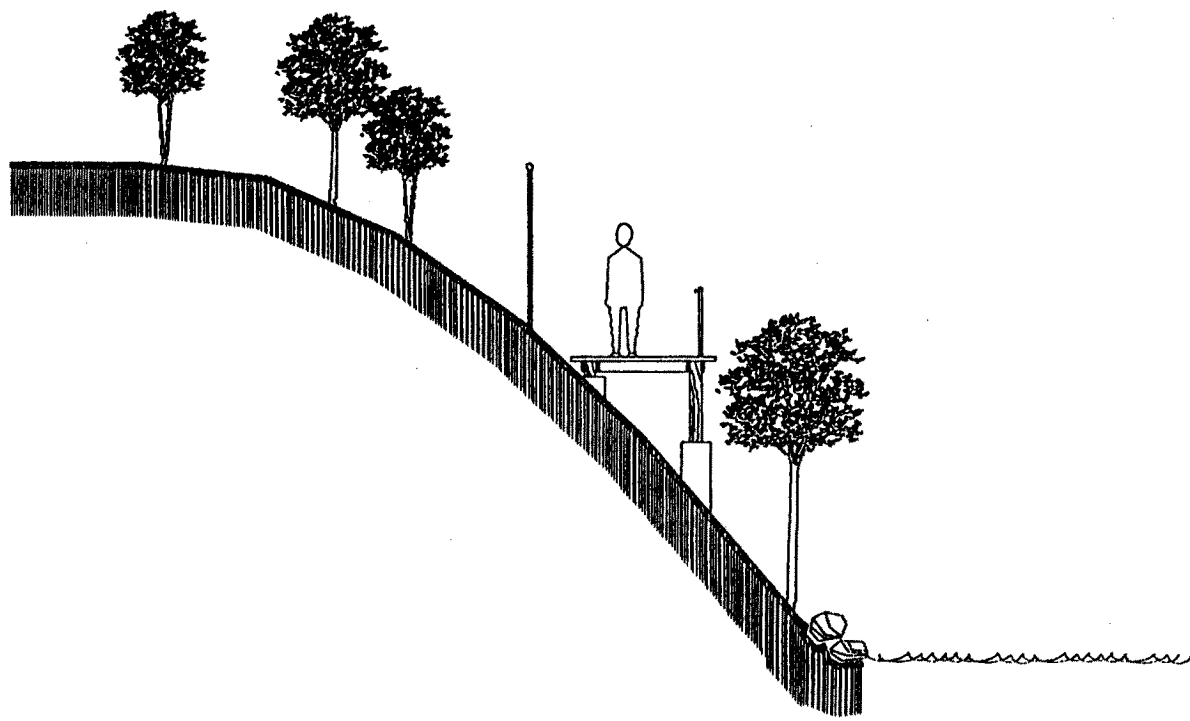


FIGURE E

TRAIL AT RAISED BOARDWALK

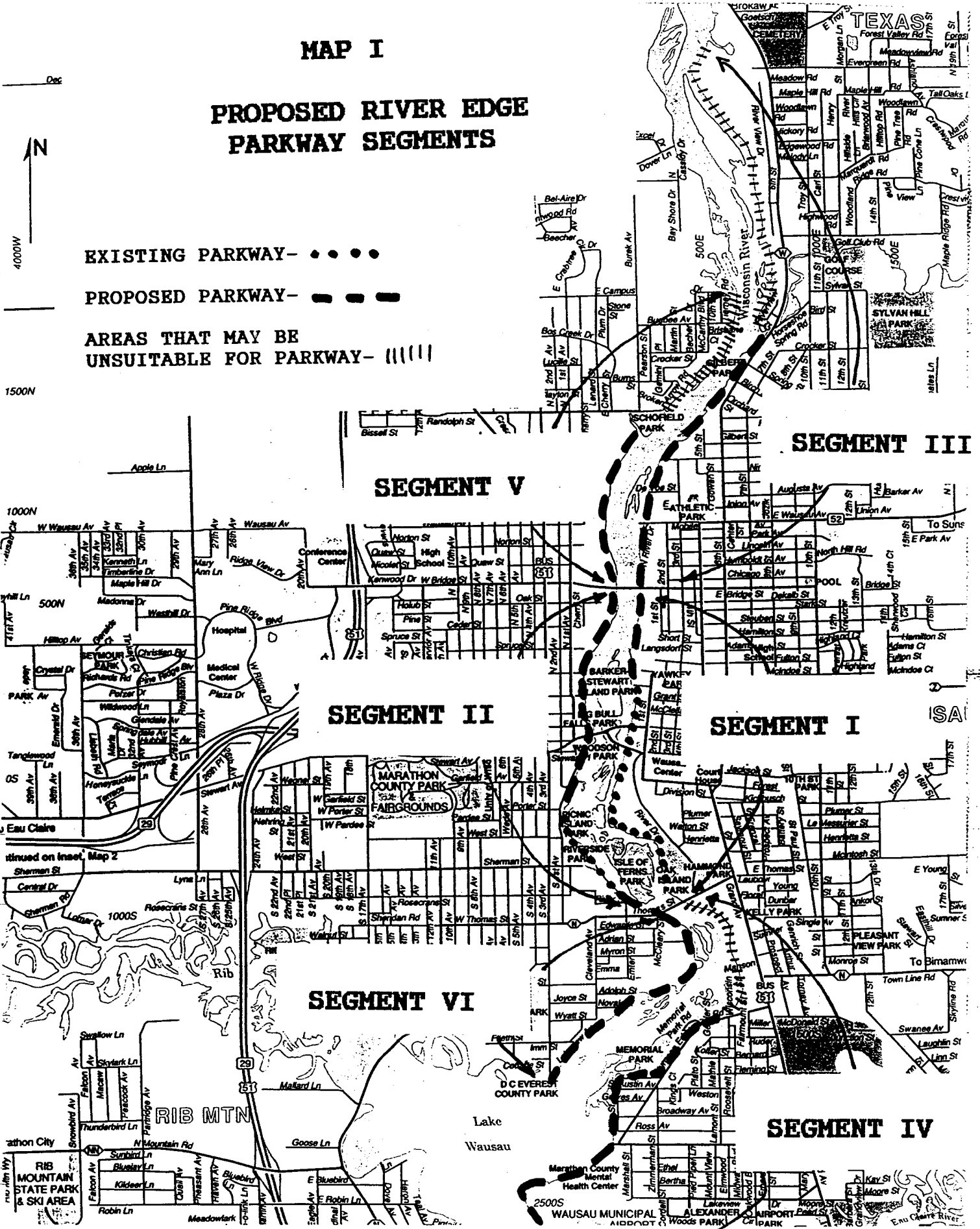
MAP I

PROPOSED RIVER EDGE PARKWAY SEGMENTS

- EXISTING PARKWAY- •••••
- PROPOSED PARKWAY- - - - -
- AREAS THAT MAY BE UNSUITABLE FOR PARKWAY- |||||

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1500N



