

## Planning Efforts for the Plainfield Riverfront: A Historical Perspective

**1900's:** As early as 1904 the Village had a riverfront amenity known as Electric Park. It was established by a streetcar company to promote business. Electric Park opened in 1904 and was named for the electric lights that were hung from the trees. In its heyday, Electric Park featured restaurants, dancing, a water slide and various other riverside activities until its closure in 1923 resulting from the decline of the streetcar business. Today, Electric Park is a riverfront park located on the east bank of the DuPage River, south of Lockport Street adjacent to Downtown Plainfield. Owned by the Plainfield Park District, the park includes a walking path, a playground, benches, open space areas, and a small parking lot.

**1988:** The concept of a riverwalk is included in the Village's first official Comprehensive Plan which was adopted in this year. Though, at that time, it was not referred to as a "riverwalk." The Plan called for a "River parkway" which would set aside a greenbelt along the DuPage River. Page 42 of the Plan states:

- "The River and its banks are environmentally sensitive areas which cannot withstand development of much intensity. "Setting aside" the greenbelt around the DuPage River will protect this fragile area, and allow it to provide its natural flood control function."
- "The River parkway helps establish the boundaries of the Village at the eastern, southern and southwestern edges. The river also serves to separate areas of differing intensities, and establish clear entry points into the Village. Such an outstanding natural feature, if enhanced by the parkway system, can create a very special identity for Plainfield, not easily duplicated."
- "The River parkway would provide outstanding recreational opportunities, and would link various parks and facilities throughout the community via walkway or bikeway. The Village and Park District could establish any number of special events and activities, such as bicycle races, foot races, picnics, boating events, and a range of other possibilities."
- "Finally, the greenbelt system can reinforce the physical shape of the community, and ensure that as Plainfield grows, it retains its traditional small

town scale. It can act to reinforce the role of historic downtown as the central activity place for the Village."

**1995:** The Village adopts an update to the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan recommends expansion of commercial uses along the river, and states "shops and particularly restaurants can make effective use of river frontage" (P.7). The 1995 Plan recommends expansion of commercial uses along the river and states "shops and particularly restaurants can make effective use of river frontage" (P.7). Although the 1995 Plan includes some of the concepts related to development of a riverwalk, the term "riverwalk" is not expressed.

**2000:** The concept of a "riverwalk" is mentioned in a Village planning document which was adopted in August of this year. The "Master Plan and Streetscape Design for Downtown Plainfield" is more commonly referred to as the "TENG Plan" due to the name of the planning consultant who prepared the plan on behalf of the Village. The TENG Plan includes recommendations for a "riverfront walk/promenade" along the DuPage River, a bike path along the river corridor with linkage to the Downtown, and various public plazas along the river. The Plan also includes conceptual illustrations.

**2002:** In May 2002, the Village adopts a Comprehensive Plan Update (updating the 1995 Comprehensive Plan), which incorporates many of the same recommendations for the riverfront as provided in the TENG Plan.

**2006:** The Village and Park District pass resolutions adopting the Plainfield Riverfront "Vision" document, which is published in May 2006. The major features include expansion of Electric Park with an ice rink and/or a children's garden; a riverwalk which links the existing Downtown with a farmer's market, festival space, cultural venues and events; and extensive natural landscaping in the areas extending north and south of the central section. Other ideas include fishing access, picnic areas, scenic overlooks and parking both in the north and south sections; a canoe launch; and connections to the DuPage River Trail (regional bike trail to be located primarily along the west bank of the DuPage River). The "Vision" document states "The long-term vision is to create a unique, exciting, and attractive riverfront corridor that links residents to the Village's history, geography, economy, and culture in sustainable ways". That is essentially the mission statement. Also, the Executive Summary refers to "a vision...that is unique, innovative and environmentally

sensitive...” The Village sees the project as something that will add to the quality of life for the residents, contribute to additional economic development in the Downtown, and be a focal point for the community.

In November 2006, the master planning process begins with a kick-off meeting held with the Steering Committee, followed by meetings with various community stakeholders. An initial Public Input Meetings is conducted in December 2006.

**2007:** A second Public Input Meeting is conducted in March 2007. The *Plainfield Riverfront Master Plan* is completed and officially adopted by the Village Board in June 2007. Implementation of the Plan begins in Fall 2007 with the design and preparation of construction plans for the first phase project, known as the Northwest Riverwalk project.

**2008:** Construction plans for the Northwest Riverwalk project are completed in Summer 2008 and are currently waiting funding for construction. The Steering Committee continues to discuss the creation of a Riverfront Foundation and future projects that are identified in the *Plainfield Riverfront Master Plan*.

