WATERFRONT PLANNING

Much of the City’s planning efforts in the past several years have focused on the waterfront along Lake Superior. In March 2005, the City adopted the Waterfront Action Plan to guide land use and zoning decisions in the areas stretching from Burlington Bay to Agate Bay. This section revisits some of the goals and action steps contained in that document while focusing on issues within the Waterfront Business District and planned marina development. Several other waterfront related issues are discussed in the rest of this document.

The traditional downtown of Two Harbors developed north of Agate Bay. Many businesses are still located there and many buildings remain available for businesses. Revitalization of this area has been a concern for many years. With the planned construction of the DNR marina and safe harbor and the possibility of new housing and lodging on Lighthouse Point, the potential for revitalization is much improved.

Waterfront Goals

1. Revitalize the Waterfront Business District as an entertainment, hospitality, and retail destination relating to the development of a marina in Agate Bay.

2. Support construction of a marina in Agate Bay, while improving waterfront access and providing open space by protecting natural aspects of publicly owned land, and encouraging investment in the downtown.

3. Redevelop JJ Castings and roundhouse for industrial use. Provide site access to Agate Bay.

4. Maintain and improve public access and use of the Lake Superior waterfront through trails, green space, and public recreation sites.

Waterfront Action Steps

1. Plan to construct the public plaza terminating Waterfront Drive that is described in the MN DNR Safe Harbor and Marina Design Plan.

   a. This project could be included in the planned request for state bonding for marina construction.

   b. The plaza would provide needed temporary parking, provide space for public use, and enhance the Waterfront Drive experience.

2. Develop a program for off-premise/way-finding signage connecting the waterfront and downtown waterfront district.
3. Develop a program to assist Waterfront Business District businesses with rehabilitation efforts.
   a. TIF, Tax Abatement, and Small Cities Development Comprehensive Grants are among the possibilities that should be explored.
      i. There is ongoing discussion of when to recommend implementation of a program: Starting before marina construction or when/after the marina construction is underway.
   b. Promote the City’s existing storefront revolving loan fund.

4. Work with Waterfront Business District business representatives to complete a concept plan to improve storefronts, and “turn businesses towards the water” by improving the waterfront sides of buildings and public spaces.
   a. Assist the business district representatives to secure funds to enlist the assistance of engineering or landscape architect firm with urban design experience.

5. Work with public and private local business stakeholders to improve marketing of Two Harbors as a destination for businesses.

   a. Apply for funding to raze and prepare the property for redevelopment.
   b. Actively market the site using economic development resources and partners.
   c. Provide site access to Agate Bay by zoning a sufficient area of the shoreline for industrial use.
      i. If the property is developed with a tenant that does not require access to the Lake the City can reassess the land use and zoning for the affected shoreline.

7. Rezone the PR (Park and Recreation District) south of the [proposed] northern MUW District and the city sewer plant property, east of the [proposed] western MUW District, east of the [proposed] PR area owned by the MN DNR, not including
the PR zoned property within the area that is currently fenced in around the
lighthouse property to PP (Park Preserve).

8. Rezone the IW (Industrial District Water Related District) and PR (Park and
Recreation District) south of the city sewer plant, west and north of the
Lighthouse Point Park Preserve, and east of the Mn/DNR Boat Launch property to
MUW (Mixed Use Waterfront). The existing road right of way should be included in
the MUW zoning. This MUW zoning will be separated into two nodes with the
smaller node being diagonally located southwest of the larger one.
RECREATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The natural setting of Two Harbors influences the city’s residents and economy in complex ways. The Lake, shoreline, scenic views, open space, parks, and historic features, are major attractions to residents, visitors and commerce. The benefits of recreation (physical and mental health, economic development, social interaction, and environmental awareness, among others) have become recognized as valuable to the public. Most of these benefits serve the individuals who take advantage of available recreational opportunities. Nevertheless, many of the benefits to individuals lead to other benefits that have social or collective merit. In fact, many of the immediate benefits are recognized to be social instead of individual in nature.

Social and cultural benefits are perhaps the best-documented contributions of “quality of life” indicators, and help put into perspective the range of feelings that people have about the role and consequences of recreational activity. Recreation resources and opportunities help to sustain the central values, tourism and related amenities. In addition, recreation and tourism activities and facilities can maintain and enhance ethnic identities and meet the unique needs of particular segments of society (the elderly, single parents, children, teenagers, the physically disabled, for example) that cannot be met otherwise. Evidence is mounting that systems of social support and companionship contribute to longer, more disease-free, higher quality of life. Many of these systems are highly dependent on recreational opportunities.

Providing recreational amenities can raise property values; costs from erosion will be minimized; spending on recreational activities by local residents will increase; parks and open space influence the quality of life and location decisions of families and businesses; and community attractiveness and recreational opportunities for tourism may increase. A community that has a healthy environment can benefit in many ways. Quality of life will be improved, which will be attractive for potential residents, and land values will increase. Creating a healthy living environment can be as simple as planting trees and shrubbery or keeping one’s property maintained. Environmental protection can also become more intricate through the adoption of erosion control or tree protection ordinances, and by establishing conservation districts.
Green Space is an important factor in encouraging active living through recreational activities. Green space is characterized by a natural state and can be unimproved "green" land or improved "green" land that does not include intensive activities such as organized sporting facilities. Communities with green space recreation areas provide relaxing environments for people of all ages and activity levels.

**Recreation and Natural Resources Goals**

1. Provide access to park and recreation facilities for residents of all ages, activity levels and interests.

2. Use land within the City of Two Harbors in a planned and managed way to bring about moderate population and economic growth while protecting key environmental and historical features such as the lakeshore, Skunk Creek, wetlands, scenic views, the lighthouse and other historic sites and preserve access and public views to the waterfront.

3. Support construction of a marina in Agate Bay, while improving waterfront access and providing open space by protecting natural aspects of publicly owned land, and encouraging investment in the downtown.

4. Maintain and improve public access and use of the Lake Superior waterfront through trails, green space, and public recreation sites.

5. Expand the Burlington Bay Campground. The west Burlington Bay area will be a combination of city campground, trailhead and recreation, open space and natural area, and a planned commercial hospitality district.

**Recreation and Natural Resources Action Steps**

1. The City will preserve the eastern node of Lakeview Park and the Skunk Creek Woods as public green space by rezoning them to Park Preserve (PP).

2. Complete the Burlington Bay Campground Expansion.

3. Collaborate with Lake County and other partners to expand and improve the skate board park and ice rink facilities behind the County Arena.


   a. The trails system is designed primarily as a part of the transportation system but has many recreational benefits as well.