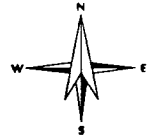
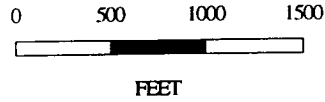
RIVER EDGE PARKWAY

SEGMENT III - Bridge Street to the north City limits on the east side of the Wisconsin River

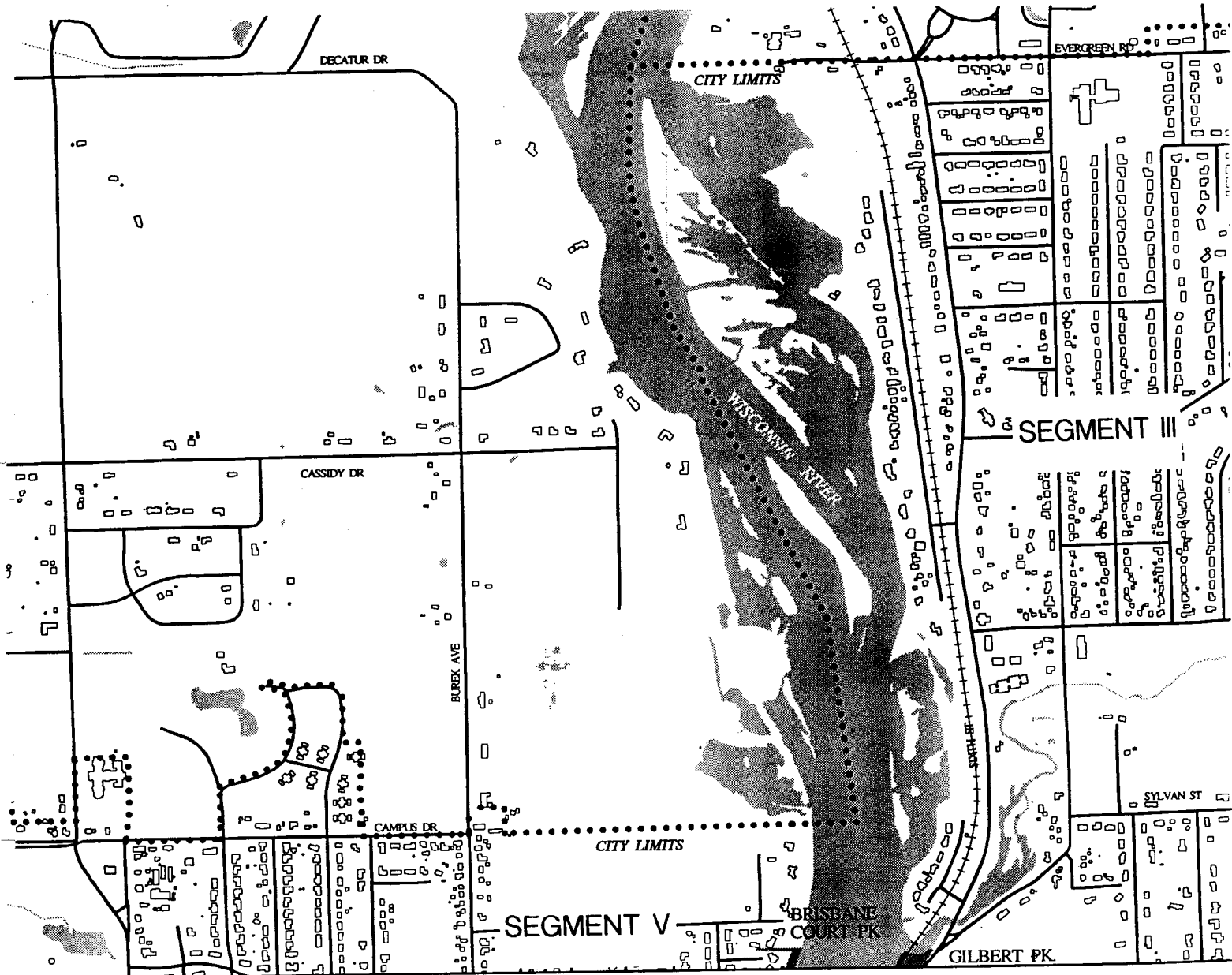
SEGMENT V - Bridge Street to the north City limits on the west side of the Wisconsin River

