ST. CLOUD URBAN AREA
MISSISSIPPI RIVER CORRIDOR PLAN

ADOPTED BY THE ST. CLOUD AREA JOINT PLANNING DISTRICT BOARD ON APRIL 28, 2011

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ST. CLOUD URBAN AREA MISSISSIPPI RIVER CORRIDOR PLAN

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This project would not have been possible without the generous financial contributions received from the following:

- *Initiative Foundation, a regional foundation*
- *Central Minnesota Community Foundation*
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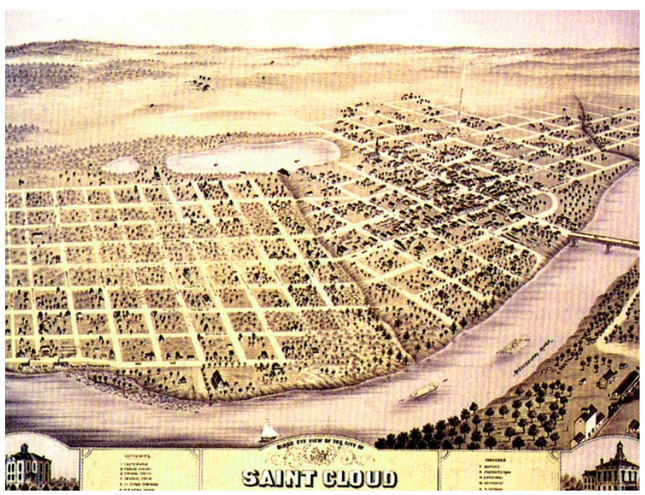
INTRODUCTION

Almost as soon as the City of St. Cloud was settled in the 1850's, local residents looked for a way to harness the power of the great Mississippi River. In 1886, the first dam was built, spurring a significant growth in local industry. Saw mills, flour mills and manufacturing were the dominant uses along the river during those formative years.

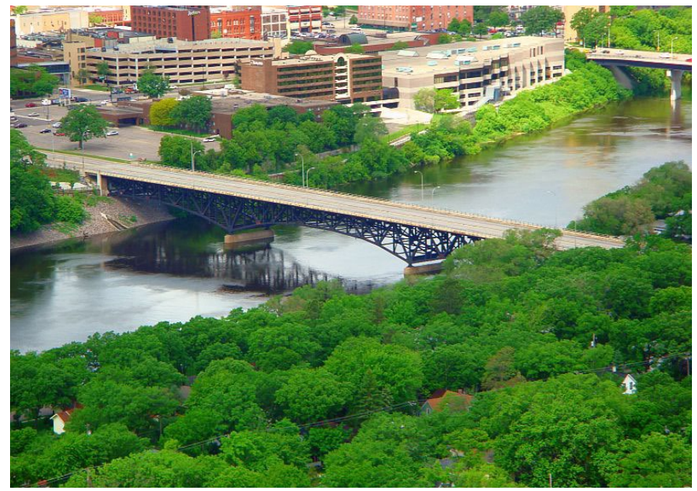
Early settlers chose to live within walking distance to its banks, establishing some of St. Cloud's and Sauk Rapids' oldest neighborhoods. As the area grew more prosperous, some of the finest homes in St. Cloud were erected on the high bluffs overlooking the river. With the advent of the automobile making it increasingly convenient to drive to a house farther away from the city center, development of surrounding agricultural lands became the dominant development pattern.

Today's residents are finding their way back to the Mississippi River. They are looking for ways to reconnect to this national treasure as it flows through the St. Cloud urban area from Itasca State Park southward to the Mississippi delta.



PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of this plan is to establish a community based vision and implementation strategy to maintain the Mississippi River as a regional asset through sustainable utilization and stewardship. It is a result of a regionally coordinated effort by the Cities of St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids, and Sartell, and Benton, Sherburne, and Stearns Counties and numerous Mississippi River advocacy groups.



Based upon previous planning initiatives, this plan serves as a guiding document for development, redevelopment, natural resource enhancement, preservation, and promotion of the river corridor within the St. Cloud urban area.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Through an interactive, broad-based process of community involvement, the planning process established a consensus vision, recommendations and implementation strategies focused on strengthening the relationship between the river and its neighboring communities. Primary objectives of the plan include:

- Review of historical and current conditions of the Mississippi River throughout the St. Cloud metropolitan area
- Review and incorporation of river-related policies, plans and projects identified in previous community planning efforts
- Create and adopt a single urban area river corridor planning document
- Define the character of development/redevelopment that will occur adjacent to the river corridor
- Develop a prioritized list of recommendations and strategies to achieve the identified goals and objectives

PLANNING PROCESS

The St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor Plan builds upon momentum recently generated by public and private initiatives focusing on the Mississippi River. **Mississippi River Connections** and **Mississippi River Renaissance**, for example, have mobilized a diverse cross section of St. Cloud's environmental, entrepreneurial, government, academic stakeholders, and private citizens interested in river corridor stewardship to serve as a base for community involvement and promotion of the river. The strength and commitment of these citizen driven initiatives spurred action of local government officials and citizen forces, as well as strengthened applications to the project's funding partners to supplement their own volunteer efforts.

Creating a clear community based vision and action plan for managing, enhancing and leveraging the riverfront through the St. Cloud urban area is necessary to successfully implement the desired outcomes expressed by the St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor Plan. The vision and can-do thinking championed by these various local initiatives continued through the planning process which included:

- A community-wide luncheon presentation and project kick-off meeting with 100+ attendees.
- A 14-member Project Advisory Committee that held 10 meetings during the course of the 12-month project.
- Four, multi-person special Topic Area Task Force committees that focused on four topic areas: Ecosystem Protection/Restoration, Active Recreation/Trails, Urban /Economic Development and Events/Tourism (50+ task force members).
- Two community-wide open house sessions, one in St. Cloud and one in Sauk Rapids.
- Two virtual, web-based interactive open houses with 2,000+ hits.

- Project web site for community members to view project documents.
- An electronic survey that prioritized 100+ task force recommendations by 300+ participants.

The most readily identifiable outcome of the river corridor planning process would be for the river communities within the St. Cloud Urban Area to be recognized as vibrant "river cities" that embrace and leverage the unique assets of the mighty Mississippi River.

USE OF THE PLAN

This five-year plan is intended for use by a variety of audiences including local municipalities, government agencies, and organizations for planning purposes. It will also be interesting for existing and potential residents, visitors and entrepreneurs seeking information regarding the benefits of residing, visiting, or investing in the area.

MANY PLANS - ONE RIVER

Communities within the St. Cloud Metropolitan area take great pride in their proximity to the Mississippi River and have been proactive in planning for wise land use and stewardship of adjacent areas along this nationally acclaimed asset. Many of these planning initiatives address aspects of the Mississippi River, and have identified public concerns, issues and opportunities. They also include supportive documentation for establishing the vision and recommended priorities described in this new river-specific plan. Some of these related plans also identify funding strategies, phasing and capital improvement budgets for specific river-related projects.

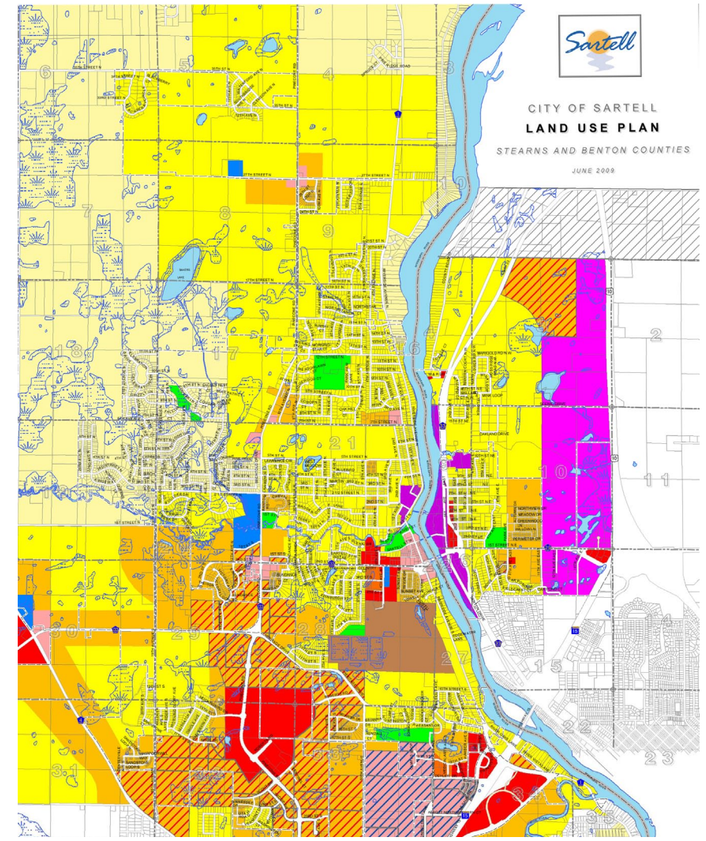
A review of those planning documents was completed in order to identify key elements that addressed issues and opportunities relating to the river corridor. It's the intention of this plan to identify and incorporate those key river-related elements.

Public Input

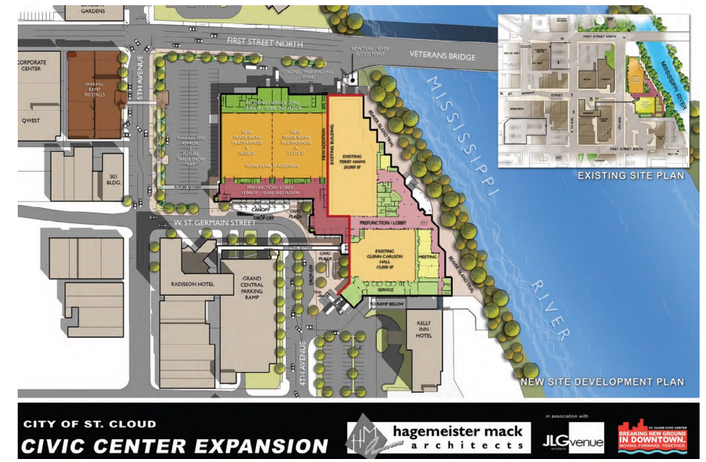
Beaver Island Bike Trail – wish it could be extended to the Lake Wobegon Trail. · Nowhere to "touch the river" on west side, north of downtown – but there are places this could happen. · Expansion of Civic Center should provide better access to river. · Beaver Island Trail is fantastic. · Munsinger Gardens is a gem. · The Mississippi River is one of the reasons I want to l live here. · The parks along the river are a great place to go. · People do not know where River is unless they actually cross it/use a bridge– please provide signs. · The entire St. Cloud area needs to better market the River and its unique opportunities. · Need to have more (or same) river-based, river-oriented events.

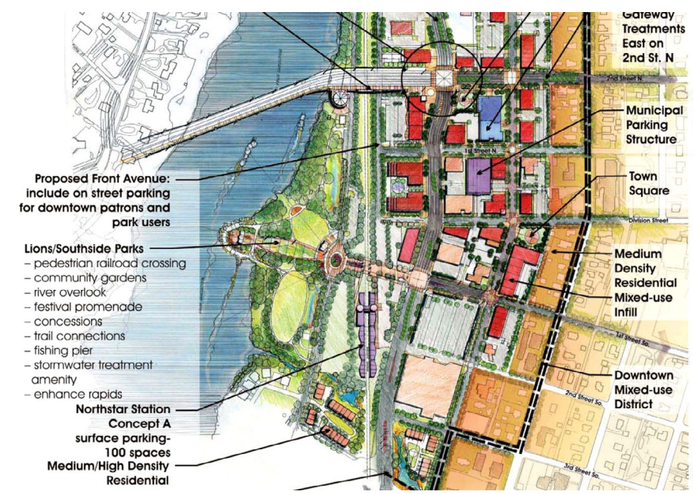
The following table presents previous related plans prepared by participating communities and lists the key river - related elements found in each of the plans.

Plan	Public/Private Investment	Key Elements
Greenway Concepts		
Greenway Concept	Public – City of St. Cloud	Conceptual greenway corridor and alternates including north-south corridor along the Mississippi River
Park and Trail Master Plans		
Watab Creek Park Master Plan	Public – City of Sartell	• Watab river overlook • Trail connections • Seating areas • Shelter/picnic area • Court games • Wading pool/splash pad area • Parking facilities • Historic interpretation • Public art features
Rotary Park Master Plan (2009)	Public – City of Sartell	• River access • Fishing pier • Shelter • Trail connections • ADA parking • Park amenities
Southside/Lions Park Master Plan	Public – City of Sauk Rapids	• Pedestrian railroad crossing • Community gardens • River overlook • Festival promenade • Fishing pier • Stormwater treatment • Park amenities • Rapids enhancement
Beaver Island Regional Trail Plan (2000), Expansion Plan – North Segment	Public – City of St. Cloud	• Follows existing 5th Avenue N • Railroad bridge underpass • Veteran's bridge underpass • Trail connection to existing Civic Center trail
Beaver Lake Regional Trail Plan (2000), Expansion Plan – South Segment	Public – City of St. Cloud	• Scenic trail overlooks • River views • Trail head/parking facilities • Trail connections • Interpretive facilities/ native prairie
Rose Walk Tour	Public- City of St. Cloud	Self guided tour of sites along the Mississippi River between Veterans Bridge and the University Bridge
Clemens/Munsinger Garden Plans	Public- City of St. Cloud	• Green houses
Riverside Park Plan (2006)	Public- City of St. Cloud	• Internal trails/trail connections • Floating bridge to Beaver Island • Water taxi • Special events bldg • Shuttle link to downtown • Historical house • Shelter • ADA parking • Greenhouse
Mississippi River Bluffs Regional Park Plan	Public- City of St. Cloud	• Multi-use trails • Nature center • Shelters/picnic area • Parking facilities • Active play areas habitat restoration • Fishing pier • Boat access • Non-motorized boat pond • Fenced dog park



Plan	Public/Private Investment	Key Elements		
Site Master/Area Framework Plans				
Sauk Rapids Downtown Framework Plan (Sauk Rapids Comprehensive Plan Update – 2004)	Public – City of Sauk Rapids	• Gateway corridor commercial district	• Benton Drive improvements • Gateway development area	• Lion's/Southside Park development (see master plan under Parks and Trails Plans in this table)
St. Cloud Hospital Plan	Private - CentraCare Health System	• Hospital expansion (322,213 SF) • Parking ramp expansion	• Native seeding restoration • Trails • Landscaping	• On-site stormwater treatment system, i.e., rain gardens, detention ponds, bio-retention swales, etc.
Civic Center Expansion	Public – City of St. Cloud	• Street, sidewalk, streetscape improvements	• Gateway plaza/river access • 4th Avenue closure	• Beaver Island trail connection
St. Cloud Downtown Eastside Framework Plan (Comprehensive Plan Update – 2003)	Public – City of St. Cloud	• Mixed-use infill redevelopment • Multi-family infill redevelopment	• Primary/secondary streetscape treatments • Public art	• Trail connections • Highway 23 (R.O.W expansion – 6 lanes)
Downtown – Westside Framework Plan (Comprehensive Plan Update – 2003)	Public – City of St. Cloud	• Mixed-use infill redevelopment • Multi-family infill redevelopment	• Parking structure • Primary/secondary streetscape improvements	• Riverfront promenade with river access • Elevated riverfront promenade, amphitheater and boat mooring
SCSU Master Plan	Private – St. Cloud State University	• North campus river access	• River edge connection enhancements	• Riverwalk enhancement
Haven Township Growth Area Master Plan (Comprehensive Plan Update – 2003)	Public – City of St. Cloud	Proposed: • Park and open space • Low density residential	• Low density mixed residential along river	
Transportation Plans				
33rd St. Corridor Master Plan (Comprehensive Plan Update – 2003)	Public - City of St. Cloud	• 33rd St. So. Mississippi River Crossing Alternative		





EXISTING CONDITIONS

This section provides a brief description of existing conditions, including river ecology, in the overall river corridor planning area and six sub-planning reaches within the overall corridor that have been defined by unique geological, ecological land cover, land use, and visual and physical accessibility.

RIVER CORRIDOR PLANNING AREA

The Mississippi River corridor within the planning area is approximately 19 river miles long and runs north-south between Watab Township from 75th St. NE south to east of Opportunity Dr. & 222nd St. E in St. Cloud. It contains over 5,400 acres of land and water, with the river occupying nearly 1,400 acres.

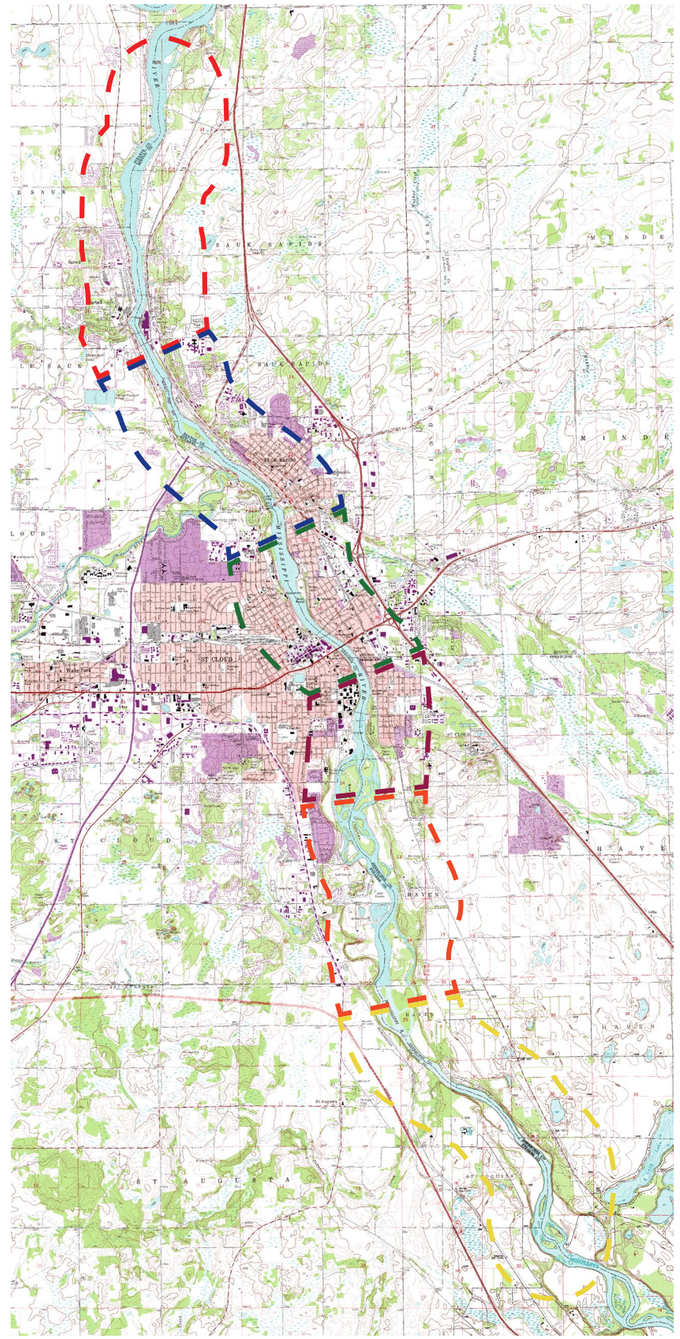
RIVER ECOLOGY

The ecology in the Mississippi River corridor is dominated by its 8,276-square mile watershed. Local influences are the shoreline vegetation and land use, stormwater runoff and dams. The river is complex.

North of Sartell, the wild river gives way to a settled one, with frequent signs of people. The river is still flanked by patches of mixed hardwood-conifer forest, small prairies, and savannahs.

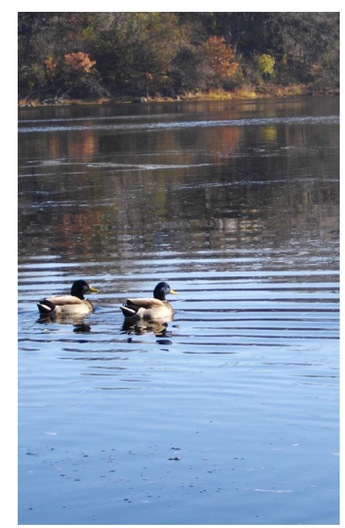
Rapids lie between Sartell and Sauk Rapids. The main channel has the fastest flow, but quiet pools lie above the dams; and a maze of side channels, backwaters, and oxbow lakes are in the Beaver Islands and downstream.

