

Milwaukee Riverlink Guidelines

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Prepared for: City of Milwaukee

1.0 Introduction

The driving force behind Milwaukee's Riverlink Project is a renewed interest in waterway rehabilitation, due to a joint public/private effort to draw people to the water as a scenic and recreational resource and a focal point for revitalization of the deteriorated, underused land along the Milwaukee River. In order to be successful, the Plan must satisfy these objectives, as well as meet the dictates of the State's Public Trust Doctrine. In accordance with the Trust Doctrine, these guidelines primarily focus on waterway use and navigation rights. However, there are also important public access, planning and design issues that are pertinent to the character and quality of water front development. Therefore, these guidelines address the four components of waterfront access as well: 1) physical access; 2) psychological access; 3) visual access, and 4) economic access.

In addition to public access goals, the Riverlink guidelines address issues specifically related to the navigation value of the Milwaukee River, including:

- The river as a transportation corridor for ships, boats, and barges;
- The river as a scenic recreation corridor and public amenity; and
- The river as a natural resource habitat for various species of plant, fish, and wildlife.

2.0 Objectives

The primary objective of the Milwaukee Riverlink Project is to restore the Milwaukee River as a primary natural resource and recreational amenity within the City of Milwaukee. As a method of creating better public access, a series of riverwalks are proposed, running the entire length and both sides of the Milwaukee River from the North Avenue Dam to the Harbor Entrance. The general character of the proposed riverwalk can be described as follows:

- A greenbelt or continuous landscaped pathway to preserve and enhance both natural and man-made features of the urban landscape;
- A pedestrian-oriented urban trail to be a public, handicapped-accessible, and continuous recreation corridor unifying the water's edge;
- A waterfront promenade to provide an extended spine of public access and navigation-related activities, also linking Milwaukee's Downtown, harbor and neighborhoods;
- An integrated system of docks, piers, and riverwalk sections;
- A series of terraces, overlooks, and public gathering places at the water's edge to be interconnected by a continuous riverwalk and (where feasible) accessible from neighboring streets, sidewalks, buildings, parking lots, and parks; and
- A balanced and compatible arrangement of public and private development such that public and private amenities reinforce rather than restrict each other, and both support rather than compromise public access to the waterfront.