SEGMENTS III AND V

SCALE 1:12600



MAP FEATURES FROM MAY 1990 AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY



CITY OF WAUSAU

MAP III

RIVER EDGE PARKWAY

SEGMENT III - Bridge Street to the north City limits on the east side of the Wisconsin River

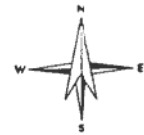
SEGMENT V - Bridge Street to the north City limits on the west side of the Wisconsin River

SEGMENTS III AND V

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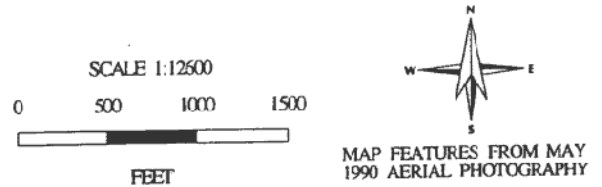
MAP FEATURES FROM MAY 1990 AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY



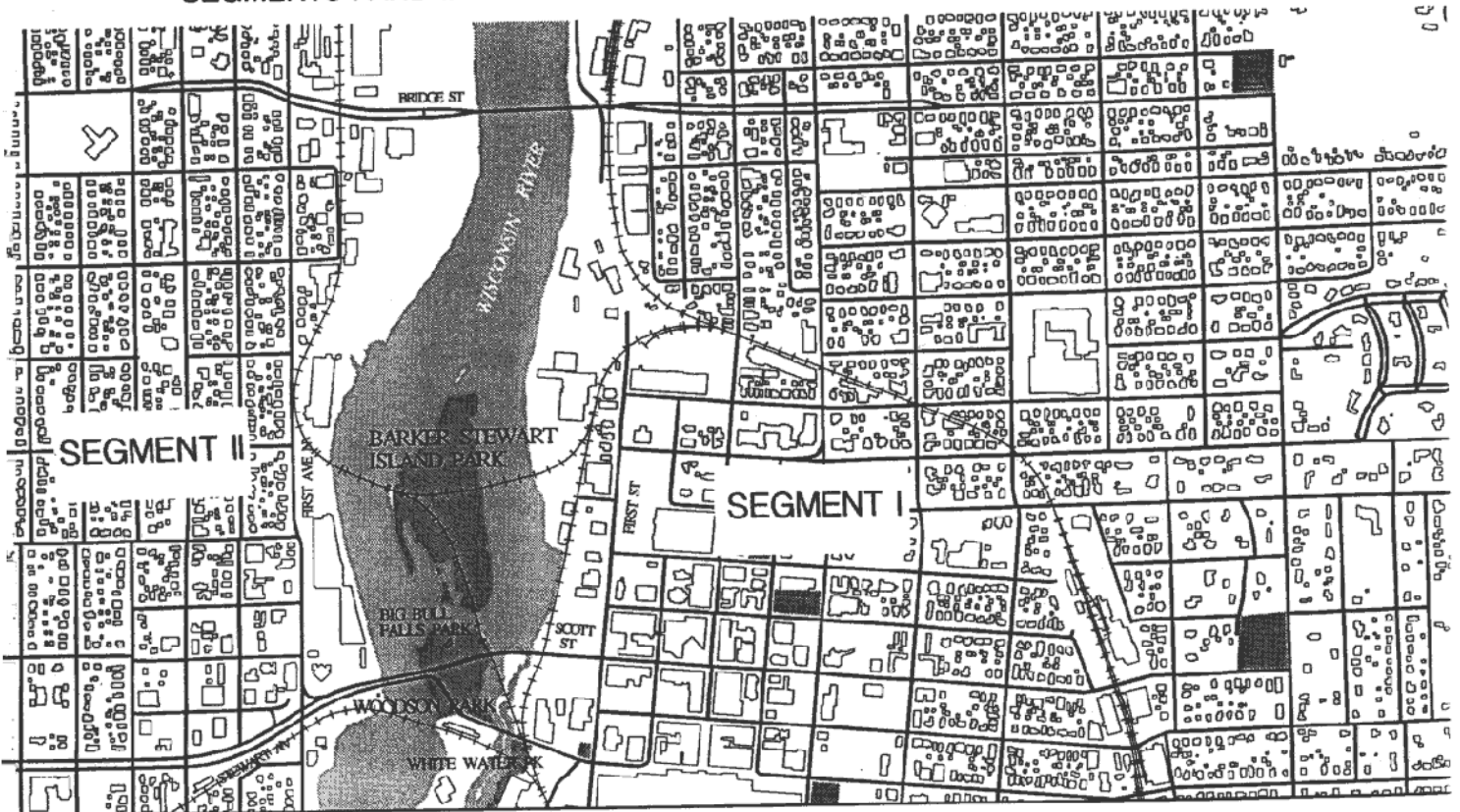
RIVER EDGE PARKWAY

SEGMENT I - Thomas Street to Bridge Street on the east side of the Wisconsin River

SEGMENT II - Thomas Street to Bridge Street on the west side of the Wisconsin River



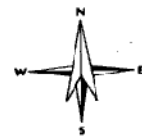
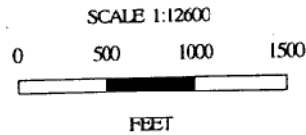
SEGMENTS I AND II