Between Sartell and St. Cloud the experience becomes distinctly urban, while south of the St. Cloud Dam patches of forests begin to enclose the river again. In wilder places, river otters use the banks, eagles and barred owls find nest sites, and kingfishers and great blue herons hunt the shallows. The river is home to many fish, including smallmouth bass, walleye, northern pike, muskellunge and channel catfish.



The planning area includes lands within a half-mile of the Mississippi River.

Threats to the ecological health of the river corridor are habitat fragmentation, unfettered stormwater runoff and pollution. For fish and wildlife, the size, quality and connectedness of their habitat make the difference between a healthy population and local extinction. Both upland and aquatic habitats have been fragmented by clearing of vegetation and dams. Eagles, otters, muskrats, turtles, frogs, small mouth bass, and dragonflies are some wildlife which require good quality upland and aquatic habitat together to complete their life cycles. Larger, more connected habitat improves the survival of



species that need such conditions, perhaps a quarter of the region's biota.

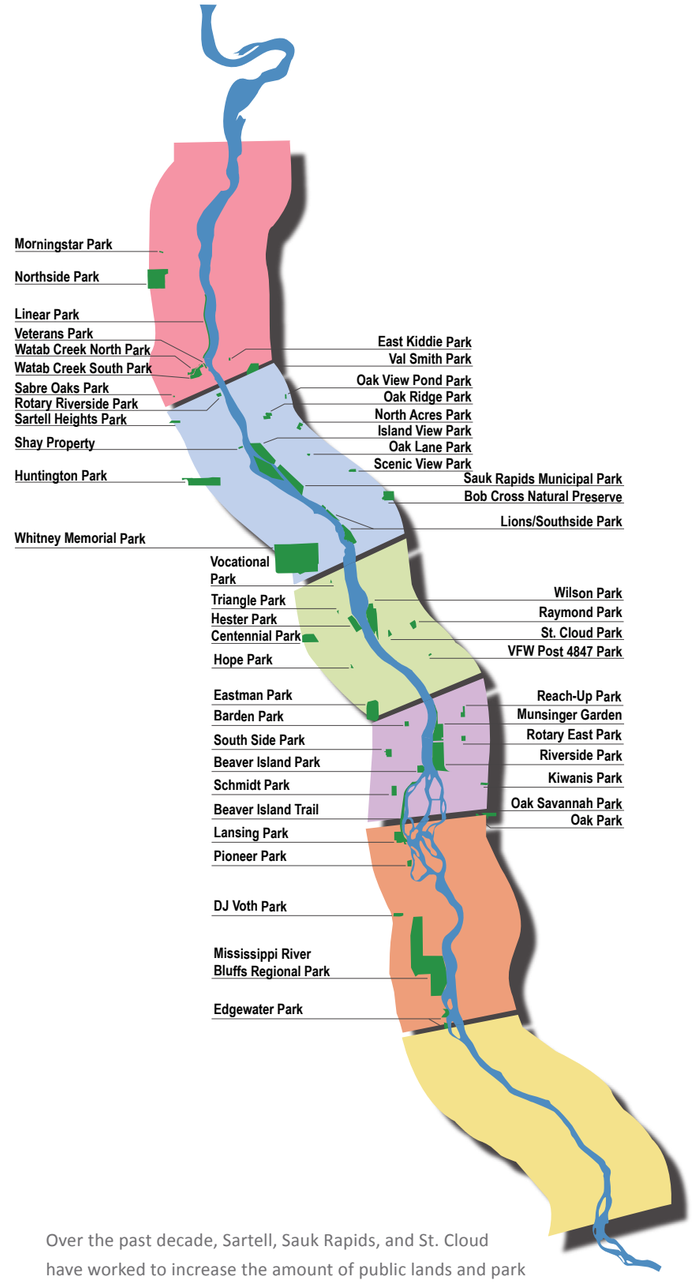
The amount of runoff and its quality affect the river. Runoff often carries sediment, pathogens, nutrients, pesticides, road salt, trash, oil and heavy metals. Pavement, roofs and other impervious surfaces quickly direct stormwater to streams and rivers, raising water levels to high levels more often than is natural. This diminishes plant life, contributes to erosion and sedimentation, and reduces recharge of groundwater that feeds streams and rivers in dry periods.

LAND USE

While more than one-fourth of the corridor is forested, 43 percent is developed in some way. Small marshes, grasslands, pastures and brushy areas total 16 percent of the land surface, and cropland makes up 12 percent. With the exception of the steep bluffs, the majority of riverfront land within the planning area has been transformed with urban development, with the exceptions of the north and south reaches.

Land uses along the St. Cloud urban area river corridor include residential, commercial, institutional, light industrial, public, park and open space and agriculture. However, residential development (primarily low-density) is the primary land use comprising approximately 18% of land. Park and public open space comprise 4% of land.

Much of the northern and southern river reaches are located within urban growth areas in Sartell and St. Cloud. Land use designation and development activity within the corridor is controlled by the local governments through their official comprehensive plans and zoning and subdivision ordinances.



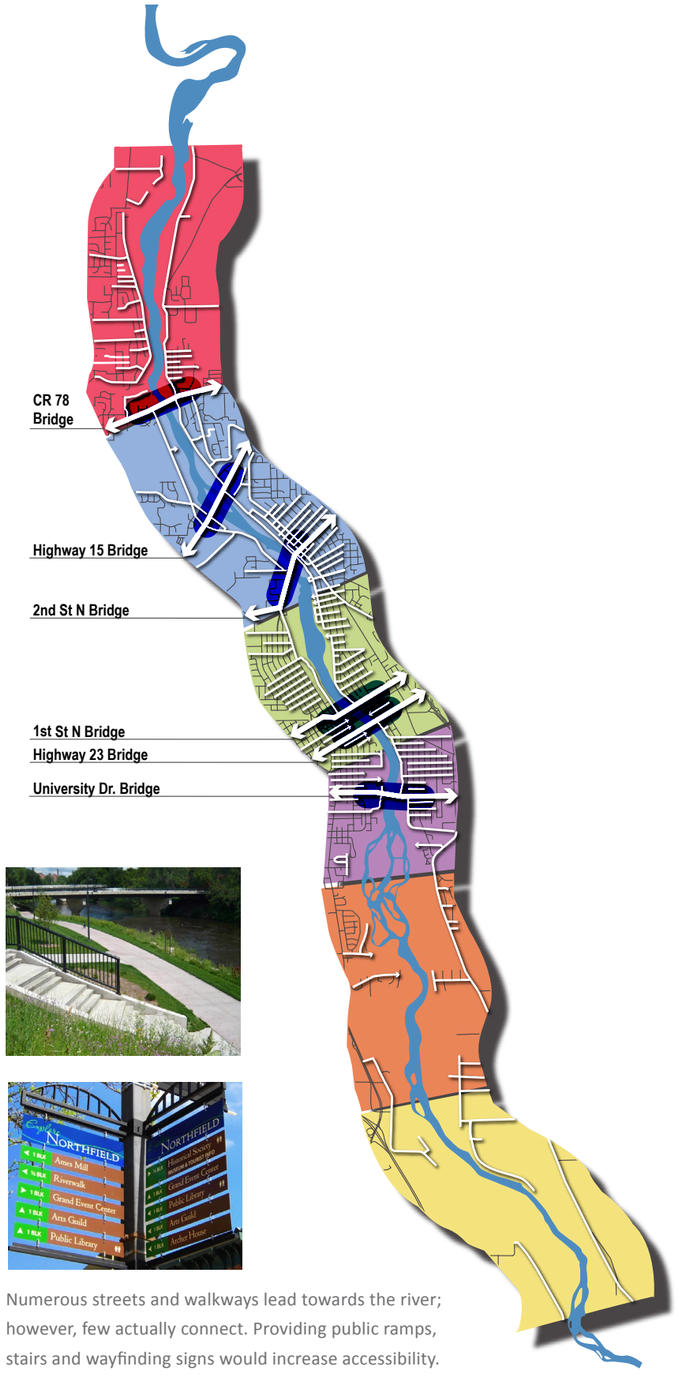
Over the past decade, Sartell, Sauk Rapids, and St. Cloud have worked to increase the amount of public lands and park and trail facilities within the urban river corridor.

Residents and visitors have the opportunity to visit many significant activity centers and attractions in the St. Cloud metro area that are within 1/4 mile of the river itself. The following is a list of parks and attractions that allow waterfront access and/or spectacular views of the river:

- Watab Creek Park
- Veterans Park
- Rotary Park
- Island View Park
- Sauk Rapids Municipal Park (public access)
- Lions Park
- Southside Park
- Hester Park
- Wilson Park (public access)
- CentraCare River Campus
- St. Cloud River's Edge Convention Center (former St. Cloud Civic Center)
- Beaver Island Trail
- St. Cloud State University Campus
- Munsinger Park/Clemens Gardens (public access)
- Riverside Park
- Talahi Park
- Beaver Island Park
- St. Cloud Country Club
- Mississippi River Bluffs Regional Park
- Several boat landings

New river-oriented uses within the corridor will depend on the redevelopment of current, non-river focused uses, many of which are identified in Sauk Rapids and St. Cloud's latest comprehensive plans, as well as previous planning efforts.

Chapters 2 and 3 describe river-oriented priority policies and projects (including numerous ideas for redevelopment) identified by community members during the preparation of the river corridor master plan.



Numerous streets and walkways lead towards the river; however, few actually connect. Providing public ramps, stairs and wayfinding signs would increase accessibility.

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

The transportation network along the Mississippi River corridor in the St. Cloud urban area is comprised of state highways, county and local roadways and streets, the Great River Road Scenic Byway, bike routes/lanes/trails and numerous sidewalks. The east and west sides of the Mississippi River are connected by a number of bridges. Currently, there are six Mississippi River crossings.

THE GREAT RIVER ROAD

While the Great River Road is a nationally recognized travel route running north and south from the US-Canada border south to the Gulf of Mexico, only sections of its length have been designated as a National Scenic Byway. One of these sections is in Minnesota beginning at the source of the Mississippi River at Lake Itasca making its way south to the Minnesota-Iowa border. On its way, it follows a number of county roads within the river corridor study area including County Roads 1, 78 and 33.

PRINCIPAL ARTERIALS

Principal arterials that serve the river corridor study area include:

- State Trunk Highway 10 that runs north-south through the Cities of Sauk Rapids and St. Cloud
- State Trunk Highway 23 that runs east-west through the Cities of Sauk Rapids and St. Cloud
- State Trunk Highway 15 that runs north-south through the Cities of St. Cloud, Sartell, and Sauk Rapids.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER BRIDGE CROSSINGS

Six bridges currently serve vehicle and pedestrian movements across the Mississippi River within the study area:

- CR 78 - Sartell (2nd St. S. Bridge)
- Hwy. 15 - Sartell/Sauk Rapids (Bridge of Hope)
- 2nd St. N. - Sauk Rapids (Sauk Rapids Bridge)
- 1st St. N. - St. Cloud (Veterans Bridge)
- Hwy. 23 - St. Cloud (Granite City Crossing Bridge)
- University Drive - St. Cloud (University Dr. Bridge)

MISSISSIPPI RIVER TRAIL

The Mississippi River Trail is a world-class bicycle route that extends from the headwaters in Lake Itasca State Park to New Orleans. The route is steeped in natural and cultural heritage, offers great beauty, and is one of the most significant bicycling opportunities available in America. Its course travels through St. Cloud on its journey through Minnesota .

BEAVER ISLAND AND LAKE WOBEGON TRAILS

The Beaver Island Trail serves as the primary riverfront trail along the west bank of the river in St. Cloud. Constructed in phases, this facility will eventually provide access along the City's entire riverfront. Connecting the Lake Wobegon Regional Trail, which runs northwest from St. Joseph to Osakis, Minnesota, to the St. Cloud riverfront trail system would greatly expand regional access to the Mississippi River.

ROSE WALK TOUR

In 2003, the Rose Walk Tour was developed, in collaboration with St. Cloud State University and St. Cloud School District #742, to highlight notable areas in the vicinity of the Mississippi River between the University Bridge and the Veterans Bridge. The 3.5 mile tour features approximately 15 significant historic buildings within the Southside Neighborhood Historic District and St. Cloud State University campus and the natural beauty of the Mississippi River.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Several agencies have regulations that influence development within the St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor. Riverfront development and discharges to the river are regulated at federal, state and local levels. The goal is to improve and protect water quality, the health of the river ecosystem and the aesthetics of the corridor. Both point source (factories, wastewater treatment plants) and non-point sources (stormwater) are regulated by the EPA Phase II stormwater program.

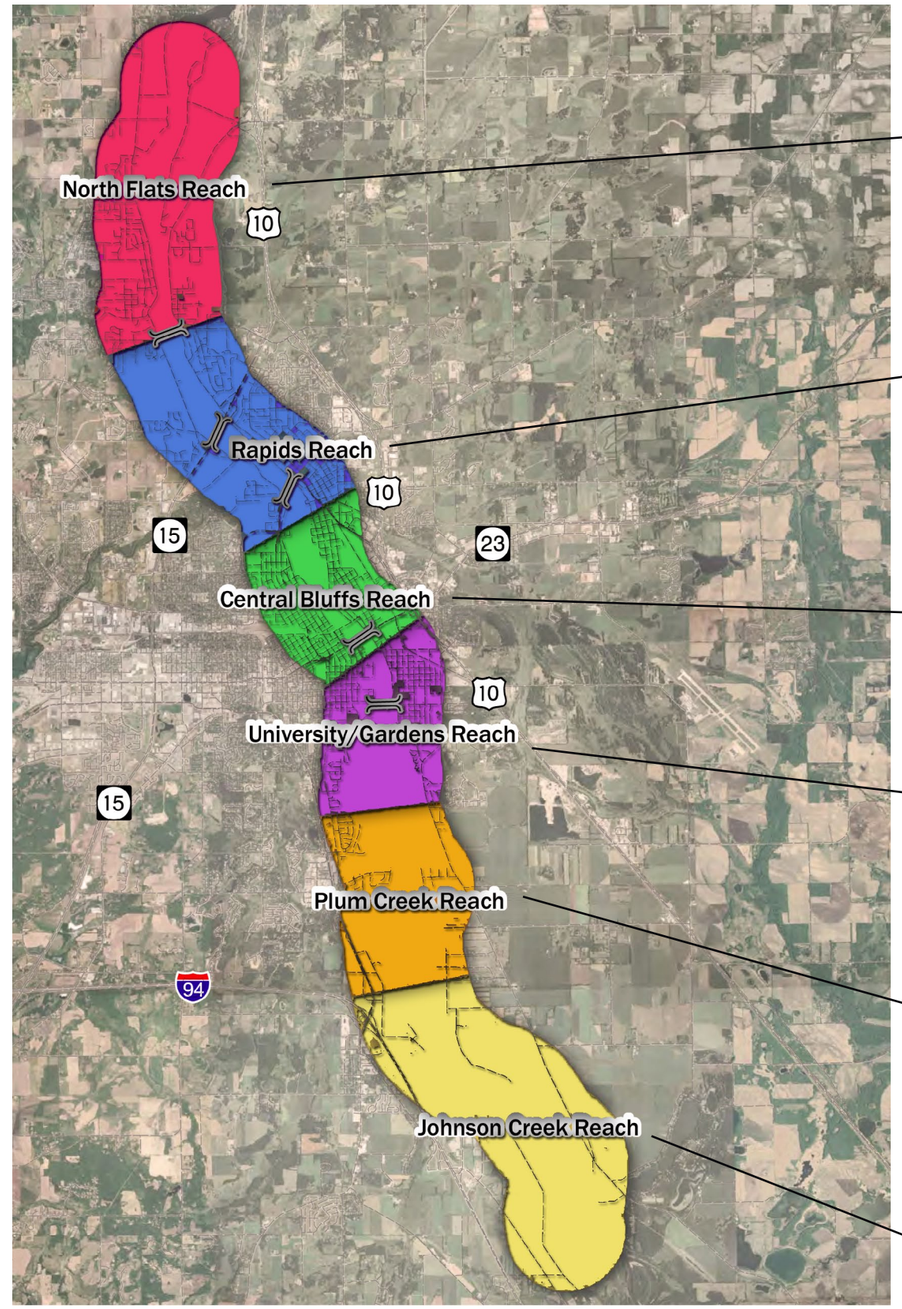
Development north of the University Dr. Bridge is regulated through local planning and zoning according to the minimum standards set by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Shoreland Management Program, and south of the University Dr. Bridge under Minnesota's Wild and Scenic River Program. These DNR programs may be merged in the future; the shoreland rules are under revision. Since cities and counties are responsible for implementation, administration, and enforcement of shoreland management standards these standards may be unique within each community. The Cities of Sauk Rapids and St. Cloud both have shoreland regulations that regulate setbacks from the river and vegetation removal. The City of St. Cloud also addresses setbacks from the bluff line, minimum lot widths, and has requirements for site and structure design. The City of Sauk Rapids does not have these same requirements. The City of Sartell does not have shoreland regulations at this time.

The Mississippi Scenic Riverway Management Plan, revised in 2004, addresses land use conflicts relating to development in the Scenic River segment. Additionally, the Cities of St. Cloud and Sartell have adopted Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) ordinances and the City of Sauk Rapids has created an Environmentally Sensitive Area Overlay District to protect high quality native plant communities and sensitive geological or hydrological features, and to offer incentives to landowners in exchange for protection of those features.

RIVER REACHES

For the purposes of better understanding the unique characteristics and places within the river corridor, six river reaches have been designated including:

1. North Flats Reach -City of Sartell and LeSauk, Watab, and Sauk Rapids Townships
2. Rapids Reach -Cities of Sartell and Sauk Rapids and LeSauk Township
3. Central Bluffs Reach-City of St. Cloud
4. University / Gardens Reach – City of St. Cloud
5. Plum Creek Reach-City of St. Cloud and Haven Township
6. Johnson Creek Reach-City of St. Cloud and Haven and Lynden Townships



MISSISSIPPI RIVER CORRIDOR PLAN

This chapter presents the River Corridor Plan for guiding development, preservation, and restoration decisions that will form the future role of the Mississippi River in the St. Cloud urban area. The Plan is organized into the following key elements:

Planning Principles (Core Beliefs)

In an attempt to clarify the community's definition of effective stewardship of the river resource, this Plan establishes a set of nine interrelated Planning Principles. Together they form a holistic vision for each community's relationship with the river and serve as criteria for evaluating potential policies, programs, and projects when proposed within the urban river corridor.

Focus Areas (Corridor Wide Goals/Actions)

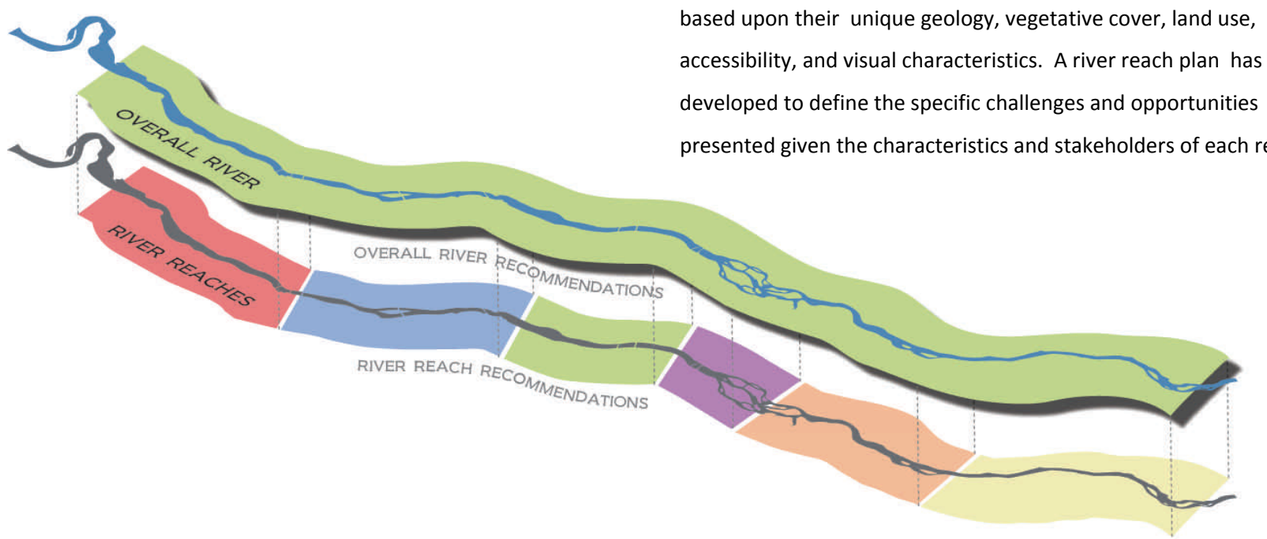
The Plan provides a framework structured around four focus areas determined by the community to be relevant to the overall river corridor within the study area, including:

- Access, Trails, Active Recreation
- Ecosystem Protection and Restoration
- Events and Tourism
- Urban/Economic Development

Working over the course of several months, four task forces identified and prioritized river-related policies, programs, and projects in each of the focus areas. These themes can be utilized along with the planning principles as a checks and balances system during project development/implementation, while also offering clear direction for unique implementation activities in their own right. See Appendix B for a full list of task force recommendations.

