

City of Merrill
Eastside Waterfront Initiative

Riverfront Revitalization Plan

ADOPTED BY COMMON COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 9, 2010

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CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW

The Eastside Waterfront Initiative is a long-term effort to redevelop a critical portion of Merrill's Wisconsin River frontage. Stretching along the north bank of Wisconsin River south of the rail line, from the Business 51 bridge to Highway 64, this segment of riverfront has great potential for redevelopment and enhancing the Merrill community.

Merrill has an opportunity to transform this industrial section of the riverfront into a mixed-use riverfront destination that serves both visitors and residents. Riverfront redevelopment will initially offer improved tax base, environmental enhancement, shoreline improvement, better public access, public water recreation, and employment.

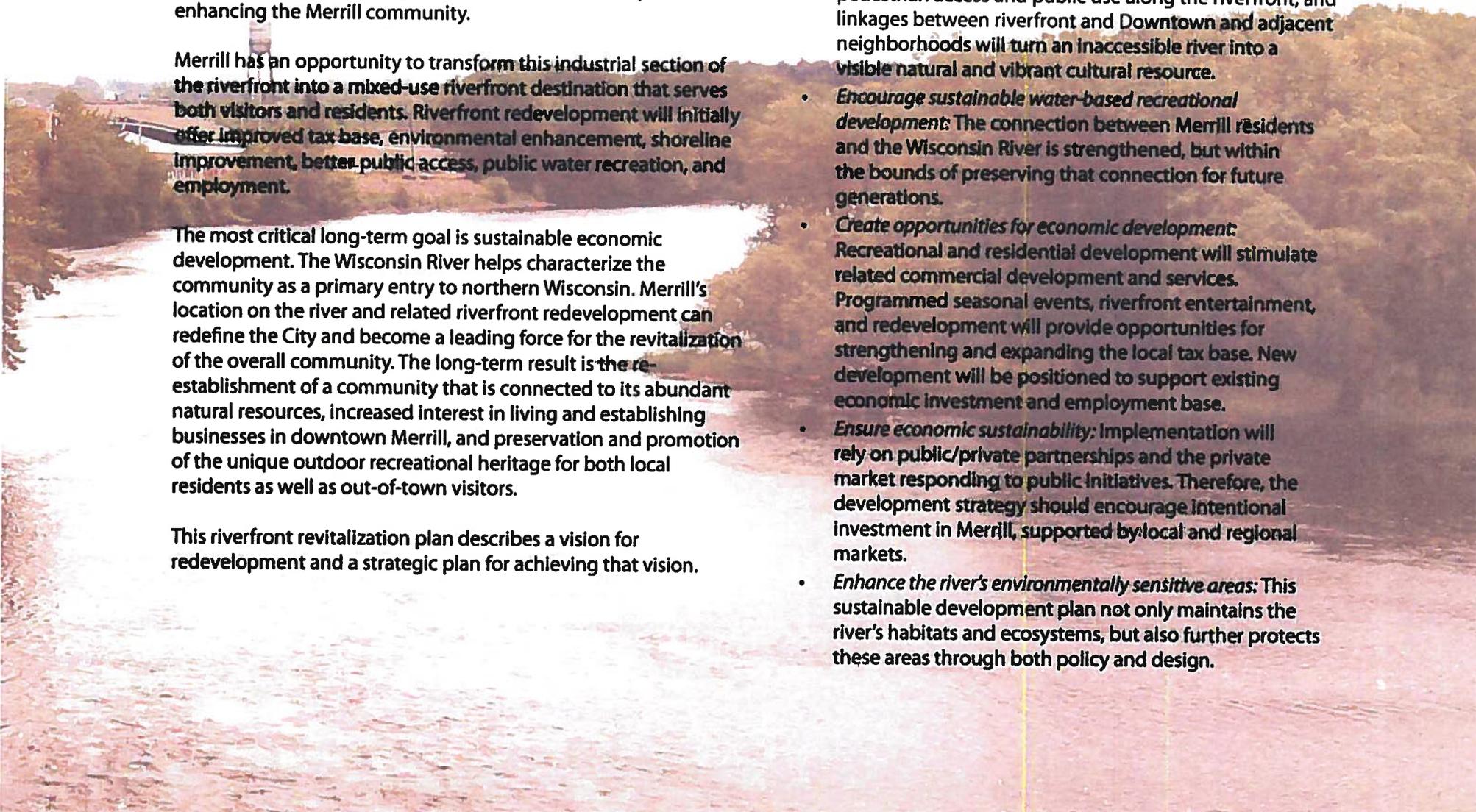
The most critical long-term goal is sustainable economic development. The Wisconsin River helps characterize the community as a primary entry to northern Wisconsin. Merrill's location on the river and related riverfront redevelopment can redefine the City and become a leading force for the revitalization of the overall community. The long-term result is the re-establishment of a community that is connected to its abundant natural resources, increased interest in living and establishing businesses in downtown Merrill, and preservation and promotion of the unique outdoor recreational heritage for both local residents as well as out-of-town visitors.

This riverfront revitalization plan describes a vision for redevelopment and a strategic plan for achieving that vision.

Riverfront Transformation

This riverfront revitalization plan will:

- ***Dramatically increase the access of the riverfront:*** Increased pedestrian access and public use along the riverfront, and linkages between riverfront and Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods will turn an inaccessible river into a visible natural and vibrant cultural resource.
- ***Encourage sustainable water-based recreational development:*** The connection between Merrill residents and the Wisconsin River is strengthened, but within the bounds of preserving that connection for future generations.
- ***Create opportunities for economic development:*** Recreational and residential development will stimulate related commercial development and services. Programmed seasonal events, riverfront entertainment, and redevelopment will provide opportunities for strengthening and expanding the local tax base. New development will be positioned to support existing economic investment and employment base.
- ***Ensure economic sustainability:*** Implementation will rely on public/private partnerships and the private market responding to public initiatives. Therefore, the development strategy should encourage intentional investment in Merrill, supported by local and regional markets.
- ***Enhance the river's environmentally sensitive areas:*** This sustainable development plan not only maintains the river's habitats and ecosystems, but also further protects these areas through both policy and design.



- ***Optimize opportunities for riverfront parks and recreation:*** Open space and trails will be designed and programmed to meet the needs of Merrill's residents and be sensitive to the river's ecology.
- ***Balance connections and access:*** Underscoring every successful redevelopment is a balanced transportation system. The plan puts those walking and biking along the river and through its adjacent neighborhoods on a level playing field with new vehicular connections and supportive parking areas.
- ***Support other revitalization efforts:*** While the riverfront redevelopment plan will be a key component in downtown and neighborhood revitalization, the plan supports and advances the City's other planning, marketing and revitalization efforts.