RIVER EDGE PARKWAY

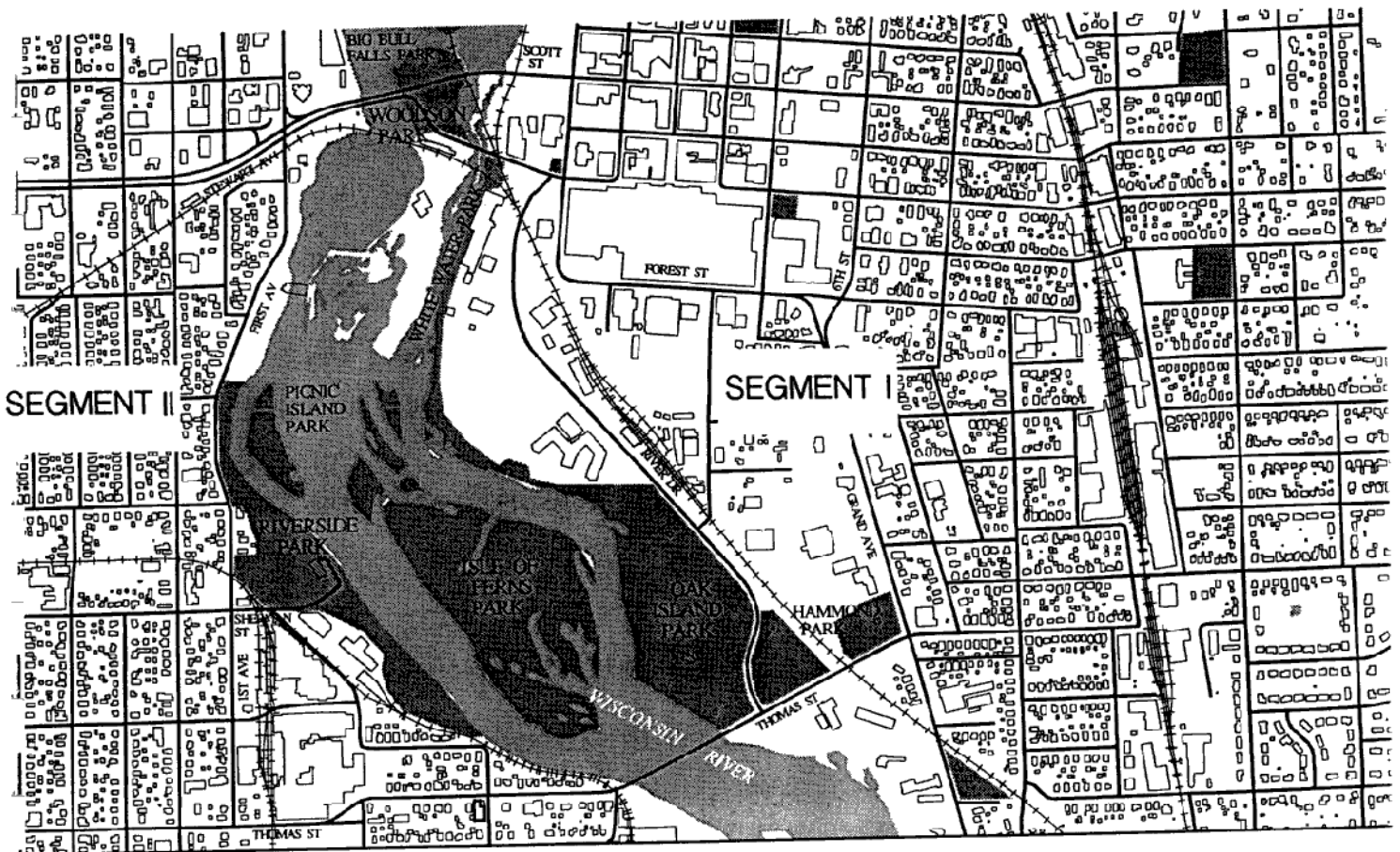
SEGMENT I - Thomas Street to Bridge Street on the east side of the Wisconsin River

SEGMENT II - Thomas Street to Bridge Street on the west side of the Wisconsin River



MAP FEATURES FROM MAY 1990 AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

SEGMENTS I AND II



RIVER EDGE PARKWAY

SEGMENT IV - Thomas Street to the south City limits on the east side of the Wisconsin River

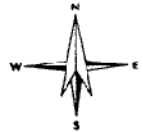
SEGMENT VI - Thomas Street to McCleary Bridge on the west side of the Wisconsin River