River Reaches (Area Specific Goals/Actions)

Six river reaches have been delineated for the urban river corridor based upon their unique geology, vegetative cover, land use, accessibility, and visual characteristics. A river reach plan has been developed to define the specific challenges and opportunities presented given the characteristics and stakeholders of each reach.



ST. CLOUD URBAN AREA MISSISSIPPI RIVER CORRIDOR PLANNING PRINCIPLES

1. Treat the river and its scenic beauty as an irreplaceable community asset.
2. Plan and act—on both land and water—in all ways that support a long-term healthy and diverse river ecosystem.
3. Imagine and invent year-round recreation for all ages and abilities along the river.
4. Draw strength for today's society from the cultural heritage of the river.
5. Strengthen visual and physical connections to the river from surrounding lands.
6. Use a mix of urban land uses consistent with the river community's comprehensive plans.
7. Leverage the river to attract new investment and sustain economic development in the region.
8. Promote public-private partnership and leadership from all interests.
9. Engage the public, government entities, and private interests in the collaborative implementation of the riverfront plan.

URBAN RIVER CORRIDOR FOCUS AREAS

Access, Trails, and Active Recreation

Experiencing the Mississippi River begins with making physical or visual connections. Having the ability to access the river, bike or walk along its edge or along a bluff line, or play near the water brings life to the river corridor and adds to the community's quality of life. Trails, river access points, recreation opportunities, and general riverfront beautification can also enhance the community's overall economy.

Goal: Provide and manage a variety of year-round, passive and active opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to access and recreate within the Mississippi River corridor.

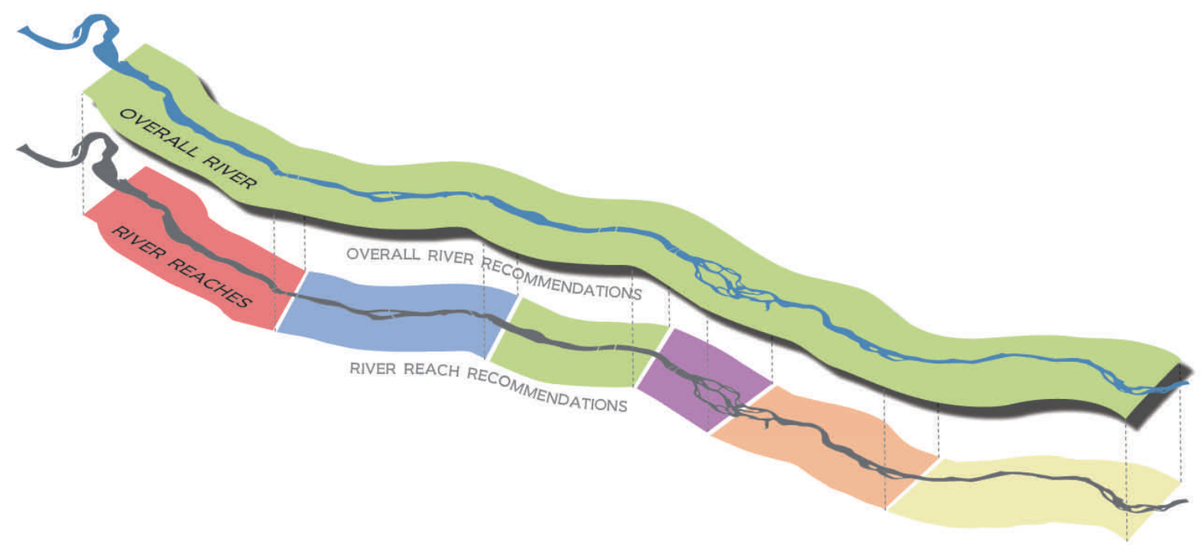
Recommendations: Valuing the Mississippi River as a regional asset requires opportunities for people to experience the river in multiple ways. Recommendations that promote improvements for river access, trails, and recreation opportunities support the Plan's principles of making a visual and physical connection to the river. Key recommendations supporting this principle fall into the following organizing themes:

Trail Connectivity: Create a comprehensive network of existing and future riverfront trails connecting community walkways and trails with riverfront oriented facilities, recreation amenities and restoration areas on both sides of the river. Trails must connect the entire length of the river corridor, as well as extend away from the river into adjacent areas.

Youth Engagement: Utilize the riverfront as a means of promoting healthier lifestyles, as well as to introduce youth to flora, fauna, and water resources. Recent studies suggest that riverfront amenities are also a vital element in retaining college graduates within the community.

Blue Trails: Better define/enhance the DNR's existing water trail that passes through the area. Enhancements could include construction of supportive shoreland facilities the length of the river corridor that take advantage of the unique opportunities provided by the Beaver Islands and other natural features. Safe access and portage opportunities must be provided for each stretch between dams and promoted as a resident and tourism amenity.

Water Access: Provide safe access for watercraft users, pedestrians, and cyclists to get to the river where possible.

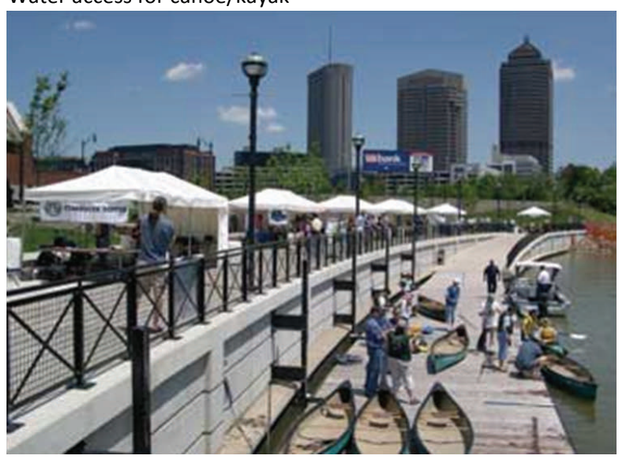


Waterfront access/beach/swimming

Connected linear trail system

Year-round riverfront programming

Water access for canoe/kayak



Scenic Overlooks

Shoreline fishing and boat access

Blue trails facilities—camping

URBAN RIVER CORRIDOR FOCUS AREAS

URBAN RIVER CORRIDOR FOCUS AREAS

Ecosystem Protection and Restoration

Ecosystem protection and restoration priorities include enhancing aspects of policy, regulation, management/enforcement and physical environment within the urban area river corridor. This focus area was identified as a critical component of achieving the community's vision for a more resilient and healthy river environment.

Goal: Protect, restore, and manage the Mississippi's natural environment while accommodating human activities in a sustainable manner.

Recommendations: Recommendations for ecosystem protection and restoration are critical to the Plan's principle of supporting a healthy and diverse river ecosystem. The goal is to support the ecosystem services from which humans and animals benefit. Structural and cultural activities in the river corridor will reflect and celebrate the role of natural systems in the river corridor. Key recommendations supporting this principle fall into the following organizing themes:

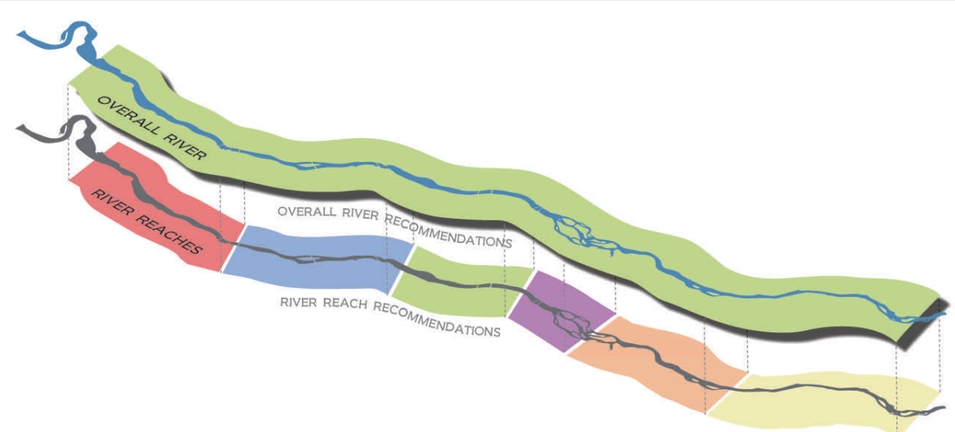
Stormwater Management: Reduce stormwater runoff entering the river to improve water quality and aquatic wildlife habitat by implementing low impact development strategies, such as decreasing the amount of impervious (hard) surface on properties, narrowing the width of neighborhood streets, installing rain gardens/barrels, installing permeable paving products, and planting trees. Improve quality of stormwater runoff from areas most prone to high sediment / contaminant levels. Local MS4 plans and numerous sources of best management practices exist as guiding tools.

Shoreline Restoration: Restore vegetative buffers along the shoreline of public and private properties with consistent

Acquisition of Natural Areas: Identify and protect remaining natural areas within the river corridor (e.g. island habitats and small woodlots) through acquisition or easement by public entities for passive and/or active recreational opportunities.

Corridor Protection: Create consistent shoreland and stormwater regulations for all governmental entities reflecting the best practices and guidance suggested by the state and other agencies/stakeholders.

Design Standards/Green Building: Strongly advocate for the use of green building standards, techniques, and materials and incorporation of conservation design elements for public and private redevelopment projects that are adjacent to the river.



EXEMPLARY HABITATS

Healthy shoreline habitat with mix of native perennials

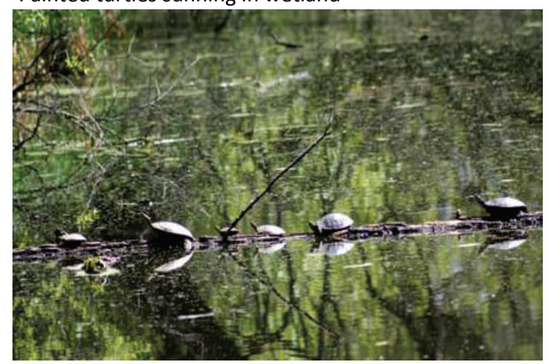
High quality oak upland habitat with native understory

Aquatic emergent vegetation

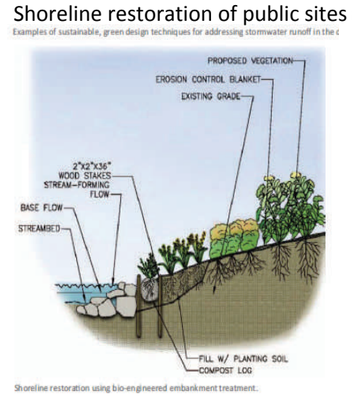
IMPORTANT NATIVE SPECIES

Small Mouth Bass

Painted turtles sunning in wetland



Shoreline restoration of public sites and private property



APPLICABLE BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Natural shoreline buffer

Residential rain barrel for recycling roof runoff

URBAN RIVER CORRIDOR FOCUS AREAS

URBAN RIVER CORRIDOR FOCUS AREAS

Events and Tourism

Tourism guides visitors to an area where they may not have come by chance. Public and private investments made in the marketing of river -related activities can result in the creation of a popular regional destination and local amenity. This not only increases civic engagement, but also engenders greater appreciation by locals for their own communities. Increasing awareness of the river supports a critical planning principle for attracting new investment and promoting sustainable economic development.

Goal: Provide and manage year-round opportunities for integrating the Mississippi River's natural, cultural, and built environment into existing and new community activities and celebrations.

Recommendations supporting tourism, river-related events and festival and promotional activities help to bring people to the river. They support the Plan's principles of providing year-round recreation for all ages and abilities, and of drawing upon the cultural heritage of the river. Key recommendations supporting this principle fall into the following organizing themes:

Expansion of Current Events: Incorporate river elements/activities into existing community festivals in Sartell, Sauk Rapids, and St. Cloud, such as changing location of existing activities (e.g., revise marathon course to river's edge) and/or adding new events (e.g., fishing contest) along the river.

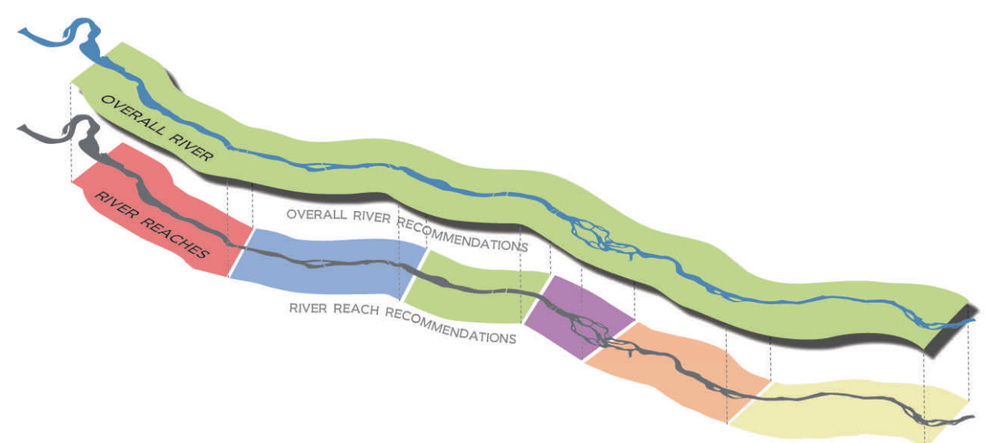
Marketing Efforts: Promote the river and its amenities (parks, trails, and destinations) as a tourist attraction and economic development asset using the St. Cloud Official Visitor's Guide and other similar promotional tools.

River Branding: Develop a consistent brand reflecting the St. Cloud area's position as a Mississippi River community. Utilize the brand as a unifying theme for regional riverfront initiatives, such as changing the name of Granite City Days to Granite City River Days in St. Cloud.

Riverfront Wayfinding: Establish wayfinding systems to enhance the river experience for residents and visitors; including creation of an "urban river map" showing access points/destinations and consistent trailblazing signage along the urban river corridor.

Events: Promote a series of events throughout the year to encourage community participation and attract visitors including:

- Birding—Year round/seasonal bird watching event in river parks.
- Sporting—"Tri-City" Triathlon (biking, running, and canoeing/kayaking in and along the river in St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids, or Sartell).
- Photography—River related photo contest—partner with local and regional media productions to promote and announce winners.



Promote regional/national river competitions

Promote urban and suburban birding opportunities

Utilize river as setting for marathons and triathlons

Community festivals and celebrations—year round

Promote Great River Road, Mississippi River Trail, and regional trail systems

Initiate photo contests and other awareness campaigns

Wayfinding system to guide/enhance visitor experience

URBAN RIVER CORRIDOR FOCUS AREAS

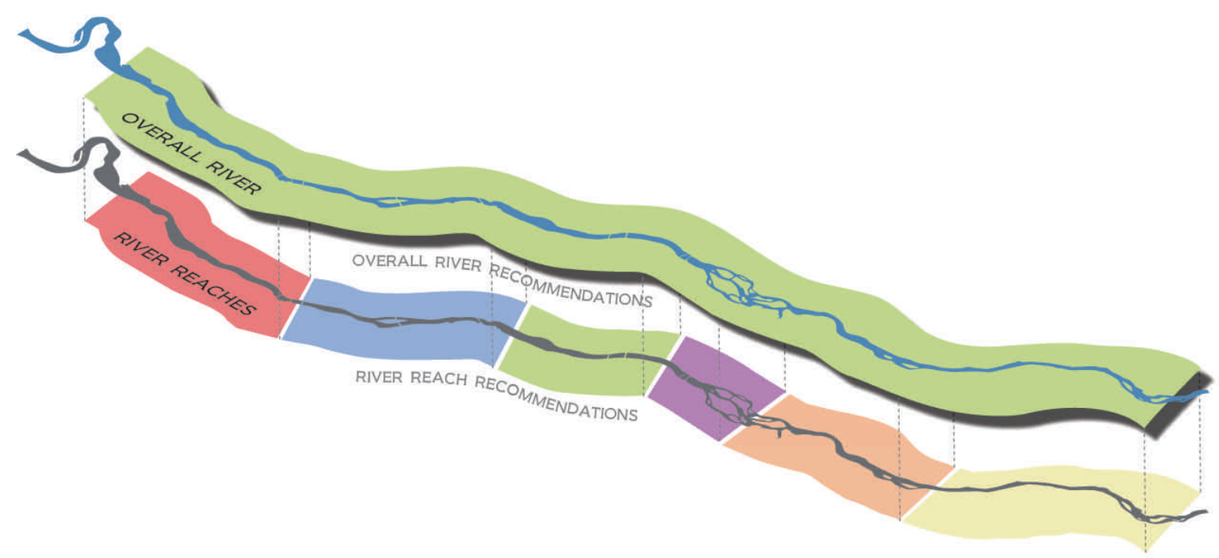
URBAN RIVER CORRIDOR FOCUS AREAS

Urban/Economic Development

The St. Cloud urban area was founded and has thrived for more than 150 years based upon the access, resources, and attraction of the Mississippi River. Great strides have been made in St. Cloud and across the World to address the impacts of 20th century growth and urban expansion on rivers. The 21st century economy seeks communities with unique water and natural settings that offer high quality of life. As such, St. Cloud is well positioned to thrive given its location near the headwaters of the Nation's greatest river.

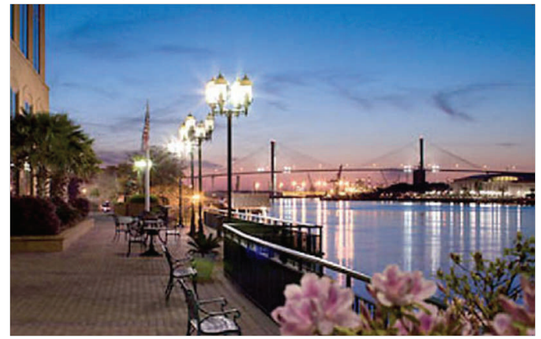
Goal: Ensure that riverfront development balances utilization of the river resource and protection of its sensitive ecology, while future growth is sustainable economically, socially, and environmentally.

Recommendation: Community stakeholders need to recognize the few opportunities that exist within the St. Cloud area for riverfront development. Projects must be designed appropriately to flourish because of that setting, as well as to complement and protect the Mississippi River ecosystem. The following design elements will aid development interests and decision makers in guiding future urban development decisions:
Riverfront Destinations-Amenities: Increase the number and quality of destinations attracting residents and visitors to the riverfront, including: restaurants, cafes, hotels, casino, community centers, museums, and education centers.
Riverfront Placemaking: Sites must include static and changing design elements (tables, benches, public art, water features) that create a unique sense of place and enhance the experience encouraging repeat visits.
Context Sensitive Design: Development must be designed to complement the natural setting and connect with the existing and future urban fabric of its surroundings.
Riverfront Plazas: Create open spaces that accommodate large assemblies for community events and tourism opportunities. Regular programming of these urban plazas can reintroduce long time residents, as well as welcome visitors and new generations to the urban riverfront. Spaces will consistently be used as an urban oasis when appropriately placed next to job centers and residential densities.