SEGMENTS IV AND VI

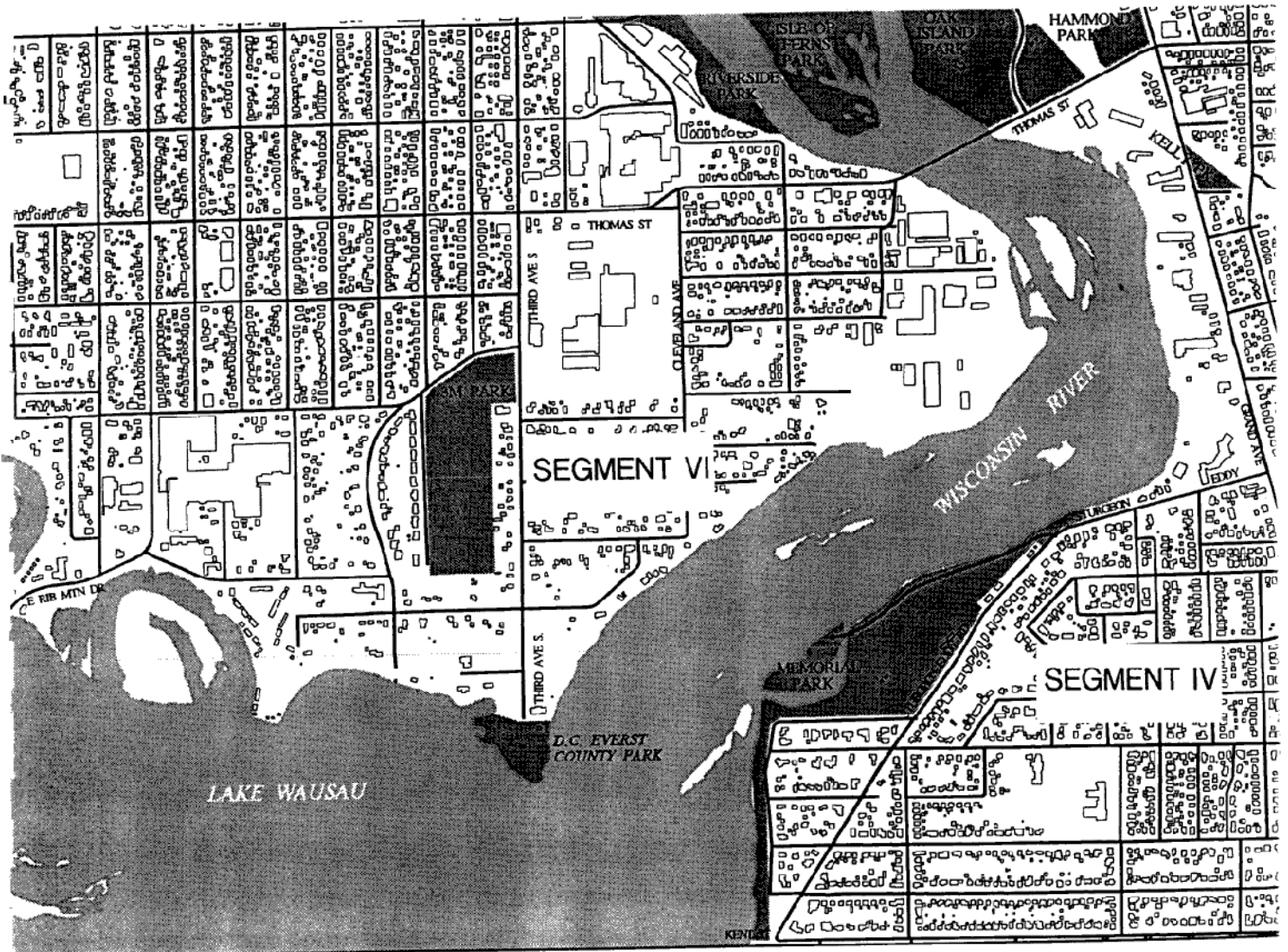
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FEET



MAP FEATURES FROM MAY 1990 AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY



RIVER EDGE PARKWAY

SEGMENT IV - Thomas Street to south City limits on the east side of the Wisconsin River

SEGMENTS IV

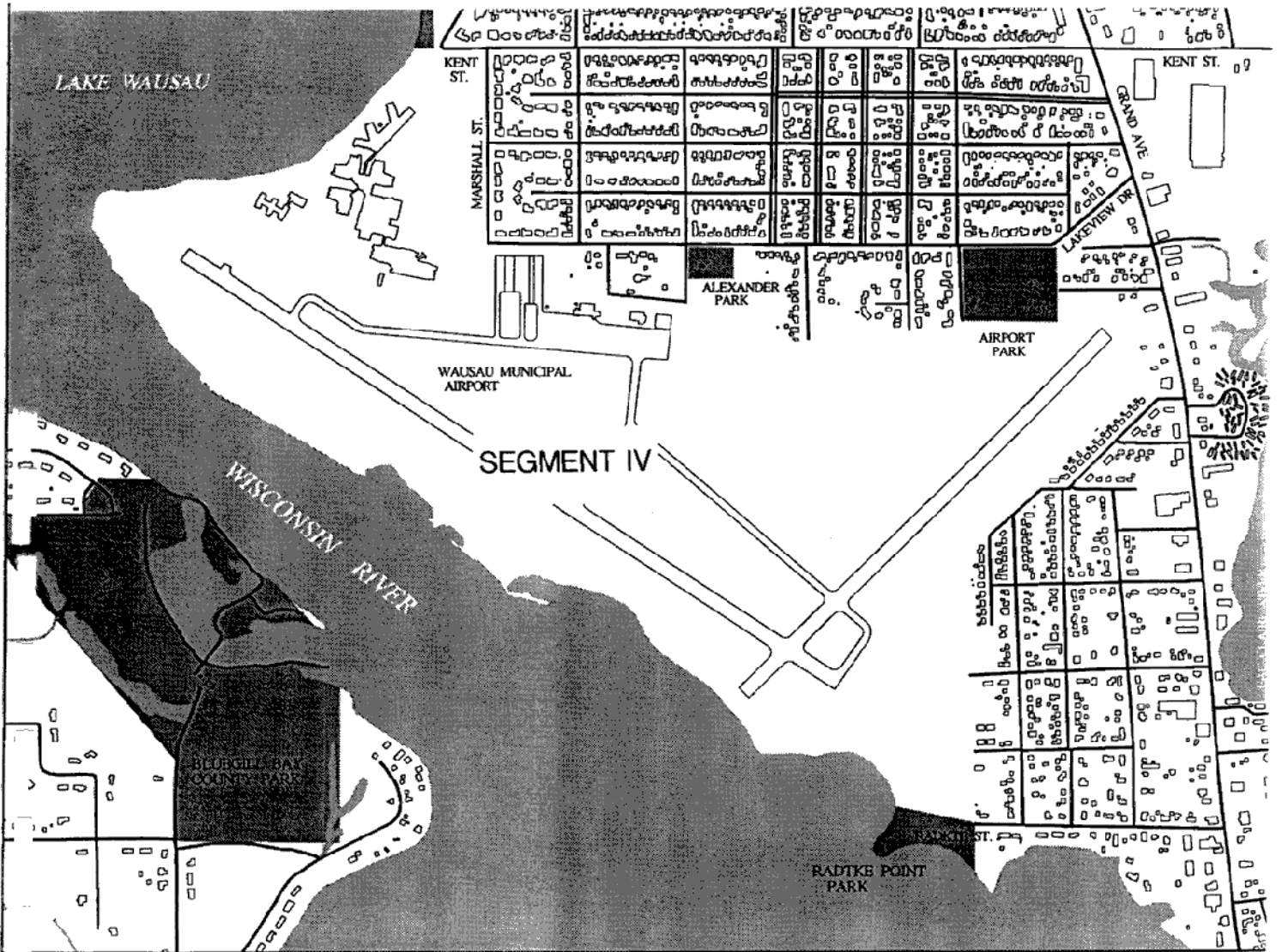
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MAP FEATURES FROM MAY 1990 AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY



RIVER EDGE COMMISSION-PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Time and Place: Thursday, October 24, 1991, at 7:00 p.m. in
the Council Chambers at City Hall.

Members Present: Dinsmore, Damgaard, Valitchka

Others Present Ken Jaecks, Peter VanBeek, Sally Reinertson,
Nancy Schulz, Joe Rohune, Bob Utech and
Deputy City Clerk Carlson

In accordance with Chapter 19, Wisconsin Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and copy sent to the Daily Herald in the proper manner.

There were thirty-five people in attendance.

The hearing was opened by Chairman Dinsmore who stated the purpose was to get public input to the development of a plan for the River Edge. Dinsmore stated that Valitchka would be giving a presentation as to the purpose of the Commission, where we are at, what we are about and where we hope to go. We hope that after his presentation there will be questions. Dinsmore asked people to come to the microphone and give their name.

Valitchka stated that the River Edge Commission is a public body of the City of Wausau and we are launching into the development of a master plan for the River Edge in our community. We felt that the first step to take was to find out from you what opinions and feelings you have about the river edge, and to share with us your ideas and hopes for the future. Valitchka stated that as a Commission we look at it with a long term vision and we know that this is a process and project that may take us well into the next several decades. We felt that it would be important to start by giving you an idea of what the River Edge Commission is all about, who we are, what our purpose is, and we would like to share with you both our mission and our vision and an outline of what we believe will be the basic components of the long range plan. After that we will open the meeting to you for your comments on what you think should be considered in the long range plans so that as we proceed with our plan it can be with your input.

Valitchka stated that the River Edge Commission was established by the City in 1974. In our purpose we state and understand that the river flows through our community, the Common Council found that the river is an important natural asset and a great value to our city both in the present and in the future. To this end the River Edge Commission was started. Our purpose is to study the river within the city with emphasis on the edge and islands in the river. We should include in our study present and projected future uses of the river within the city including but not

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limited to industrial, mercantile, recreational and aesthetic values. The Commission shall, after we do studies, make proposals and, where permitted by law implement proposals, plans and recommendations for the river. We will also entertain proposals from persons interested regarding use or improvement of the river. As you see our purpose is general in scope, focused on the river and our meeting tonight is most appropriate in hearing from you as residents of the City.

Valitchka stated that the Commission recently adopted a statement of mission and we see that our mission is to maximize the aesthetic and natural benefits of the Wisconsin River Edge in the City through study, planning and cooperative programs with all public and private interests for recreation and other uses. We see our mission as maximizing that resource for the benefit of our community.

It was important for us to have a vision for this river edge well into the future and we designed a vision statement that we thought was visionary, it was not meant to be something specific or concrete at this time, but is meant to be conceptual and give us a sense of where we want to go and have a goal and a purpose to shoot for in the long term sense. We have a vision of the river edge being a showplace of natural beauty for public enjoyment with a system of walks, recreation areas and commercial settings which utilize the natural resources and beauty of the river and its islands. It should be aesthetically pleasing, ecologically and environmentally sound with safe areas that provide enjoyment for the area citizens and visitors and profit the City. These areas would attract tourists and increase the value of the river corridor and surrounding areas.

At this point Valitchka went through some conceptual drawings developed by Mike Morrissey and Beth Krebs and explained the ideas presented on those drawings. After this was concluded, Valitchka opened the meeting for comments.

Sally Reinertson, 1229 Park Blvd stated that her main interest was in having a well developed walkway along the river as far as possible, preferably taking in most of the City. What is the proposal for what I would consider to be a hardtop cover for the walkway? Valitchka stated that the proposed design standard at this time would probably be a ten foot wide minimum asphalt path. A walkway that would be multi-purpose open to any and all uses, probably with segregated portions for use.

Sterling Anderson, 222 Sturgeon Eddy Road stated I think this is a really exciting proposal. I remember as the Riverside Plaza was built, where Prangeway is now, we just could not believe that they were going to put a whole string of stores with their backs facing the river and forget about that side. It is good to see

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someone working to remedy that. I do live in one of those four houses just behind Sturgeon Bluffs, and I should warn you that it is going to be very difficult for you to find a path there. Study that area very carefully. Valitchka stated that we realize that there are some physical limitations for the walkway to be totally contiguous and in those situations we would develop cut outs with a sign and perhaps a map showing where the walkway could be picked up again.

Bob Utech, 909 W Crocker Street, I have about 500 feet of River frontage and I want to see the area developed. I have a concern about the Cribs that are left in the River. I don't know if this group has any influence on that issue. I am very excited about the project itself.

Nancy Schultz, 417 Division Street stated that there are no rest room facilities and the rest room facilities are closed early in the fall. If you would consider this when you are making this walkway it would be appreciated.