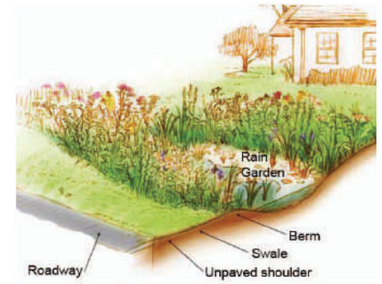


Riverfront Destinations—Entertainment

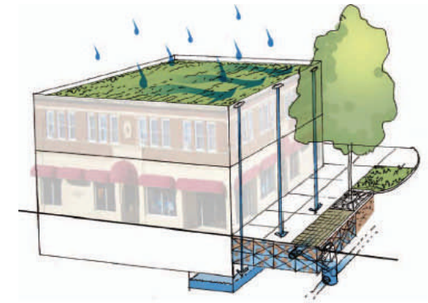
Pedestrian promenade



Green Building/Development Standards



Residential Raingarden

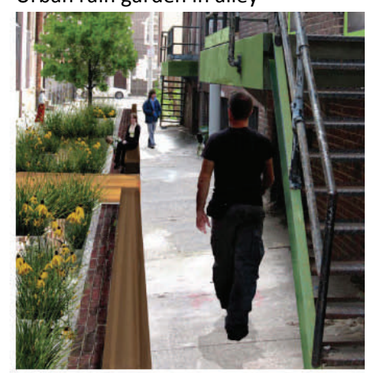


Urban building with green roof and overflows to subsurface storage and treatment system

Riverfront Destinations—Cultural

Urban plazas for community gathering/events

Urban rain garden in alley



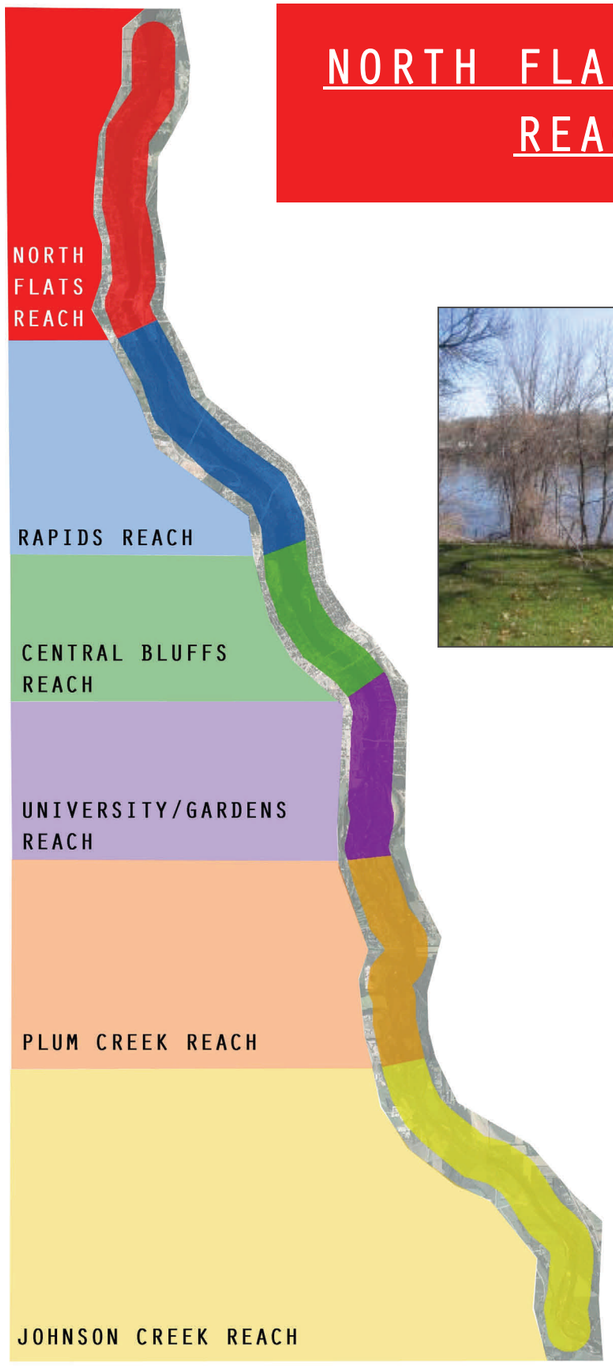
Urban Rain Garden Retrofitted Into Alleyway Passage

Context sensitive design that complements nature

Placemaking design elements

Extensive vegetated roof for capturing stormwater runoff

URBAN RIVER CORRIDOR FOCUS AREAS



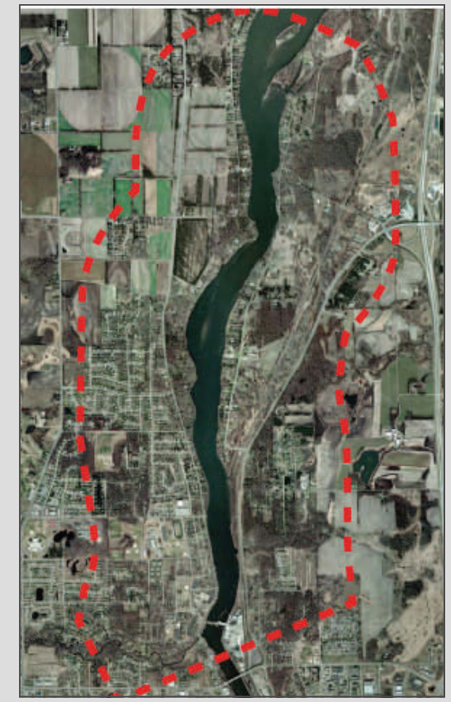
NORTH FLATS REACH

The North Flats Reach comprises 1,130 acres with 340 acres of open water. It is defined by a deep pool created by the Sartell Dam at 1st Street NE, flanked by gradual slope and low bluffs. The channel is easily navigable. About 45 percent of the land is vegetated. Most of this is oak forest, which 50 years ago was open and savanna-like. Scattered throughout are many small grasslands and pastures. A high quality native plant community occurs in this reach.

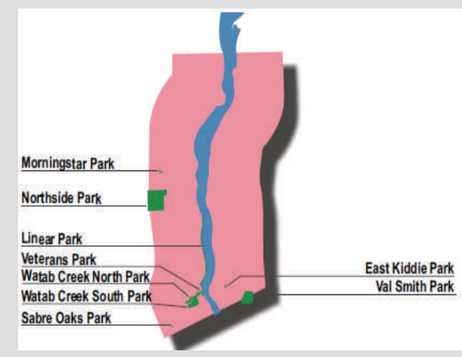
This reach is located within the City of Sartell and LeSauk, Watab, and Sauk Rapids Townships.

About half of this reach is developed, mostly as residential and zoned open space. Industrial land uses, such as the NSP Riverside natural gas fired power plant, paper plant, DeZurik, and the adjacent Sartell Dam comprise a portion of the City's riverfront lands while single family residential occupies the majority of the west and east bank.

This air photo illustrates the development pattern in the North Flats Reach.



River access points along the river within this reach include public boat access on the NE River Rd., Linear Park along Riverside Avenue, Watab Creek Parks (north and south), Sartell Veterans Park, and Rotary Riverside Park.



NORTH FLATS REACH

The primary organizing theme for the North Flats reach focuses on enhancing the ecological function and aesthetic appearance of the river's shoreline with native vegetation to improve habitat, reduce the negative effects of stormwater runoff and improve access for watercraft. While the city can initiate the ecological repair and enhancement of public lands, much of the riverfront is under private ownership. Restoration and enhancement of these areas could be undertaken through a series of initiatives such as natural shoreline landscape education programs, private-public partnerships for plant installation and volunteer/service club river restoration efforts.

Ecosystem Protection/Restoration Recommendations

- Enhance /restore the shoreline of public parks with river frontage including Linear and Rotary Parks in Sartell. Currently a good deal of this shoreline includes a variety of large-scale rip-rap, turf grass and deciduous shade trees. Introducing native grasses, woody shrubs and wildflowers along these areas along with bio-engineered embankments of resilient woody shrubs and rip-rap would improve habitat for river wildlife as well as protect water quality and reduce the threat of erosion.
- Conservation design and stormwater BMPs are essential elements of future development within the reach.

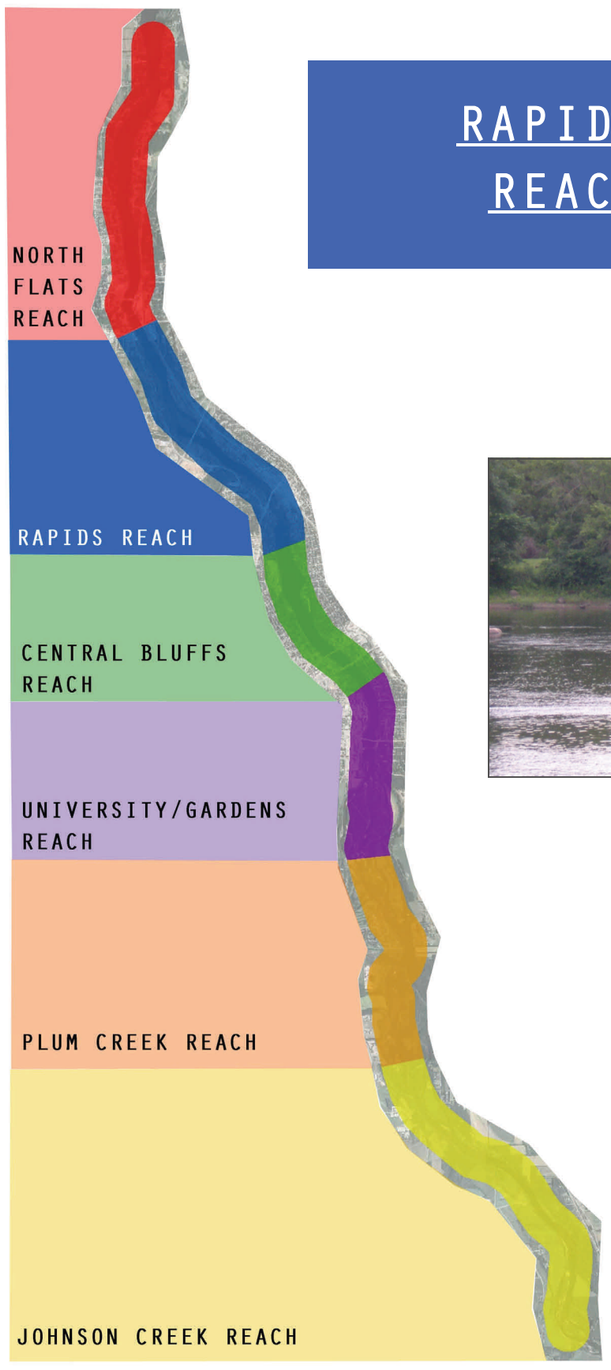
Active Recreation/Trails Recommendations

- Provide access areas below the dam in Sartell to provide a stable and safe area along the bank of the river to fish or experience the water's edge. This would be in addition to the recently installed fishing pier at Rotary Riverside Park.

Ecosystem Protection/Restoration—Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Enhance/restore the shoreline of public parks with river frontage, including Linear and Rotary Parks in Sartell	1. Work with local initiatives to restore shoreline with native vegetation to protect water quality, improve wildlife habitat and reduce erosion potential. 2. Identify funding sources to implement restoration programs and installations. 3. Engage government agencies and non-profit groups to assist in developing enhancement and restoration plans.	City of Sartell Stearns County SWCD Benton SWCD LeSauk/Watab/Sauk Rapids Townships MnDNR
Active Recreation/Trails/Access— Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Provide access areas below the Sartell Dam to provide a stable and safe area along the bank of the river to fish or experience the water's edge.	1. Construct river access structure along the river bank below the Sartell Dam. 2. Seek funding sources to implement access installation.	City of Sartell MnDNR

Restoring shoreline with native vegetation to protect water quality, improve wildlife habitat and reduce erosion potential. Numerous public and private properties exist within the North Flats Reach and the urban corridor which must be identified and slated for restoration as part of a comprehensive series of projects to have the greatest possible benefit for the River's ecosystem.

To take advantage of the world class fishing that exists in the urban stretches of the Mississippi River , including the North Flats Reach, appropriate locations must be identified for safe access by visitors and residents of all ages and abilities. (example: granite fishing piers)

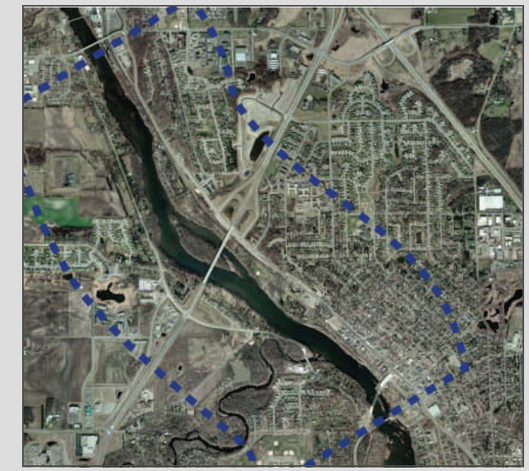


RAPIDS REACH

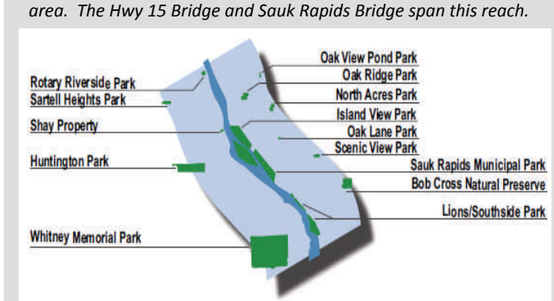
The Rapids Reach comprises 990 acres with 240 acres of open water. In the Rapids Reach the river is shallow, with rocks and shoals, and a large island dominates the scene at the Highway 15 Bridge. The river valley narrows and is constrained by steep bluffs, especially on its west side. The river moves quickly, and navigation through the rapids is challenging. The Sauk River enters from the west, in the southern part of Sartell, and creates a complex, braided delta. Developed land and zoned open space comprise 79 percent of this reach. Oak forest—formerly savannas—provide nearly all the natural vegetation and make up 12 percent of the land surface.

This reach is in the Cities of Sauk Rapids and Sartell and LeSauk Township. The east bank of the river is mostly developed, while the west bank is fully developed. No expansion of commercial uses to the riverfront is envisioned.

This air photo illustrates the development pattern in the Rapids Reach.



River access points along the river within this reach include Island View Park, Sauk Rapids Municipal Park, Southside Park, and Lions Park, which are all on the east bank. Public boat ramps are available at the mouth of the Sauk River and just upstream of the mouth on the south bank of the Sauk River itself in the Heims Mill area. The Hwy 15 Bridge and Sauk Rapids Bridge span this reach.



RAPIDS REACH

ST. CLOUD URBAN AREA MISSISSIPPI RIVER CORRIDOR PLAN

The primary organizing theme for the Rapids reach is strengthening river connections between downtown attractions, select redevelopment corridors / sites and existing parklands in Sauk Rapids and Sartell. More detailed planning efforts were targeted towards some of these areas during previous comprehensive planning efforts.

ECOSYSTEM PROTECTION/RESTORATION

- Restore/enhance the shoreline of public parks with river frontage in Sauk Rapids including: Lions/Southside Parks, Sauk Rapids Municipal, and Island View parks.
- Acquire the Dehler property or other property in Sartell for a "natural" park located along the Sauk River.

ACTIVE RECREATION/TRAILS

- Develop a trail connection along the western side of County Road 1 from the Sauk Rapids Bridge to Heims Mill.
- Continue implementing improvements in Lions/Southside Parks (Sauk Rapids) and Rotary Park (Sartell).
- Continue property acquisition for expansion of Municipal Park.
- Redevelop the Heims Mill (west bank) and the former Sauk Rapids Locker Plant (east bank) properties for outdoor-oriented / adventure commercial with canoe/kayak rentals.

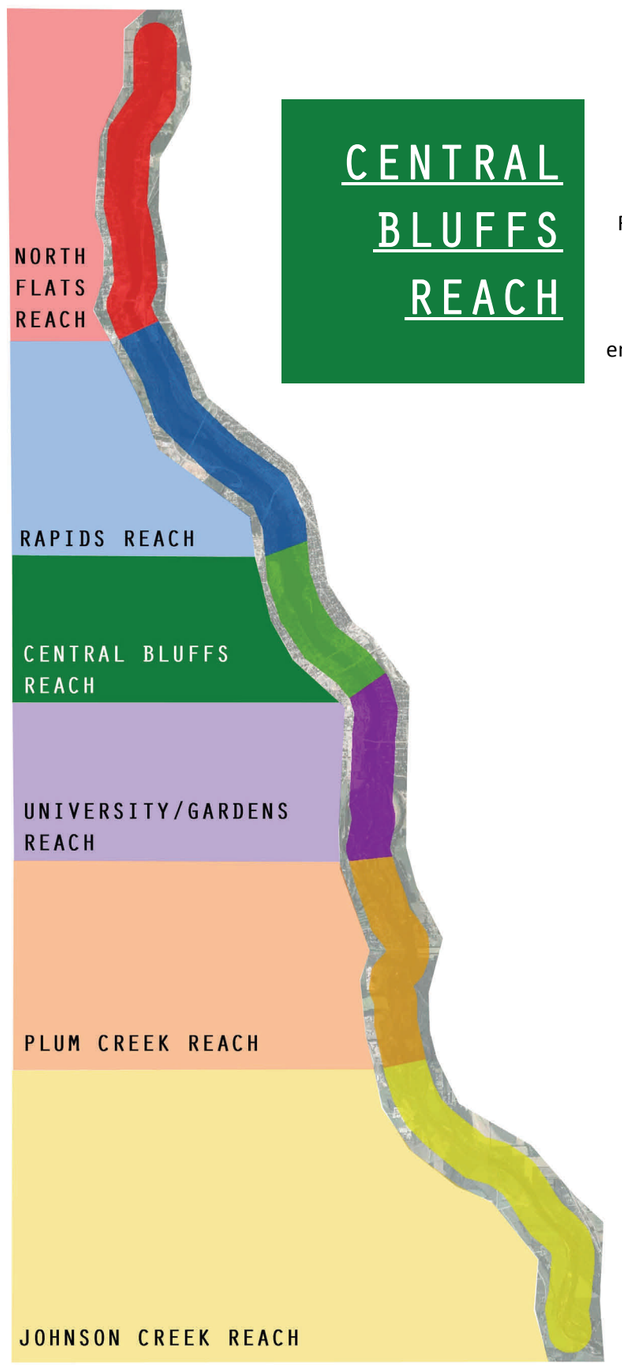
URBAN/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Redevelop Holiday Station and Dollar Store area as river-oriented commercial facilities, if opportunity exists (City of Sartell).
- Redevelop former Checker Auto Parts site as river-oriented commercial (Sauk Rapids).
- Redevelop Fischers Trailer Park into river-oriented use (Sauk Rapids).

The Mississippi River in the Rapids Reach provides a great venue for kayaking and canoeing. Redeveloping one of the City's available vacant buildings as a sporting goods/adventure outfitter would capitalize on this unique river asset.

A number of riverfront sites within the Rapids Reach are ripe for development of destination uses given their existing condition, traffic accessibility, and adjacent land uses. Encouraging appropriate development or reuse of these few sites not only provides an economic development opportunity, but also allows more pristine riverfront locations to be retained for open space or less intense uses.