Damgaard stated that he was very excited about this project, our river is one of our greatest assets and we should be using it to the best advantage, keeping it natural and making it something of value to our town.

Joe Rolling stated I am very glad to see this project happening and I would like to perhaps see some specialty shops and information centers along this area.

Bob Utech stated that his concern was about the cribs left in the River. At this point there was a discussion with audience participation. Bob Martini and Pete Tyler from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources offered information on how municipalities can obtain permits to remove structures from a river bed. Bob Martinie stated that there are several other cities that are trying to do the same thing. What we generally try to find out is where the cribs are located that you feel are of concern, if you try to take them out completely you could be removing fish and wildlife habitat as well. Usually we can come up with a compromise that reduces the height enough to allow boating safety but still contains enough fish and wildlife habitat as it was in the past. In most cases you would need a Chapter 30 permit to remove materials from the bed of navigable waters and there is a procedure that you have to go through to do that. Until you know exactly which ones you want to alter and exactly how much you want them altered, it is hard to deal with this.

Tyler also provided information on obtaining stewardship funding for river edge improvements.

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Comments offered from the audience included:

Consider and plan for the older buildings and cultural resources in the river corridor.

Use colors on bridges and buildings which blend with the natural surroundings.

Factor in the Marathon County Park Department Conservancy Plan for the river corridor.

Strike a balance between the desire to have natural aesthetics with the fact that we are in a city.

Have the river edge walkway make a loop if possible; allow for walking, running, roller blading and biking.

Build a good basic path and the rest will follow.

Valitchka stated that we would most likely have this type of forum again in a more formal fashion, but I would like to thank all of you who came tonight.

Dinsmore stated that since there was no further discussion at this time, I would also like to thank all of you for coming. We will consider this hearing closed. hearing closed at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Doris Carlson
Staff Secretary

APPENDIX II

Responses to October, 1991, Wausau Daily Herald Editorial

"I have reviewed the plans for the river front in Wausau and would like to commend the commission for creating a visionary plan. Your plan, when implemented, will make the river front an attractive asset in our urban environment.

One of the recommendations in your plan calls for establishing bus stops, where bus routes intersect the river. The Wausau Area Transit System, Inc. endorses the creation of bus stops to provide access to the walkway system for bus riders. If possible bus stops should be included in plans to replace the Falls Bridge and the streets around the bridge. Pullouts should be created for buses to allow them to get out of the flow of traffic while making such stops. Pullouts for bus stops will make them safer for bus riders and will reduce traffic conflicts.

Please accept my written comments in lieu of oral testimony. If you have any questions or need additional information please feel free to contact me at (715) 842-9287."

Joseph McCarthy, Manager
Wausau Area Transit System, Inc.

"First, use the Able Property for the library - We need this 1st & badly. Use no taxpayers dollars for this dream of a walkway. Remember the taxpayer's purse is getting thinner all the time with these dreams. The taxpayer just got taken for a ride again on this school deal."

A Disgusted Taxpayer

"Buy up all Frontage possible before more businesses start up on River Front like the Viking Elec Warehouse on Bridge St. Get rid of sore eyes like the concrete culverts stored along River Frontage between Winton and Gilbert St. Buy up this River Frontage property if possible.

Improve what we have such as Gilbert Park on No 6th St. Clean up brush. Fill in the holes along railroad tracks. Cover surface rocks with black dirt for better lawn."

Anonymous

"My vision for the River front should be something beautiful in nature of flowers, a walkway, benches etc. Probably a boat dock for ?pesive? boat rides. We could have a miniture scene of San Antonio, Texas. Place for band stand that could also be used for occassion needed, plus a beautiful water fountain. I could just go on & on. In winter place for ice sculptures. thank you."

Anonymous

"Naperville, Illinois has a very functional and lovely riverwalk. Volleyball courts which become ice rinks in the winter are a wonderful summer hangout for the area's teenagers. A state-of-the-art playground complete with a large sandbox and cushioned play area for handicapped youngsters is frequented on a continuous basis. An amphitheater has been included in the plans for warm-weather entertainment. A very large sled hill which doubles as another amphitheater is used year round as a place for winter activities as well as for summer and fall festivals. An area of the river is sectioned off for paddle boats. A concession stand is available for hungry visitors. Picnic areas are provided with tables or wide open grassy areas.

I would encourage you to contact Naperville's Chamber of Commerce because much of the walk was completed through volunteer efforts. I also believe the city of Naperville has accomplished a lot in the many ways it has found to use its riverwalk. It is a main attraction! I commend you and your efforts to use a grand resource. Good luck."

Van Walton

"Development of a Heritage Park along the river/in the corridor/near the downtown; Hmong Village with two traditional Hmong houses, Native American component, other ethnic traditions represented, e.g. European, Logging Museum, Papermaking Museum, etc."

Ron Lippi

"See what Duluth has done along lakeshore, also Houghton, Michigan along ship canal."

Mary Bethke

"Land Trust."

Edmund Suchomski

"Rivers have been ignored in America up to now. we are lucky to have one - lots have a bike path (important) & walking, a X-C ski track from the north to the south end of Wausau. This would encourage healthy activities. Need help - ask Minneapolis - Marvelous paths around their lakes. Ask Boulder, Colorado - a great river walkway bike path with trees, flowers, landscaping. Good luck!"

Anonymous

Please include a BIKE PATH with the walkway that is being planned along the Wisconsin River.

Our family enjoys "family bike rides" but there is always the danger of being struck by a car, especially for our youngest, age 7. It would be wonderful to have a safe bike path (free of car traffic) that a family could use and enjoy in Wausau.

Rockford, Illinois has an excellent, paved walkway and bike path along their river! It is beautiful and well planned in that the walkway and bike path are parallel to each other but yet separated by approximately ten feet of grass, making it safer for walkers and bikers. It would be worth a trip for the Planning Committee to venture to Rockford and see it for themselves. They would be impressed!"

Just a Mom who enjoys walks and family bike rides

"I think the proposed plans to develop a 6 mile trail along the river of recreation benefit to all age groups of the community.

I especially think that the feasibility of allowing cross country skiing on this trail in the winter would make it usable year round."

Anonymous

"I have a question for Wisconsin's River Edge Commission, is this walkway going to be safe? Who is going to be responsible for any one getting off the trail or falling into the river? My suggestion is for anyone using this trail or has use for it, pay for it and take care of it. Is anyone in a wheelchair with a cane or aged that can't walk will they have any use for it? don't make anyone on social security or on a pension pay for it, just collect from the people who want this. Not me.

P.S. Don't take it from my taxes."

Anonymous

"Split the "10 ft" trail

- 1) Walking
- 2) Biking
- 3) Jogging
- 4) Roller skating

A section for all (Blacktopped)

I wish everyone could see Lake Calhoun near Downtown Minneapolis - It is beautiful - They rent rollerskates there - - - The atmosphere is "terrific" - Walking or jogging next to water - I'm sure we could do it too; Park benches along the six miles. Go for it - - -"

Margaret Artus

"I am very excited about the possibility of a bike trail in Wausau. I hope it will be in the form of a loop or circle with mile markers along the way. As long as we're dreaming let's have it paved as opposed to rotten granite. Good luck!"

Anonymous

"Since they want individuals & corporations to contribute, why not persuade whoever has title to the NW corner of 1st & Scott to give the land for a park. According to an old Wausau Daily Record Herald the Wagner store was built on the site of the first cemetery in Wausau. It would be a fitting respect for the first settlers to have a "Pioneer" park, and atone for the desecration that took place in the past."

Earl Neitzke

"Hope you can read this - I feel very strongly about cyclists sharing the same walk with pedestrians. Few of them let you know they are close behind."

Mrs. Richard Barnes

"I like the walkway idea - but please not the same walk for people and bikers.

A lady walking the Oak Island walk was hit by a cyclist last July - Hospitalized with a broken femus bone & still painfully walks with a walker. There are many children, parents & seniors walking on Oak Island."

Anonymous

**RIVER-EDGE CLEAN-UP '92
RESULTS OF VOLUNTEER RESPONSE FORM
October 26, 1992**

SUMMARY:

Over 650 volunteers participated -- not including support personnel such as army, radio, Commission, DPW, etc. The Holiday Inn fed over 700-closer to 800 meals. Most verbal comments expressed to the Volunteer Center staff were extremely positive --- they appreciated the way they were treated and encouraged the development of similar projects.

Following are highlights of the results of the 41 written response forms returned to the Volunteer Center.

WAS THE RIVER CLEAN UP PROJECT A SUCCESS:

A resounding YES!

WHAT DID YOU LIKE MOST:

- "The organized, genuine enthusiasm volunteers received upon arrival."
- comraderie, fellowship and community spirit ranked high as did the satisfaction of doing something worthwhile for the environment.
- that it didn't take all day
- working cross-culturally for common purpose
- that all ages could participate
- it was well organized
- the sheer numbers of people and the positive attitude of all volunteers
- support of corporations
- "It was an opportunity for families to participate in worthwhile activities that helped set an example for younger generations that each of us can make a difference."

WHAT THEY LIKED LEAST:

It took too long to get started--- younger children were very restless.

HOW WOULD YOU IMPROVE A PROJECT LIKE THIS?

- Have written instructions for each team leader to eliminate oral instructions.
- Thank sponsors and give credits during lunch
- Schedule staggered starts.

WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO VOLUNTEER FOR OTHER COMMUNITY PROJECTS LIKE THIS? WHAT KINDS?

- A resounding YES.
- Many said they were interested in doing just about anything.
- Those more specific said they favored environmental projects such as planting, parks, lake clean-up, etc.
- Projects that would enhance our community ---- that whole families could do together, and
- projects that were short in duration and one time shots.

**HAVE YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT THE WISCONSIN RIVER CHANGED?
PLEASE DESCRIBE.**

- Comments expressed centered around the realization of a sense of history, both for the foresight of those who developed the cribs to insure its beauty as well as those who had abused the river.

"I feel very sorry for this overworked river -- Saturday it received some long overdue tender, loving care."

- Others reinforced the rivers' value as a great natural resource and asset to our community.

**WHAT SHOULD OUR COMMUNITY DO WITH ITS RIVER CORRIDOR AREA?
WHAT ARE YOUR IDEAS?**

- Many comments supporting a river walk-way - to include bike paths, parks, etc.
- Keeping it as accessible as possible to the greatest numbers of people.
- Continue improvements
- Clean up brush

HOW WOULD YOU MAKE THE CORRIDOR BETTER - WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE AND HOW?

- Most people felt the river corridor should be kept as public and natural as possible with access, parks, etc.
- A few more specific recommended:
 - banning any development that produces litter;
 - encouraging business bordering river to clean-up;
 - utilizing welfare work crews to main natural beauty;
 - removing log and rock pilings for better boat usage; and
 - shoring up banks to prevent erosion.

ARE YOU A WAUSAU TAXPAYER?

27 Yes - 14 No

WOULD YOU SUPPORT APPROPRIATIONS IN THE CITY BUDGET TO PAY FOR RIVER EDGE WALKWAY DEVELOPMENTS OVER THE YEARS?

23 Yes - 6 No - 11 no response