Ecosystem Protection/Restoration—Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Enhance/restore the shoreline of public parks with river frontage including Lions/Southside Parks, Sauk Rapids Municipal, and Island View Parks.	1. Work with local initiatives to restore shoreline with native vegetation to protect water quality, improve wildlife habitat, and reduce erosion potential.	City of Sauk Rapids Benton SWCD MnDNR
Acquire Dehler property in Sartell or other areas along Sauk River for a "natural park".	1. Acquire property. 2. Seek Legacy Grant funding and other funding sources to finance park restoration.	City of Sartell Stearns County MnDNR
Active Recreation/Trails/Access— Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Develop a trail connection along the western side of County Rd. 1 from Sauk Rapids Bridge to Heims Mill.	1. Construct trail connection. 2. Assist in seeking funding sources to finance park restoration .	City of Sartell Stearns County
Continue implementing Lions/Southside Park improvements	1. Construct park elements that would enhance the river experience. 2. Seek funding sources to finance improvements.	City of Sauk Rapids
Urban/Economic Development—Sauk Rapids - Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Redevelop the former Sauk Rapids Locker Plant (east bank) property as outdoor-oriented/adventure commercial with canoe/kayak rentals.	1. Provide incentives to attract prospective business owners to redevelop the sites. 2. Seek additional incentives to implement redevelopment projects.	City of Sauk Rapids Private investors HRA
Redevelop the former Checker Auto Parts site with river-oriented commercial facilities	1. Provide incentives to attract prospective business owners to redevelop the site. 2. Seek additional incentives to implement a redevelopment project.	City of Sauk Rapids Private investors
Urban/Economic Development—Sartell—Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Redevelop the Holiday Gas station and Dollar Store area with more river oriented commercial facilities, if opportunity exists.	1. Provide incentives to attract prospective business owners to redevelop the sites. 2. Seek additional incentives to implement redevelopment projects.	City of Sartell EDA Private investors
Redevelop the Heims Mill (west bank) property as outdoor-oriented/adventure commercial with canoe/kayak rentals.	1. Provide incentives to attract prospective business owners to redevelop the sites. 2. Seek additional incentives to implement redevelopment projects.	City of Sartell Private investors HRA

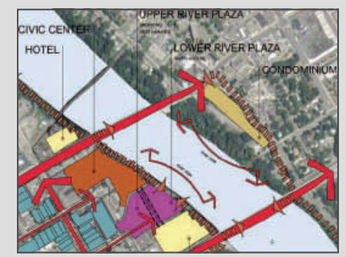


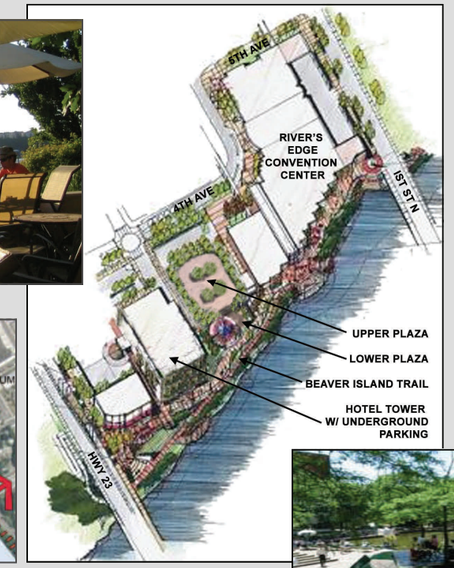
CENTRAL BLUFFS REACH

The Central Bluffs Reach comprises 600 acres with 170 acres of open water. Steep river banks dominate the Central Bluffs Reach, creating an ideal site for a dam. The river is a deep pool, and navigation is easy. This reach is entirely within St. Cloud and entirely developed. The organizing theme of this reach is to provide riverside destinations that are easily accessed from downtown and the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

This air photo illustrates the development pattern in the Central Bluffs Reach.

Two public parks frame the northern extent of the reach with Hester Park on the west bank and Wilson Park on the east bank. Boat ramps exist at Wilson Park and along 5th Avenue North near Cathedral field. Veterans Bridge and Granite City Crossing Bridge form the southern extent of the reach.





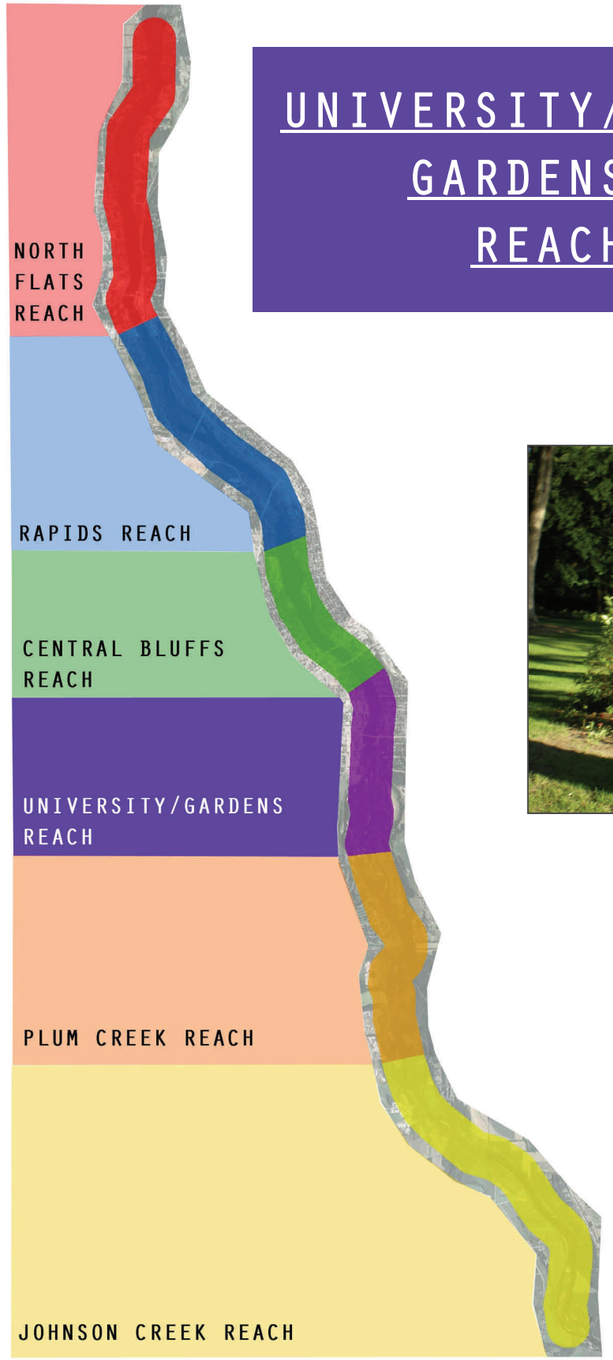
Continued attention and investment has been made to improve accessibility and utilization of the Mississippi's west bank by downtown employees, community residents, and visitors. Trails and overlooks have and will continue to be incorporated into future expansion of the St. Cloud River's Edge Convention Center, adjacent private properties, and the City's capital planning. Nonetheless, the desire for a visual connection and more direct access from the downtown to the west river bank remains high.

While the west bank is now lined by structures to the water's edge, recent community discussions have considered the potential for relocation of the Kelly Inn tower to the TH23 frontage in an attempt to open a tiered public plaza to the riverside trail. The central location of the public plaza between the two buildings would protect the space from the adjacent roadway corridors, while maintaining the underground parking would limit potential operational impacts to those businesses. In addition, river-related destinations (e.g., café, restaurant, river education center) should be incorporated into the public plaza and renovated facilities for the mutual benefit of community and businesses. A new hotel tower might also provide greater river views from all rooms.

The St. Cloud Cathedral football field offers one of the few opportunities to access the water's edge near St. Cloud's Central Business District. The fact that the property remains free of structures and is used only occasionally for the school's recreational offerings introduces the potential to enhance this underutilized site for greater enjoyment/betterment of the community. The proximity to the water's edge creates a unique setting for boat access, shoreline fishing, and other water activities. The gradual slope rising from 5th to 6th Avenues No. forms another unique opportunity to meet the needs for large riverfront community assembly space. Active uses (plays, concerts, etc.) can be programmed throughout the year in a permanent amphitheater built with the sloping terrain. Future riverside trail connections to Hester Park and south to the Central Business District will provide excellent pedestrian access to the site for residents, downtown employees, and visitors alike.

The primary organizing themes of the Central Bluffs reach include increasing/improving access between the riverfront, downtown St. Cloud and the Cathedral Field area, as well as creating a series of river-oriented public gathering spaces. Previous planning efforts targeted the West and East banks of Downtown, expansions of the CentraCare River Campus, St. Cloud Civic Center, and City water works. As explored in these previous efforts, reconfiguring/redeveloping aspects of the Civic Center and Kelly Inn to provide more river-focused mixed use development and public space presents a prime redevelopment opportunity.

Ecosystem Protection/Restoration— Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Enhance/restore the shoreline of public parks with river frontage including Wilson Park, Hester Park, and the base of the Civic Center bluff.	1. Work with local initiatives to restore shoreline with native vegetation to protect water quality, improve wildlife habitat, and reduce erosion potential. 2. Identify funding sources to implement restoration programs and installations. 3. Engage government agencies and non-profit groups to assist in developing enhancement and restoration plans.	City of St. Cloud Stearns County SWCD MnDNR
Acquisition of Natural Areas—Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Restore bluff line as part of redevelopment on the east bank north of the Veterans Bridge to the railroad tracks.	1. Acquire properties. 2. Engage government agencies and non-profit groups to assist in appropriate redevelopment. 3. Work with local initiatives to restore shoreline with native vegetation to protect water quality, improve wildlife habitat, and reduce erosion potential.	City of St. Cloud Benrton SWCD MnDNR
Active Recreation/Trails/Access— Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Develop a riverfront plaza within the St. Cloud River's Edge Convention Center and Kelly Inn complex.	1. Create a site plan. 2. Identify funding sources to implement development project.	City of St. Cloud EDA
Develop a public plaza and amphitheater in the redevelopment of the Cathedral Field site.	1. Create a site plan. 2. Identify funding sources to implement development project.	City of St. Cloud EDA
Develop trails along the entire west side of the river to provide access to the St. Cloud River's Edge Convention Center and Hester Park.	1. Construct trail segment with connections to the Civic Center and Hester Park.	City of St. Cloud Stearns County MnDNR
Provide a connection to the Lake Wobegon Regional Trail.	1. Coordinate efforts with Stearns County and MnDNR to plan the regional trail connection.	City of St. Cloud Stearns County MnDNR Railroad
Provide canoe/kayak facilities at Wilson Park to connect and enhance the water trail from the Rapids Reach to the University/Gardens Reach.	1. Identify funding sources to implement development project.	City of St. Cloud Private investor SCSU
Urban/Economic Development—West Bank - Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Develop riverfront shops and restaurants with outdoor seating.	1. Create a site plan. 2. Identify funding sources to implement the development project. 3. Provide tax incentives to attract prospective developers and business owners. 4. Seek additional incentives to implement redevelopment projects.	City of St. Cloud EDA Private investors
Develop a "river gateway" with a public gathering space and connections to the Beaver Island Trail.	1. Create a site plan. 2. Identify funding sources to implement the development project.	City of St. Cloud MnDNR
Re-envision St. Cloud River's Edge Convention Center expansion design to improve its connection to the riverfront.	1. Create a site plan. 2. Identify funding sources to implement the redevelopment project.	City of St. Cloud
Redevelop the Kelly Inn tower area as a river-oriented mixed use development with a public riverfront plaza.	1. Create a site plan. 2. Identify funding sources to implement the redevelopment project. 3. Provide incentives to prospective developers and business owners. 4. Seek additional incentives to implement the redevelopment project.	City of St. Cloud EDA Private investors
Urban/Economic Development—East Bank— Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Redevelop east bank on the south side of St. Germain St. E from the river to Riverside Drive with a public plaza feature at St. Germain St. E bridgehead. Redevelop east bank on the north side of St. Germain St. E between railroad tracks and St. Germain St. E. with multi-family housing.	1. Create a site plan. 2. Identify funding sources to implement the development project. 3. Provide incentives to attract prospective developers and business owners. 4. Seek additional incentives to implement the redevelopment project.	City of St. Cloud HRA Private investors
Redevelop HRA Riverside Apartments as a riverfront oriented mixed-use commercial / market rate residential development.	1. Create redevelopment site plan. 2. Provide incentives to attract prospective developers and business owners to redevelop the site. 3. Seek additional incentives to implement redevelopment project.	City of St. Cloud HRA Private investors
Events/Tourism—Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Create a connection between the Downtown Art Crawl and the river.	1. Create a site plan. 2. Coordinate efforts between the City and Downtown Art Crawl event organizers.	City of St. Cloud Chamber of Commerce Downtown Council St. Cloud Arts Commission
Promote historic buildings close to the river, including bed and breakfasts and commercial buildings in Downtown St. Cloud.	1. Provide incentives to property owners who rehabilitate/restore historic buildings.	City of St. Cloud Chamber of Commerce HRA Private investors Downtown Council St. Cloud Heritage Preservation Commission



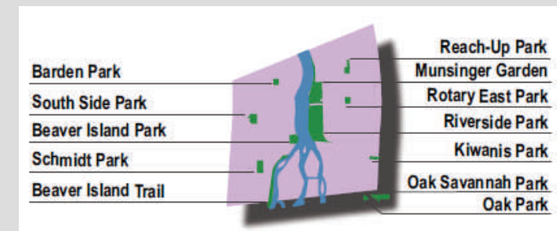
UNIVERSITY/ GARDENS REACH

The University/Gardens Reach is located entirely in St. Cloud. It comprises 630 acres with 180 acres of open water. This reach is a transition from the narrow Central Bluffs gorge to the wide Plum Creek/Beaver Island flats farther south. Towards the south the bluffs pull back from the river and slopes become gradual. The river there becomes braided and shallow with sand bars, making navigation difficult. Over half of this reach is urbanized, while one-quarter remains forested, chiefly by oaks which formerly were in a more open setting. Herbaceous wetlands associated with the river occupy 12 percent of the reach. A high quality native plant community occurs in this reach.

Munsinger and Clemens Gardens are two distinct gardens situated on both sides of Riverside Drive SE (Munsinger Gardens on the west and Clemens Gardens on the East) between University Drive SE and 13th Street SE along the east bank of the Mississippi River.

The organizing theme is to better connect St. Cloud State University with the three parks on the east bank and orient development around making this reach a center for river activities and study. Existing uses are largely appropriate.

River access points along the river within this reach include Clemens/Munsinger Gardens and Riverside Park on the east bank. A public boat launch sits on the west bank near the Beaver Island Park south of St. Cloud State University. The river is spanned by University Bridge. The southern portion of this reach is in the state's Mississippi Scenic River district which begins at the St. Cloud Dam and continues to Highway 24 in Clearwater.



This air photo illustrates the development pattern in the University/ Gardens Reach.

UNIVERSITY/GARDENS REACH

The organizing theme in this reach is to enhance and strengthen the connections to the river with trail extensions, park enhancements and ecological shoreline restoration. These include the ongoing implementation of the master plans for Munsinger Gardens, Riverside and Talahi Parks on the east bank and establishing the Mississippi River Center and a new boat landing at St. Cloud State University along the west bank.

ECOSYSTEM PROTECTION/RESTORATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Restore/enhance shoreline of public property with river frontage such as the side slope embankments of the St. Cloud Dam, Munsinger Gardens, Riverside and Talahi Parks.
- Address existing stormwater point and non-point discharge locations affecting river shoreline and water quality .

ACTIVE RECREATION/TRAILS RECOMMENDATIONS

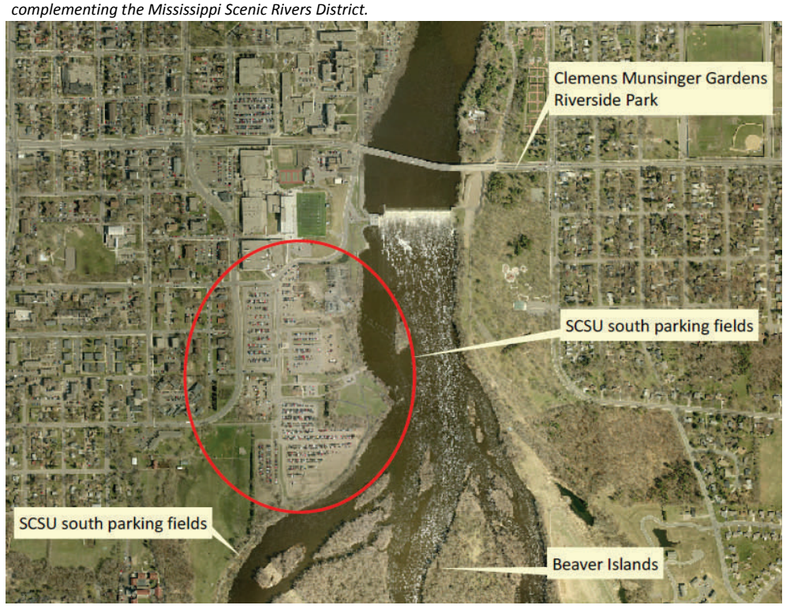
- Construct a multi-use trail crossing on the SCSU campus that connects the Beaver Island Trail south and north of campus.

URBAN/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

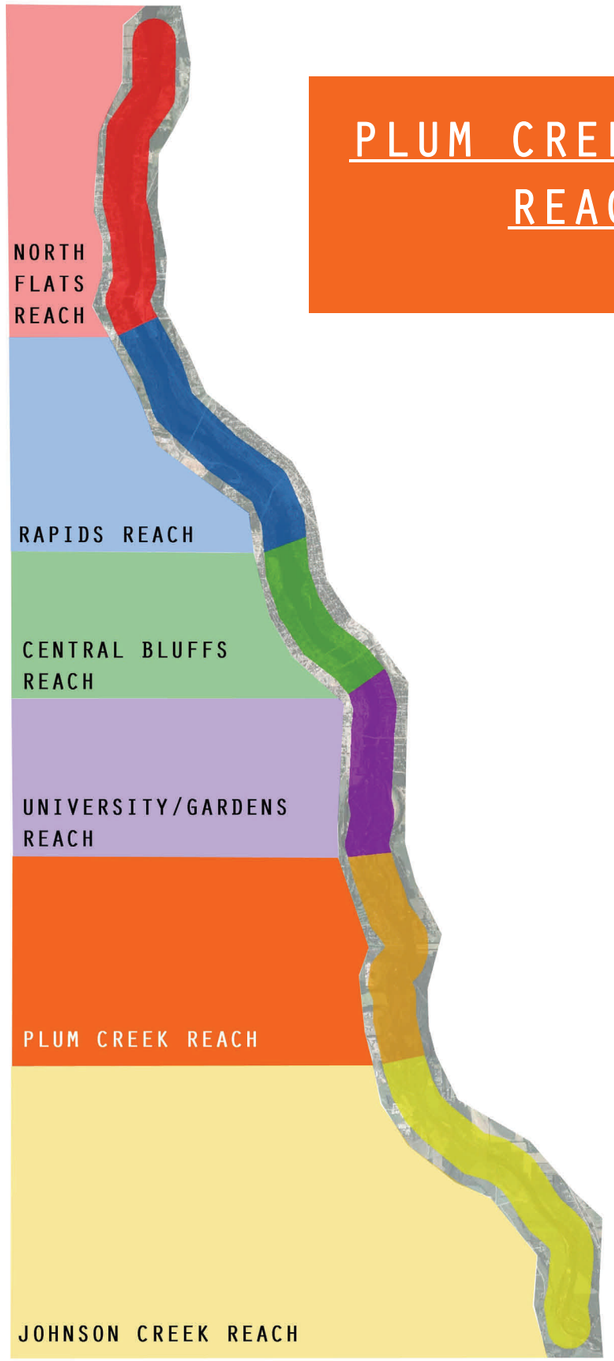
- Target west bank redevelopment in areas south of the St. Cloud State University campus.

Introducing a series of stone piers built from local granite would provide multi-seasonal access to the river for a variety of activities. Vegetating the rip-rap embankment of the dam would also improve habitat and enhance visual quality while also discouraging anglers from using the dam's wings for fishing.

The SCSU campus and its southern parking field are key sites for the connection of local and regional trail systems, as well as the potential development of cultural and educational facilities that can benefit the community while complementing the Mississippi Scenic Rivers District.



Ecosystem Protection/Restoration—Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Enhance/restore the shoreline of public property with river frontage, such as beside the St. Cloud Dam, Munsinger Gardens, Riverside, and Talahi Parks.	1. Work with local initiatives to restore shoreline with native vegetation to protect water quality, improve wildlife habitat, and reduce erosion potential. 2. Identify funding sources to implement restoration programs and installations. 3. Engage government agencies and non-profit groups to assist developing enhancement and restoration plans.	City of St. Cloud Stearns County SWCD Sherburne County SWCD MnDNR
Active Recreation/Trails/Access—Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Construct a multi-use trail across the SCSU campus that connects the Beaver Island Trail north and south of campus.	1. Construct multi-use trail. 2. Identify funding sources to implement the trail construction project.	City of St. Cloud Stearns County SCSU MnDNR
Urban/Economic Development—Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Promote redevelopment of select west side properties for river-oriented mixed use, such as new shops, restaurants, and market-rate housing.	1. Create an area redevelopment plan. 2. Provide tax incentives to attract prospective developers and business owners to redevelop the sites.	City of St. Cloud SCSU EDA Private investors
Events/Tourism—Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Develop an environmental/interpretive center (including fresh water aquarium) on the south end of the SCSU campus.	1. Create a site and building plan. 2. Identify funding sources to implement restoration programs and installations.	City of St. Cloud SCSU MnDNR
Incorporate SCSU Riverwalk behind buildings into Lemonade Art Fair.	1. Create a site plan. 2. Coordinate efforts between the City and Lemonade Art Fair organizers.	City of St. Cloud SCSU Lemondade Art Fair organizers St. Cloud Arts Commission

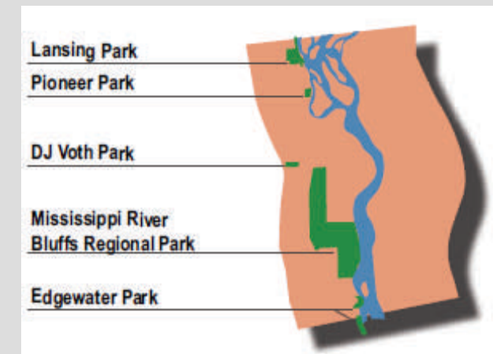


PLUM CREEK REACH

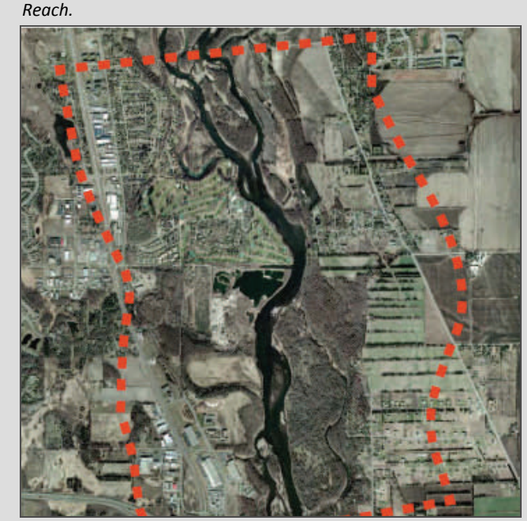
The Plum Creek Reach comprises 790 acres with 240 acres of open water. The Beaver Islands are the main feature of the Plum Creek Reach. The river valley widens and is sharply delineated by bluffs on the west bank. Over a dozen teardrop-shaped islands orient longwise with the current. Most notable are Grand Island, which is the large island located directly across from the river oxbow in the Mississippi River Bluffs Regional Park, and St. Augusta Island, which is the smaller island to the south of the view shed in the regional park. The current separates into several shallow channels that are difficult to navigate in large boats. Plum Creek, draining a small watershed of about 4 square miles, enters the river on its west bank at the southeast corner of the St. Cloud Country Club. Only 10 percent of this reach is developed. Cropland makes up 17 percent of the land, forests 40 percent, and pastures and grasslands 22 percent. Marshes make up 11 percent of the land. A high quality native plant community occurs in this reach.

The west bank is in St. Cloud, while the east bank is Haven Township. The organizing theme is to manage growth on the east bank through administering Minnesota's Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The primary objective for the west bank is to continue implementing the Mississippi River Bluffs Regional Park master plan and establish the park as a trail head for the Beaver Island Trail system extending north and south.

There are no river access points in this reach. Public lands in this reach include Mississippi River Bluffs Regional Park. The St. Cloud Country Club is a noticeable greenbelt on the river's west bank.



This air photo illustrates the development pattern in the Plum Creek Reach.



PLUM CREEK REACH

With its west bank in St. Cloud and east bank in Haven Township, the Plum Creek Reach is one of the more undeveloped and rural river reaches.

The organizing themes for this reach center around implementing the master plan for Mississippi River Bluffs Park and promoting river bank restoration and enhancement along the east bank. Minnesota's Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is intended to guide development near the river.

ACTIVE RECREATION/TRAILS RECOMMENDATIONS

The Mississippi River Bluffs Regional Park is the primary planning area within the Plum Creek Reach. Recommendations from the park's master plan include:

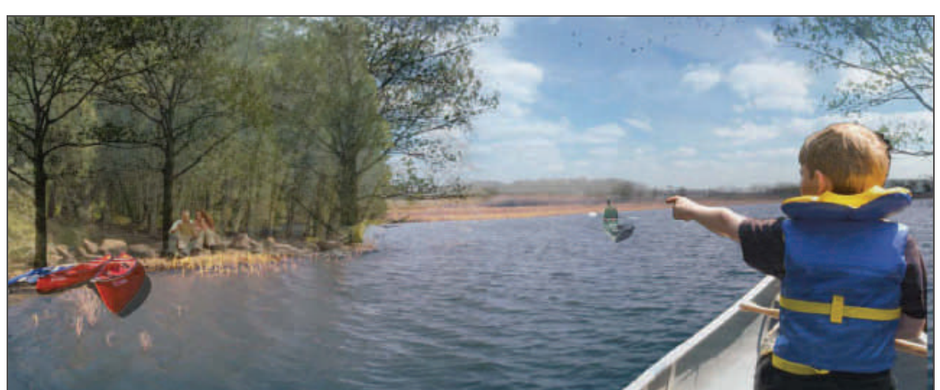
- Restore park to an oak savannah (oaks and natural grass prairie) landscape.
- Construct a river overlook in the park on the west side of the river.
- Install a great lawn and wet meadow within the park
- Construct a canoe and boat launch in the park
- Extend the Beaver Island Trail connection from Mississippi River Bluffs Regional Park south to the St. Cloud city limits

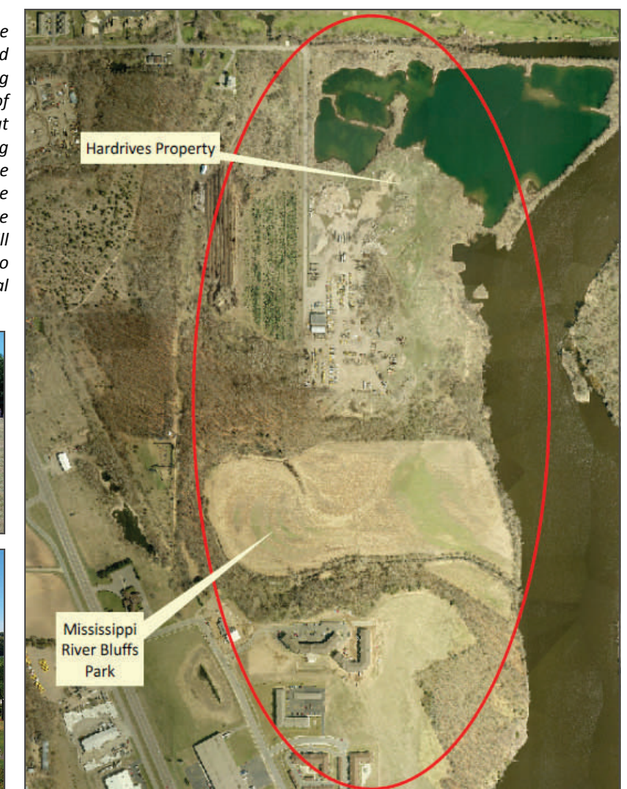
EVENTS/TOURISM RECOMMENDATIONS

- Hold a winter festival on the river for the community and visitors where activities could include ice sculptures, speed skating, ice fishing contests, etc.

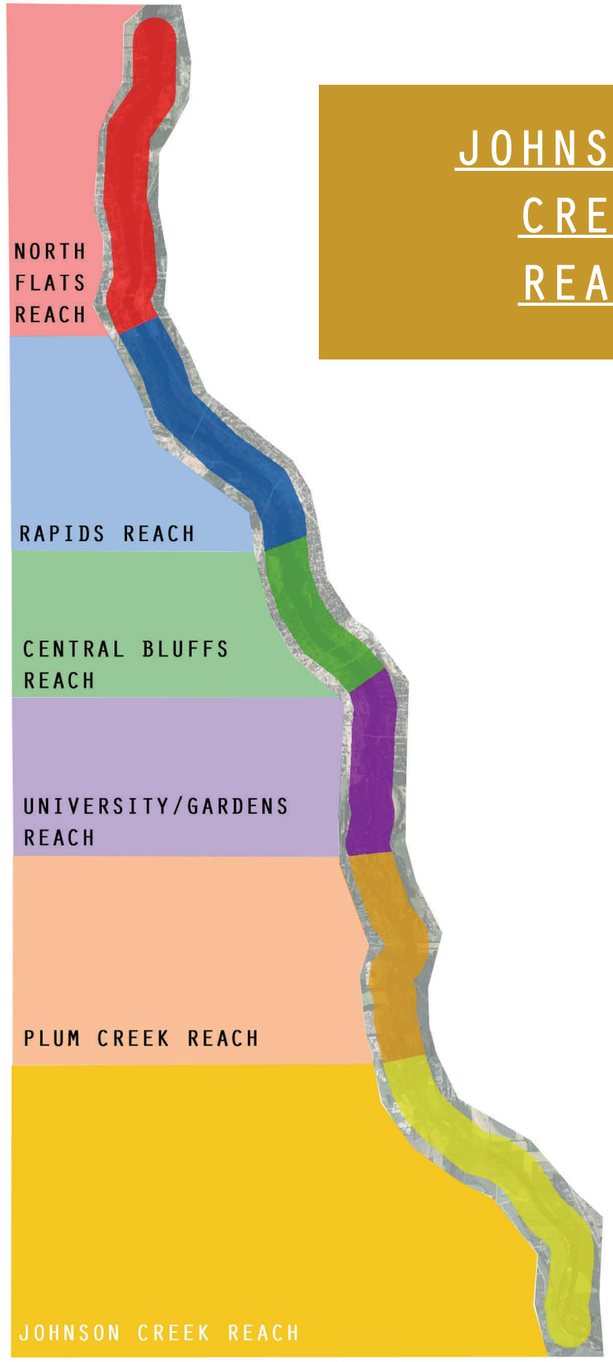
Active Recreation/Trails/Access— Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Implement recommendations from the Mississippi River Bluffs Master Plan for the following elements: • Oak savannah restoration • River overlook on west side of river • Canoe and boat launch • Beaver Island Trail extension from park to St. Cloud city limits	1. Construct those park elements that would enhance the river experience. 2. Seek funding sources to finance park improvements.	City of St. Cloud Stearns County MnDNR
Events/Tourism— Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Hold a winter festival offering riverside activities, including ice sculptures, speed skating, ice fishing contest, etc.	1. Develop program and promotional material for a river related winter festival.	City of St. Cloud Chamber of Commerce St. Cloud Area Convention and Visitor's Bureau

The Mississippi River Bluffs Regional Park offers a unique setting for balancing active and passive recreation desires along the urban area's river corridor. A community-based park master plan was developed in 2004 setting forth a vision and strategy for meeting eco-system restoration and protection needs, while taking greater advantage of currently underutilized portions of this 150+ acre site. The master plan suggests that the adjacent privately held Harddrives industrial site offers a particularly interesting opportunity to create a centralized location for waterfront activities/improvements. The expanse of the property also allows the most sensitive environmental features to be protected and/or restored in the midst of the growing urban area. The future connection of Mississippi River Bluffs Regional Park to the Beaver Island Trail system will not only allow the property to be a river destination for residents and visitors, but also to serve as a trail head for adventures on the regional trail system through central Minnesota.





PLUM CREEK REACH
ST. CLOUD URBAN AREA MISSISSIPPI RIVER CORRIDOR PLAN



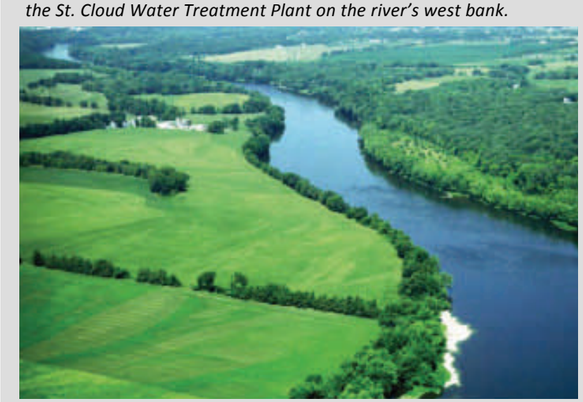
JOHNSON CREEK REACH

The Johnson Creek Reach comprises 1,300 acres with 285 acres of open water. In the Johnson Creek Reach the river valley narrows, with bluffs on both banks. Moving south along the east bank, the bluffs pull back from the river. The sandy river and deeper channel are fairly easily traveled, although shoals and islands do occur. Johnson Creek originates in the farmland and highlands of St. Cloud and St. Augusta, making it a sizeable 3rd order stream draining over 30 square miles. It forms a noticeable delta where it enters the Mississippi River near the City of St. Cloud wastewater treatment facility. Cropland and forest dominate this reach. Pasture and grassland make up 22 percent and marshes 11 percent of the land surface.

The west bank is in the City of St. Cloud and a small part of Lynden Township, while the east bank is in Haven Township. The organizing theme in this reach is to appropriately transition between parkland / scenic river character and industrial development on the west bank and managed growth on the east bank. The reach serves as the point of entry for the Mississippi River Trail into the St. Cloud urban area passing Warner Lake County Park along the way. Minnesota's Wild and Scenic Rivers Act guides development near the river.

This air photo illustrates the development pattern in the Johnson Creek Reach.

One river access point is available in this reach. It is located at a 63-acre Sherburne County Park in Section 5 in Clear Lake Township. The new park has not been named yet. Public lands in this reach include the St. Cloud Water Treatment Plant on the river's west bank.



JOHNSON CREEK REACH

The organizing theme in this reach is to manage growth and effectively transition between urban land uses and the serene character of the Scenic River District. The west bank will continue to experience growth pressure due to its access to I94 and existing utilities, while the east bank is marked by existing riverfront development and high quality natural lands. Similar to the Plum Creek Reach, Minnesota's Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is intended to guide development near the river.

ECOSYSTEM PROTECTION/RESTORATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider acquisition of land and easements for sensitive areas adjacent to the Scenic River District.

ACTIVE RECREATION/TRAILS RECOMMENDATIONS

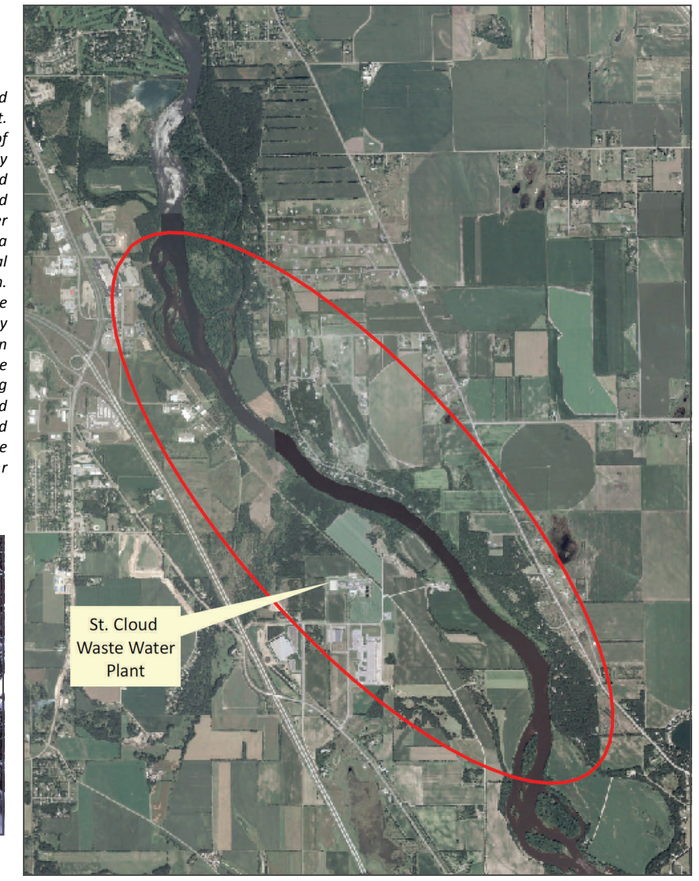
- Extend the Beaver Island Trail with a southern trail head facility to the St. Cloud city limits to provide a complete west bank riverfront trail system.
- Implement existing and future plans for development of riverside parks/open space and blue trail facilities through coordination of State, County, City, and Township resources.

EVENTS/TOURISM RECOMMENDATIONS

- Hold a winter festival offering riverside activities for the community and visitors given the regional trail access, as well as existing and future public lands adjacent to the river's edge .

Ecosystem Protection/Restoration Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Consider acquisition or easements across unprotected portions of parcels split by the Scenic River District.	1. Identify high amenity parcels along the river corridor that are currently split by the Scenic Rivers boundary. 2. Identify alternative funding sources to assist in purchase of land or easements.	City of St. Cloud Haven Township MnDNR Sherburne County
Active Recreation/Trails/Access Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Extend the Beaver Island Trail with a southern trail head facility to the St. Cloud city limits to provide a complete west bank riverfront trail system.	1. Construct trail extension. 2. Identify funding sources to implement trail construction projects.	City of St. Cloud Stearns County MnDNR
Events/Tourism Recommendations/Action Items/Stakeholders		
Recommendations	**Action Items**	**Stakeholders**
Hold a winter festival offering riverside activities, including ice sculptures, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, etc.	1. Develop program and promotional material for a river related winter festival.	City of St. Cloud Chamber of Commerce St. Cloud Area Convention and Visitor's Bureau

Portions of the Johnson Creek Reach are included within 50 year growth boundaries for the St. Cloud Urban Area given the central location of urban services and the accessibility provided by Interstate 94. As such, the reach will be faced with continuing pressure for urban growth and development. The Mississippi Scenic River District and its management plan establish a clear vision and mandate for maintaining rural densities throughout the Johnson Creek Reach. The City of St. Cloud and Haven Township have for the last 20 years maintained an orderly annexation agreement solidifying the common understanding and commitment to upholding the goals of the Scenic River District and managing urban growth. Continued cooperation and coordination between these entities and community stakeholders are essential to the responsible stewardship of the river resource.



The Johnson Creek Reach is a vital point of connection between the Beaver Island Trail within the City of St. Cloud and the regional trail system to the south. Local governments and community stakeholders have made considerable strides in acquiring property to construct this remaining void in the trail system paralleling the Mississippi River. However, considerable stretches remain to be acquired requiring significant financial resources. Nonetheless, local, State, and Federal funding must be obtained to make this important connection between the Beaver Island and Lake Wobegon trails, as well as the continuation of the Mississippi River Trail corridor.

IMPLEMENTATION

Success of the Mississippi River Corridor Plan will require a well-defined implementation approach that includes decisive actions of many river corridor stakeholders. Implementation based on the plan's vision will require concerted effort and vigilant commitment of river corridor stakeholders to address political, financial, and societal barriers. Attaining the plan's goals and objectives and acting upon its recommendations will enhance the quality of life for residents, businesses, and visitors of the St. Cloud area now and well into the future.

This chapter outlines general strategies and specific actions for implementing the Plan recommendations and identifies stakeholders who will play key roles in the implementation process.

The strategies and action statements are intended to be used as implementation tools for use by the decision makers of St. Cloud, Sartell and Sauk Rapids, and those boards, commissions, agencies, organizations, and staff designated to advance portions of the plan.

The successful completion of the actions outlined in the following pages will depend upon the fiscal and political climate in any given year; therefore, it is important that this document is reviewed and strategies prioritized on an annual basis and used in conjunction with local river corridor planning and development initiatives.

GENERAL STRATEGIES

ESTABLISH A RIVERFRONT ADVISORY COMMITTEE AS THE RIVER CORRIDOR CHAMPION

As with any successful initiative, a champion is needed to serve as the keeper and promoter of the St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor vision before the community and elected officials.

The planning process has from its inception been a community based initiative building upon the momentum of the Mississippi River Connections and Mississippi River Renaissance initiatives. The energy and enthusiasm of these committed volunteers needs to be recognized and sustained through future implementation activities.

Thus, the local governments and other river corridor partners should sponsor and support a volunteer organization to serve as an on-going "riverfront advisory committee" that helps stakeholders with future implementation activities. Many examples of these volunteer and/or non-profit riverfront organizations are seen across the Country as "Friends of the River" or in similar forms.

No one group or agency will implement this framework plan. Rather, the partners involved in implementation of any particular element of the river corridor vision will vary depending upon their area of expertise, geographic location, and available resources. The riverfront advisory committee can be the unifying leader in all riverfront efforts by fostering relationships and maintaining open lines of communication between all partners to coordinate the implementation of projects and programs outlined in this framework plan.

The riverfront advisory committee can also serve a vital role in the implementation of the plan by advocating for timely funding of the recommended corridor improvements by local government partners, as well as by focusing on private fundraising. Finally, the riverfront committee can lead joint public/private promotional campaigns for culture and business related to the river corridor. Continued cooperation among the public and private partners will also increase the likelihood for riverfront projects to receive grants and other support from outside the community.

FUNDING MECHANISMS

In establishing an overall funding program for riverfront improvements, it will be necessary for the area's cities and counties to clearly understand the existing and potential sources of locally controlled funds that can be dedicated toward riverfront improvements. To utilize a number of these potential revenue sources, the cities and counties will need to firmly link the river corridor plan with its local comprehensive plans to set the groundwork for updating or creating fee programs and utilization of other financial mechanisms such as unique taxing districts. These sources of locally controlled money can provide a reliable funding stream for key improvements that can be anticipated in the years shortly following adoption of this plan. In addition, these local controlled funds can also serve as the local match or leverage for other outside funding sources discussed later in these implementation actions.

The following list represents a sample of the potential funding sources that should be considered by the area cities and counties for implementation of the river corridor plan recommendations. While this is not an exhaustive list, it should be considered a starting point for discussions with the professional staff in each of the local jurisdictions having experience and expertise in these and other similar revenue sources:

- **Tax Increment Financing (TIF):** Minnesota law allows local jurisdictions to enact tax increment financing (TIF) districts that utilize the incremental tax growth generated by redevelopment to assist in project development costs or undertake public improvements benefitting the project or district.
- **Tax Abatement:** The abatement of real estate taxes would reduce a building's operating costs that in turn would increase the net operating income and increase the value of the property to the owner. The resultant marginal increase in value could be used to offset the cost of developing pedestrian improvements adjacent to the river.
- **Local Sales Tax:** The St. Cloud metro area has an existing local sales tax that can be utilized for regional park improvements. The tax is levied on the retail price of merchandise and collected by the retailer. Local jurisdictions must aggressively lobby for the local sales tax to be extended before its termination in 2017.
- **Special Assessment:** A compulsory levy made against certain properties to defray part or all of the cost of a specific improvement or service deemed to primarily benefit those properties.
- **Municipal State Aid:** The City receives an allocation of funding from the State of Minnesota that is spent on road construction projects on eligible streets and highways.

- **Parkland Funds:** Local jurisdictions are authorized by Minnesota law to require a parkland dedication exaction or payment in lieu of land dedication from new development projects to offset the cost of increased demand on the surrounding public parks system. Existing parkland dedication funds or new revenue generated from redevelopment adjacent to the river corridor can be utilized to implement riverside park and trail goals.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

Given the scarcity of public sector resources, it is important to acknowledge that city/public funding of proposed riverfront improvements will compete with infrastructure and other public projects throughout the community. As such, it is vital that the improvements suggested by the river corridor plan be incorporated into the capital improvement program of each city and county partner. The capital improvement programming process can provide an on-going platform for determining the priority status, cost estimates, and potential funding sources for consideration of the respective Planning Commission and City Administration. The Capital Improvements Program process typically includes elements of public input to create a comprehensive list of suggested public improvements. These input opportunities should be a primary task of the future riverfront advisory committee, as well as other river corridor stakeholders, to maintain the area's focus on reinvestment in its riverfront.

Early successes that elicit positive reaction are important to the viability of a project. They demonstrate that positive changes can happen by providing continuity. They also direct results after the planning process, as well as establish a foundation and support for future changes and actions. Examples of these successes may include a variety of actions ranging from river related activities/events and riverfront programming to capital construction projects. This philosophy should be an emphasis of presentations during the capital improvements programming opportunities cited above.

JOINT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

While a number of local funding sources exist as potential tools for implementing specific recommendations of the St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor Plan, the river corridor partners should proceed with the full expectation that outside funding sources will be needed. These funding sources should be identified and pursued. The primary sources of these outside revenues will be state, federal, and foundation programs through competitive grant programs. It will be crucial for the area cities, counties, and private partners to combine their lobbying resources effectively to help position them to obtain grant funds. As competition for funding is high, communication with the sponsoring agency or organization prior to grant submission is essential to ensure a successful application. The following is a brief listing of several local, state, and federal grant programs that could be targeted and leveraged by locally controlled funds for riverfront improvements:

- **County Soil and Water Conservation Districts:** Offers technical and financial assistance to local landowners, businesses, organizations, and governments interested in implementing conservation practices on their property for the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources
- **Minnesota Legacy Amendment Parks and Trails Fund:** Acquisition, development, restoration, and maintenance of park and trail facilities that are considered of regional or statewide significance. A detailed description of the criteria for a park or trail of regional or statewide significance can be found on the Parks and Trails Legacy Grant web page or by contacting program staff.
- **Minnesota Legacy Amendment Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund:** Funds support arts, history and cultural heritage organizations that are already a vital economic engine for the state and new activities that will enhance that economic impact, elevating Minnesota's resourcefulness and increasing its creative capital.
- **DNR Local Trail Connection Grant:** Develop trail connections between people and desirable locations. Priority given to residential connections to state and regional facilities and linking existing trail segments
- **DNR Boat Access Grants:** Development and improvement of public boat accesses, parking lots, docks, and boat launching ramps.
- **DNR Regional Park Grants:** Acquisition, development and/or redevelopment of regional outdoor recreation facilities. A regional park should be 100+ acres with some exceptions, serve a regional clientele and provide outdoor recreation facilities and activities that are primarily natural resource based.
- **Minnesota Board of Water Resources:** The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) is a state agency dedicated to helping local governments manage natural resources. BWSR aims to improve local capability by providing technical, financial, and administrative assistance.
- **Minnesota Council on Foundations:** The Minnesota Council on Foundations produces the Guide to Minnesota Grant Makers, a directory of foundation and corporate grant making programs. They are dedicated to helping nonprofit organizations identify potential partners and financial supporters to help sustain and improve Minnesota communities.
- **Outdoor Heritage Fund:** Funding to restore, protect and enhance ecological communities and wildlife habitat, and implement the Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan. Paid for with sales tax through constitutional amendment.
- **Minnesota Department of Transportation**: The Minnesota Department of Transportation has two funding categories that focus on bicycle, pedestrian and natural resource issues. The first is the Transportation Enhancements Program, which targets funding for twelve eligible categories of projects, including bicycle or pedestrian facilities and projects that are historic, scenic or environmental in nature. The second is the Scenic Byways Program, which makes funds available for eight eligible categories of projects on state and nationally designated Scenic Byways.
- **Minnesota Financial Aid to Private Landowners:** University of Minnesota Extension Service produces a 16 page guide describing 52 programs for private landowners.
- **Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance:** Each year, the Office of Environmental Assistance awards money to

organizations to help them move toward more sustainable practices. Specifically, projects must focus on pollution prevention, recycling market development, environmental education, sustainable communities' development and/or resource recovery.

- **Minnesota Pollution Control Agency:** There are various opportunities available for receiving financial assistance to help protect and improve Minnesota's natural resources.
- **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation:** This Foundation has a variety of challenge grant programs that fund projects to conserve and restore fish, wildlife, and native plants and their habitats. Federal, state, and local governments, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations are welcome to apply.
- **Sustainable Communities Grants Program**: The purpose of the Sustainable Communities Grants Program is to facilitate the development of new sustainability initiatives in communities throughout the United States.
- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has an array of financial assistance programs. The EPA's Office of Environmental Education supports projects that enhance the public's awareness, knowledge, and skills to make informed decisions that affect environmental quality.
- **Others:** Private sector contributions could include :
  a. Voluntary Donations - equipment, easements, land
  b. Contributions - cash, securities
  c. In-Kind Matches - labor, knowledge, time, political support
  d. Fundraisers - benefits, sales, etc.

COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

The growth and vitality of the St. Cloud area can be credited in part to the active participation of its citizens, institutions, and businesses in proactive planning and cooperative implementation strategies. Thus, the potential for partnering of public and private entities and expanding cooperative relationships were seen as essential elements of the St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor Planning process. The planning process included representatives from the area cities and counties, as well as past participants in the Mississippi River Renaissance and Mississippi River Connections initiatives such as non-profits, community organizations, and local businesses.

Many of the projects outlined in this report are too large to be implemented by a single entity and will require a continued commitment to public/private partnerships. A variety of public and private actions will need to take place in order to implement the river corridor vision. To facilitate these partnerships and encourage their public involvement, smaller projects and potential project partners have been identified in the specific river reach plans through the urban area.

While partnerships require a higher level of coordination, they can enable the needs of multiple organizations to be satisfied. The leverage of resources, particularly financial assets, provides an opportunity for funding facilities, programs, and improvements that may not have been otherwise possible.

REGIONAL CONSTITUENCY FOR RIVERFRONT IMPROVEMENTS

The efforts of Mississippi River Renaissance and Mississippi River Connections have successfully reintroduced the river corridor to area residents. While the broader community has generally lost its identity as a river community, these efforts to bring individuals back to the river's edge and onto the river's waters have built renewed interest and sense of community ownership for the Mississippi River.

Increasing this sense of ownership will be essential to implementing the corridor plan recommendations. It will help create a regional constituency committed to actively participating in implementation activities and advocating for policy and fiscal decisions of riverfront stakeholders. While other implementation actions suggested by this Chapter call for the creation of a riverfront committee serving as a formal on-going entity as champion for riverfront enhancement, new stakeholders and leaders must be actively sought to reinforce the grass-roots momentum that led to the initiation of the urban river corridor planning process. The inspired masses of residents can bring new life and a stronger voice for implementation of the recommended riverfront improvements.

REALIZING THE COMMON CORRIDOR VISION

The St. Cloud metropolitan area has developed an interrelated series of plans intended to coordinate the policies and actions of individual jurisdictions within the context of a common vision for the growth of the region.

The St. Cloud Joint Planning District adopted in 2000 was the first community based planning document developed in Minnesota outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area. This regional plan continues to offer guidance to local decision makers and establish a framework for communication of emerging issues and policy trends in the St. Cloud area. However, the primary implementation tool of the regional vision established by the St. Cloud Joint Planning District Plan is the comprehensive plan adopted by each individual local government jurisdiction.

Consultation with the local comprehensive plan is required by Minnesota law and sound planning practice prior to action of local governments to implement particular economic development incentive mechanisms, make quasi-judicial land use decisions, adopt development regulations/standards, and prepare the local capital improvement program.

In taking these actions, the advisory (e.g., planning commissions and park boards) and elected bodies (e.g., county boards and city councils) can be consistently reminded of the river corridor vision and its relevance to broader community development objectives defined by the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, the formal adoption of the St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor Plan into the comprehensive plans of each local government is an important first step in realizing the vision and objectives of the St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor Plan.

PROMOTE THE PLAN AS A DECISION MAKING TOOL

While incorporation of the river corridor vision and goals into the formal planning process of local governments is vital to guiding future development and infrastructure decision-making, it is also important to note the significant role of private property owners, non-profits, community organizations, and local business interests in realizing the vision of this plan. The Corridor Plan represents a collective vision for the future of the community and should be shared in a summary form with all residents and businesses of the community.

The role of these river corridor stakeholders and partners is detailed in the river reach plans presented in Chapter 2. To that end, sufficient copies of the full Corridor Plan must be produced for distribution at key locations around the City—such as the City Hall, the library, senior centers, Chamber offices, and schools. These locations will increase accessibility for review by residents as needed. Further, sufficient copies of the full report should be maintained to share with private developers looking to develop property in the City or public agencies planning infrastructure or facility investments that will affect the character of the City. At minimum, an article should appear in city and county newsletters that summarizes the Plan, its implications and the next steps for the City to implement. Further, the cities and counties should post the full Corridor Plan report on the City's internet site and other mass media outlets (e.g., cable access television) and social networking sites.

Finally, at the time of the plan's adoption, City officials should work with the local media to publicize the new Corridor Plan. The assistance of a professional public relations or marketing firm may be valuable in developing the form and content of these public information documents to realize the full potential of these campaigns.

UPDATING THE PLAN

While the Plan Committee should complete an Annual Report for the St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Plan, a comprehensive review of the St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor and its plan should be done every five years after the date of original designation. In years when a five-year review and update is completed, it would take the place of the Annual Report. The five-year update is envisioned to be conceptual, similar to the original plan, and to be used by local entities, agencies and organizations for planning purposes of the urban river corridor. The purpose of the update will be to assess, from a longer historical perspective, the following measures:

- successes and failures of the Mississippi River Corridor Plan (Everything that follows is a recommended change);
- realization of corridor goals and objectives;
- effectiveness of proposed actions;
- local, regional and state changes affecting the corridor;
- need for reformulation of goals, objectives and strategies;
- effectiveness of promotion and data collection efforts;
- need for changes in mapping and/or corridor description; and
- impacts the plan has had on the surrounding communities.

ST. CLOUD URBAN AREA MISSISSIPPI RIVER CORRIDOR PLAN

HISTORY/CULTURAL RESOURCES CHAPTER

THE RIVER

The Mississippi is the central theme of the history of this region, tying together the divergent stories of the hundreds of thousands of people who have called it home. It carried the Ojibwa and the Dakota as they moved between village and hunting grounds. It brought the boats of explorers like Zebulon Pike and Henry Schoolcraft into the northern woods. From those forests, it floated the logs down to the mills and manufacturers that built the local economy in the early years. It powered industry and lit up homes. Thousands of immigrants, fresh off ships from Europe, took the Mississippi to St. Cloud and Sauk Rapids, bought land, and began the great farms of Benton, Stearns, and Sherburne Counties. With its scenic vistas, breaking the surrounding prairie land, it beckoned visitors to linger on its banks and residents to build homes on its shores. The Mississippi is our history book.

NATIVE AMERICANS AND THE MISSISSIPPI

Before there was a territory called Minnesota, before the Plimoth Plantation and Jamestown, even before Columbus discovered a so-called New World, native peoples traveled through and across what are today the cities of Sauk Rapids and Saint Cloud. Although there were footpaths across the prairies and through the woods, the river was the main avenue of travel.

Archaeologists have found evidence of early habitations in Talahi Park in St. Cloud and the East Terrace Site in Sauk Rapids. These discoveries are a window into the lives of the people who left no written record. Because so little is known about these earlier cultures, they have been categorized into broad cultural groups. The Paleoindian people lived from 10,000 B.C. through 5,000 B.C., and the Eastern Archaic people lived between 5,000 B.C. and 750 B.C. Hunting large game and gathering food from the plant life around them sustained their lives. For spear points and simple tools, they chipped stones and mined copper and it is often these stones, or the small left-over chips, that provide evidence to archaeologists as they studied the East Terrace and Talahi Woods sites, including spear points as old as 10,000 years.[1]

At a time when Euro-Americans began exploring the upper Mississippi, this central region of Minnesota was a borderland, shared by two Native American nations, the Ojibwe, who inhabited northern Minnesota, beginning late in the 1600s and early 1700s, and the Dakota, who flourished in southern Minnesota long before the arrival of the early explorers.

Naturalist Henry Schoolcraft observed the interaction of these two tribes when he visited the area with an exploratory party in 1820, charged by Michigan territorial governor Lewis Cass to make “a personal examination of the Indian tribes.” Escorted by several Ojibwe guides, Schoolcraft camped just north of present-day St. Cloud, and in his journal, noted, “[an] object which attracted our attention…an Indian sign, or letter of birch bark, affixed to a long pole in the centre of the deserted encampment. This had been left for the information of the Chippeways [Ojibwe] by a large part of Sioux [Dakota].” His guides translated the pictorial message: “a large party of Sioux [Dakota] had proceeded thus far up the river on a mission of peace, but not meeting with any Chippeways [Ojibwe], had returned.” Later, at the confluence of the Sauk River and the Mississippi, he wrote: ““This is one of the principal hunting grounds of the Minow Kantong [Mdewakanton] band of Sioux [Dakota].”[2]

In the decades before Minnesota became a territory, the long-standing relationships between nations was disrupted, when the Winnebago were removed from their traditional homes in Wisconsin and settled in an area near present-day Long Prairie. A southern missionary to the Winnebago, David Lowry, brought his son, Sylvanus, to the area. As he grew older, Sylvanus became a fur trader, settling near Sauk Rapids, and then founded Upper Town, an early settlement that became part of St. Cloud.

As more Euro-American settlers moved into the area in the 1850s, interaction between the cultures were not infrequent. One woman, who settled at the junction of the Little Sauk and the Mississippi, remembered, “[The Indians] would everlastingly stand and look in the windows and watch us work. We were so used to them that we never noticed them.”[3]

But the gulf widened as the towns of St. Cloud and Sauk Rapids grew, leaving fewer opportunities for interaction. Following the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, even casual encounters became increasingly rare, and white views toward the native peoples turned hostile. Before the conflict, Jane Grey Swisshelm, editor of the St. Cloud Democrat, encouraged people to come and settle in Minnesota, writing, “We beg to assure our Eastern friends once again that there is not the slightest danger to the people of Minnesota from Indians.” But after the events of August and September 1862, she bitterly wrote, “They should be got rid of in the cheapest and quickest manner.” This tragic turn would alter the relationships between the cultures for decades.[4]

FOOTNOTES

[1] Brauer and Associates, Bend in the River Regional Park Master Plan Report (Benton County, Minn., 2005), III: 8. Talahi Woods was acquired by the St. Cloud State Alumni Association in 1938 and turned over the university in 1944. George Selke, president of St. Cloud State, encouraged the use of the site and brought an abandoned Civilian Conservation Corps to here from Shakopee, where it became a popular spot for students and faculty.

[2] Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, Schoolcraft’s Narrative Journal of Travels, ed. Mentor L. Williams (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1992), 183-189.

[3] Mrs. C. A. Burdick, quoted in Old Rail Fence Corners: The A.B.C.’s of Minnesota History : Authentic Incidents Gleaned from the Old Settlers by the Book Committee (Austin, Minn.: F.H. McCulloch Print. Co., 1914), 104. To understand these encounter stories with proper context, see Bruce M. White, “Stereotypes of Minnesota’s Native People,” Minnesota History (Fall 1992), 99-111.

[4] Quoted in Francis P. Prucha, “The Settler and the Army in Frontier Minnesota,” in Selections from Minnesota History, edited by Rhoda R. Gilman and June Drenning. Holmquist (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1965), 39-51; St. Cloud Democrat, September 11, 1862.

ZEBULON PIKE AND EARLY EXPLORATION

In August 1805, a young army lieutenant named Zebulon Pike boarded a keelboat in Saint Louis, Missouri, ready to head north up the Mississippi River on a voyage of discovery. At the exact same time, to the west, Lewis and Clark were exploring the headwaters of the Missouri River, but Pike's mission was different. His orders instructed him to find the headwaters of the Mississippi — a key natural landmark in the treaties that established the northern border of the United States. What was part of the United States and what was under British control? To secure the American presence in the northwest, Pike was told to meet Indian leaders to acquire land for future military posts.

Traveling with a twenty-man party, Pike made his way upriver. In late September, he met with Dakota Indians at the junction of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers. Through a questionable treaty, Pike acquired more than 100,000 acres for a military reservation. At the signing, he gave the Dakota gifts with a total value of around $200. The total payments, made years later, amounted to only $2,000. The land eventually became the site of Fort Snelling, and later, the cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul.[5]

Following this parley, Pike proceeded up the Mississippi River. As he passed the site of present-day St. Cloud, he wrote in his journal: OCTOBER 10th. Came to large islands and strong water early in the morning. Passed a cluster of more than twenty islands in the course of four miles; these I called Beaver islands, from the immense sign of those animals; for they have dams on every island and roads from them every two or three rods.[6]

The team traveled another forty miles before winter closed in. The expedition was poorly equipped for the icy weather, so Pike split the party and forged on with a few men, hauling supplies on sleds, finally reaching Leech Lake, which Pike thought was the source of the Mississippi. The party also made contact with several British traders who set up shop on American soil, and still flew the Union Jack. With a dramatic flare Pike ordered one of the American soldiers to shoot down the British flag. But it was all show, because without a permanent military outpost, as soon as Pike left, business returned to normal.[7]

After a grueling winter, the expedition turned around and returned to St. Louis in April 1806, having traveled nearly 5,000 miles. Pike had not located a single stream or lake which was previously unknown; his maps were poorly drawn and inaccurate. Ordered to find the source of the Mississippi, Pike had failed; ordered to stop the illicit fur trade in the North, Pike had blustered but failed again.

But the young officer had made a name for himself and was quickly sent on a new mission to explore the Southwest. Less than a decade later, he died while fighting the British during the War of 1812. But his legacy lives on in the name of one of America's great mountains: Pike's Peak, and, in this region, in the name that he gave to the Beaver Islands.

FOOTNOTES

[5] Gary Brueggemann, "Rendevous at the Riverbend: Pike's Seven Days in the Land of Little Crow," Ramsey County History 40 (Summer 2005): 4-16.

[6] Elliott Coues. ed. The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike to Headwaters of the Mississippi River, through Louisiana Territory, and in New Spain, during the years 1805-6-7 (Hudson, Wis.: Ross & Haines. 1895, reprint, 1965), 193.

[7] Institute for Minnesota Archaeology, Archaeology Beyond the Walls: Tracing Zebulon Pike's Travels in the Mississippi Headwaters (Minneapolis: Mercil Communications, Inc., 1992), videocassette.

SETTLEMENT

As soon as the land along this stretch of the Mississippi opened for settlement in 1852, the result of newly-negotiated Indian treaties, ambitious men came north to claim land and plat new towns. Sauk Rapids was a natural magnet and was a trading center as early as 1805, when Robert Dickson opened a post here. Philip Beupre, a Canadian fur trader, settled here in 1844, soon joined by Henry M. Rice in 1848. Sauk Rapids was platted as a village in 1854 and became county seat of Benton county in 1859. Initially settled by Yankees, later newcomers to Sauk Rapids included people of Scottish, German, Irish, Dutch, and German ancestry.

A few miles to the south, by 1854, there were three settlements in what would eventually become the city of St. Cloud, each divided from the others by a steep ravine. If you stepped off a steamboat in 1855, unsure of which village it was, the sound of the voices might be your first clue.

If you walked through Upper Town, the speech might have had a southern lilt to it. It was founded in 1853 by General Sylvanus B. Lowry of Tennessee. He came north as a boy when his father served first as a missionary to the Winnebago, and then as an Indian agent. As an adult, Sylvanus settled near Sauk Rapids in 1849 when he became trader for the American Fur Company. Attracted by the pleasant Minnesota summers, Lowry's Acadia, as he called it, drew wealthy southerners, who brought their slaves with them. At first, it was the most successful settlement, with easy access to the river. Warehouses and stores lined the shore and, in 1858, a government office moved here from Sauk Rapids.[8]

In Middle Town, the first village to be established, the language might have been German. It was founded in 1853 when John L. Wilson, a native of Maine, purchased 320 acres from Ole Bergeson, a "Norwegian squatter," for one hundred dollars. Situated between the two ravines that originally connected Lake George to the Mississippi River, Wilson caught the attention of John Tenvoorde, who was trying to find a new home for a German colony from Indiana. Wilson offered generous terms and soon Middle Town became a magnet for German Catholics, drawn to the area by the writings of Father Francis Pierz.[9]

Lower Town, also known as St. Cloud City, was located below the southern ravine around the present St. Cloud State campus. It was established by George Fuller Brott, a real estate developer from New York. Brott was a practical businessman, and attracted investors including C. T. Stearns for whom the county is named. Advertised in the east by Brott, this area drew settlers from New England and the Mid-Atlantic states.[10]

In March 1856, two years before Minnesota became a state, the three villages were incorporated into one town and named St. Cloud. When the Civil War began in 1861, many with southern ties left Upper Town, although Lowry lived here until his death in 1865. Brott, a businessman, had his land claim tied up in court for years, and eventually moved away. Wilson's Middle Town became the commercial center of the new town.

Looking down at the Mississippi near the former Upper Town landing, you gain a sense of how St. Cloud developed from its connections to the river, but also an understanding of how the people of St. Cloud have transformed the natural surroundings.

One more natural phenomenon radically altered the fortunes of the two towns. In 1886, a cyclone swept through Sauk Rapids, leaving it in ruins. More than thirty-eight people died and hundreds were injured. A reporter described the scene, writing, "It is not any one section of Sauk Rapids that is gone; it is not the North end or the South end; it is the whole town." In its wake, St. Cloud businessmen pressed their advantage and soon, it became the dominant commercial center of the region.[11]

FOOTNOTES

[8] William Towner Morgan, Earth, Wood, Stone: Central Minnesota Lives and Landmarks (St. Cloud, Minn.: 2008), 14-15; John J. Dominik, Three Towns Into One City: St. Cloud, Minnesota (St. Cloud: Sentinel Publishing Company, 1976), 8.

[9] John J. Dominik, St. Cloud: The Triplet City (Woodland Hills, Cal.: Windsor Publications, 1983), 9-13;

[10] William Towner Morgan, Earth, Wood, Stone: Central Minnesota Lives and Landmarks, 16-17.

[11] St. Cloud Daily Times, April 14, 15, 1886.

OXCART TRAILS

They called it the "Big Squeak" — the sound made by a caravan of one hundred or more oxcarts as they rolled along Sauk Rapids and through Saint Cloud. Contemporaries often complained about the echoes of dozens of greaseless axles as the carts made their way across the prairies. One French visitor wrote, "A den of wild beasts cannot be compared to its hideousness."[12]

These oxcarts were heavy, two-wheeled wooden vehicles used by fur companies to bring pelts from Hudson's Bay through the Red River Valley — now the western border of Minnesota. The path followed early Native American routes from there to the Mississippi. There were three main trails. One went south and west from St. Paul, following the Minnesota River. The other trails passed very near this spot, following the east side of the Mississippi. One branch, the Plains route, crossed north of here, at first by ferry, and then by bridge, and followed the Sauk River to the prairies. Another route, the Woods Trail, continued north to Crow Wing, where it turned west and headed to the Pembina Valley.[13]

During the peak years, as many as 200 carts a year would pass through this area, carrying tons of goods in both directions. It fueled the local economy as well, because servicing the wagons provided employment for local businessmen: blacksmiths, saddlers, wagon makers, and cattle merchants.

There was a great mystery and romance to the trade as the French-Canadian Metis — men, women, and sometimes children — rolled through town from what seemed to be another world. Some were struck by their colorful outfits. Ralph Sweeny, a gentleman who had recently moved from Philadelphia to Minnesota, wrote home about "their dark coarse blue coats, glittering with a savage profusion of enormous buttons of polished brass; their long, waving sashes of the brightest red, and jaunty little caps, half Tartar and half French; even their loose trowsers of English corduroy or some dark woolen stuff, if not of elk or bison skin, down to the quaint and dingy moccasins."[14] Many remarked on their strange mix of race and nationality. In 1859, a correspondent from Harpers' Monthly Magazine described them, saying: Within the circle of their camp is heard a strange melange of language, as diverse as their parentage. You may hear French, Gaelic, English, Cree, and Ojibewa, with all the wild accompaniment of mingled accent, soft and musical, abrupt and guttural, in such strange, startling contrasts as flings an additional interest about the mysterious people.[15]

By the 1860s, steamboats replaced the cumbersome and slow wagons between here and Saint Paul, and by 1870, as roads improved, the age of the oxcart was over.

FOOTNOTES

[12] Pierre Berton, The Impossible Railway (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 25.

[13] Rhoda R. Gilman and Carolyn Gilman & Deborah M. Stultz, The Red River Trails: Oxcart Routes Between St. Paul and the Selkirk Settlement, 1820-1870 (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1979, 5, 16, 55-68.

[14] "The People of the Red River," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 18 (January 1859), 169.

[15] "The People of the Red River," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 18 (January 1859), 170.

STEAMBOAT ERA

"Cheap transportation and financial ruin." That is how George Brott, one of the city's founders, described the steamboat era in Saint Cloud and Sauk Rapids. Although the river was the primary avenue of transportation in the city's earliest years, the obstacles were formidable. — To get a boat on the water, it had to either be built north of St. Anthony Falls, or lifted over the them in high water. Then the ship's captain had to keep an eye out for low water, sandbars, and islands. During the long Minnesota winters, ice blocked the river. Heading north, Sauk Rapids was a natural barrier.

A steamboat hardly seemed to be a good business investment. In 1849, however, Fort Gaines, later known as Fort Ripley, was established just north of Little Falls, and a shallow draft steamboat, the Governor Ramsey, made the trip from St. Anthony Falls the following year. In the wake of the voyage, the Minnesota Pioneer declared, "The proprietors of the 'Governor Ramsey' have done an incalculable service to Minnesota by opening to immigrants a region of country wholly fresh and unsettled which all who have seen say is 'lovely beyond the power of description, for seventy or eighty miles up the river beyond St. Anthony.'"[16]

Over the next decade, the Governor Ramsey continued to make regular trips between St. Cloud and Minneapolis, joined later by the H. M. Rice, the Minneapolis, and several shallow draft vessels. Father Bruno Riss, heading north in 1856, described his excursion on the Rice:

The boat left St. Anthony on May 19, and by evening arrived at the point where the Crow River enters the Mississippi. Here a stop was made until the next morning. The craft was merely a boat for transportation of freight, had no conveniences whatsoever for passengers, furnished no meals, not a chair to sit upon, — still 50 passengers entered at this place. For two days and one night we sought comfort among the trunks and other freight, and were exposed to ferocious attacks of mosquitoes and had nothing to eat.

On the afternoon of the 20th the boat was moored about two miles below St. Cloud; orders were given to have freight unloaded at this point while passengers were to step out at St. Cloud. About half of the freight was unloaded. Father Bruno and one of the lay brothers were on shore attending to their baggage and the other lay brother remained on board keeping guard over our cask of mass wine for the little cask was an attraction to the deck hands.[17]

As early as 1868, the demise of river traffic was pronounced, when a local newspaper stated: "The steamer Enterprise is to be moved below St. Anthony Falls and will be navigated on the Lower Mississippi. The building of the railroad to St. Cloud has killed steamboating above the falls." The last steamboat to reach St. Cloud was the "Minneapolis" in 1874.[18]

Some shipping continued on the river in the next three decades, but it was so minimal that when the Coon Rapids Dam was built in 1913, it had no lock system for navigation. River transportation between St. Cloud and Minneapolis came to a halt.

FOOTNOTES

[16] Gertrude Gove, "Early settlers arrived in St. Cloud by steamer on Mississippi River," St. Cloud Daily Times, February 21, 1959.

[17] Father Bruno Riss, "The Earliest Years of Saint John's Abbey, 1856-1862," accessed May 20, 2011, http://www.saintjohnsabbey.org/archives/earlyyears1.html.

[18] Jan Hanson, "River travel drowns in waves of progress," St. Cloud State Chronicle, July 2, 1986.

LOGGING

Between 1855 and 1915, the logging industry used the Mississippi to transport timber from the northern woods down to markets in St. Paul and beyond. The lumber business worked on different levels in St. Cloud.

On top, there were the lumber barons like Nehemiah Clarke and Charles Gilman. Clarke owned timber land across the valley of the upper Minnesota while Gilman parlayed his lumber business into six years as Lieutenant Governor of Minnesota.[19]

In the middle stood the sawmill owners and lumber yard managers. At one time Benton County had fifteen portable and permanent sawmills. Joseph Sartell started a mill in Sartell in 1870. Joseph Coates and C. B. Buckman built a sawmill in Sauk Rapids about 1881, located near the present Sauk Rapids Bridge. When the logs reached St. Cloud, local sawmills, such as those owned by H. J. Anderson and C. J. Bridgeman, turned the raw logs into sawn wood, then supplied local companies that would, in turn, either sell them as lumber for construction, or turn them into a finished product. Others, like Raymond and Owen, and Freeland Dam, built small fortunes from finishing of sashes, windows, and doors. These local companies helped fuel the region's rise in prominence in the late nineteenth century.[20]

At the bottom, the logger. Charles Gilman described his days with a logging drive: In June, when the great mass of logs were being driven down the rivers, hundreds of the log-drivers all dressed in red-blanket suits would celebrate their home-coming by drinking poor whisky until they were wild, and then they would paint the town red with their fearful yelling up and down the streets. For several nights if we slept at all, it was within hearing of their continued yells, ten thousand times more hideous than dangerous. For drunk or sober the rough pioneer lumbermen of Minnesota were big-hearted, big-souled men who would do no harm if not molested. Then we slept in lumbermen's wanegans and tents on the banks of the river, and ate with them of their delicious baked beans.[21]

Logjams often backed up the river, sometimes in spectacular fashion. In 1885, an enormous logjam made a solid wall from shore to shore in front of downtown Sauk Rapids. "So great was the commotion that the roar of the waters," wrote Fred Sartell, "the crashing of the cedars and the groan of the logs could be heard for several miles away, leaving millions of feet of logs stranded high and dry along the shores, on rocks and bars and piers."[22]

St. Cloud resident Elizabeth Lauterman recalled: "The logs backed up the river because they got stuck by the St. Germain Street Bridge. They couldn't get through there." Wanigans, she said, tied up below the dam. "Wanigans were the place that the log drivers slept. They didn't have any power, only a great big paddle in the back to steer down the river. They always had wonderful cooks. They used to bake the best cookies [and] once in a while they would give us one."[23]

But, as a local newspaper said in 1893, the company was "eating a big hole in the forests of northern Minnesota." The supply of trees dwindled and the era of the logger came to an end by 1915.[24]

FOOTNOTES

[19] Mike Moran, "River served as loggers' highway," St. Cloud Times, April 10, 2000.

[20] "H. J. Andersen's St. Cloud Saw Mill," St. Cloud Daily Times, July 30, 1890.

[21] Charles Gilman, quoted in "On the River," manuscript, Stearns History Museum, 1978.

[22] Fred Sartell, wuoted in Thomas Sartell, "The Mississippi River: The River, The Stumps," in History of Sartell, Minnesota: Lumber, Paper, Valves, and Progress (Sartell, Minn.: City of Sartell, 2006), 113-118.

[23] Elizabeth Lauterman, "Memories of the River Log Drivers," transcript, oral history interview, Stearns History Museum.

[24] Alice M. Larson, The White Pine Industry in Minnesota (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1949), 405.

RAILROADS

First there was the river, and then came the railroad. This bridge was built in 1872 by the Saint Cloud, Saint Paul, and Pacific Railroad for its Minneapolis to Moorhead line. Steamboat traffic, always limited by St. Anthony Falls on the south and Little Falls on the north, fell by the wayside in 1866 when the first train reached the city, changing the journey from a five-hour steamboat ride, depending on the season, to a three-and-a-half hour trip that ran year-round. The train closely paralleled the river, following the east side until passengers disembarked across from the city and took the ferry, or later the St. Germain wagon toll bridge. When this bridge opened, it carried the trains to the west bank and the new depot near Ninth Avenue and Third Street North.

It changed the city in many ways. As the line extended to the west, St. Cloud became a central shipping area for agricultural goods and supplies for farmers, especially after it was acquired by James J. Hill's St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba in 1878. Around the same time, the Northern Pacific completed a branch line from the north, building its own passenger depot on the east side. In 1884, fourteen trains ran daily from St. Paul to St. Cloud. It also made possible the development of Minnesota's important non-agricultural industries like timber, quarrying, and mining. By the late nineteenth century, the city was built around its railroad tracks, and not the river.[25]

The Great Northern Railroad was also an important local industry that employed thousands of St. Cloud workers at the building shops and division headquarters. The St. Cloud shops, the largest car shops in the Great Northern system, were responsible, throughout their operation, for building the tens of thousands of freight cars needed for Hill's "Empire." Between 1901 and 1917 the shops built more than 20,000 forty-foot wooden truss-rod boxcars, and during World War Two built the first plywood-sided boxcars and the first aluminum-sided boxcars for the Great Northern. They were the only shops on the Great Northern lines devoted to building freight cars.[26]

So much has changed. Regular passenger service ended in 1971 and the Great Northern shops are closed. This bridge remains a remarkable piece of railroad history. It has been rebuilt and reinforced over the years, with the addition of a third truss down the middle of the bridge structure and new steel bracing. If you look closely, you can still see some of the original stone pier in the middle of the river.

FOOTNOTES

[25] St. Cloud Journal Press, September 1, 1887, St. Cloud Times, July 20, 1998, p. 7a.

[26] "The Story of the St. Cloud Shops: A Tribute to the Great Northern Veterans," St. Cloud Nordstern, August 10, 1922; St. Cloud Daily Times, November 27, 1944.

BRIDGES

As the region grew, the river increasingly became seen as a barrier to growth — an obstacle to be spanned with a bridge. The city's founders, John Wilson, George Brott, and Sylvanus Lowry, all pressed for construction of a bridge, although disagreement of its location prevented any action. Finally, downtown businesses on St. Germain Street agreed to contribute and carried the day.

The St. Cloud Wagon Bridge, a wooden causeway connecting with St. Germain Street, was the first local bridge across the Mississippi, erected in 1868. It was a business investment, so tolls were charged to pay off the $42,000 cost of construction. The toll was 25c for horse teams and 5c for pedestrians and appears to have immediately generated some complaints from local residents. Nine years later, the city bought it and turned it into a free bridge. The old bridge was replaced several times over the years, including an impressive deck truss bridge built in 1894, designed to carry the city's new street cars. The current span, known as Veterans' Bridge, was constructed in 1971.[27]

In 1878, the first bridge to span the Mississippi at Sauk Rapids was erected, although it was destroyed the following year during an electrical storm. Although rebuilt, the 1886 cyclone destroyed three spans of this structure. A new bridge was built in 1900. The present span was begun in 1942, halted by World War II, and completed in 1948.

Soon after the 10th Street Dam was completed, the Tenth Street Bridge opened, a thru-truss design, built in 1891. In 1985, it was replaced by the University Bridge, a concrete girder structure designed by Howard, Needles, Tammen, and Bergendoff — an engineering firm best-known for its NFL football stadiums. Signature features of the bridge include the curved piers, the curve on the north end of the bridge, and the detail work in the concrete.

Sartell developed relatively late, after the opening of the dam and paper mill, and so did not need more than a ferry crossing. That changed when the Watab began operations. A swinging bridge was thrown across the Mississippi, so that employees could get to their homes on the west bank. Then, in 1914, a truss bridge was erected for vehicular traffic. No longer used for traffic, it now carries utility pipes.[28]

Within the last decade, two important new bridges have been erected. The Highway 15 Bridge, dubbed the "Bridge of Hope," opened in 1995. The bridge crossing is striking, not so much for its road surface, but for the faux cut stone effect the use of pointed arches in the piers.
The downtown Sauk Rapids bridge, opened in 2008, replaced the aging Sauk Rapids bridge, a steel spandrel-braced arch bridge completed in 1948. Signature features of the new bridge include the curved piers, the curved steel girders, and the multi-level helix for bicycle traffic. The new bridge fixes an important safety problem with the old bridge in that it also crosses the very busy high-speed BNSF railroad tracks on the Benton County side of the bridge.

The area's newest bridge is the Granite City Crossing, opened in late 2009, built to replace the older DeSoto Bridge. That bridge, named for the Spanish explorer, opened in 1959 and was the last deck truss bridge remaining over the main channel of the Mississippi River. However, it was built using the same design as the I-35W Bridge in Minneapolis that collapsed in 2007, and so was slated for fast track replacement. The new bridge features granite, a common construction material native to the area.

FOOTNOTES

[27] John A. Weeks III, "The Bridges and Structures of the Minnesota River," http://www.johnweeks.com/river_minnesota/index.html, accessed May 20, 2010.

[28] Marcella Dingmann, "The Mississippi River: The Swinging Bridge," in History of Sartell, Minnesota: Lumber, Paper, Valves, and Progress (Sartell, Minn.: City of Sartell, 2006), 134.

ROADS

A military road was the region's first, running right here along the east bank of the Mississippi between Fort Snelling to Fort Ripley. Authorized by Minnesota's territorial legislature in 1849, it basically followed an older oxcart trail. In the beginning, at least, the road system worked in conjunction with the river.[29]

Henry Clay and J. C. Burbank — two brothers from St. Paul — saw a business opportunity in the growing trade between St. Cloud and Red River Valley of the North. Tapping into the oxcart trade, they founded the Burbank Trading Company and quickly built it into one of the city's biggest firms. However, the slow, plodding carts and the muddy makeshift trails held back the company's potential.

The brothers pressured the state legislature to build roads and bridges, and, in 1858, the state ordered that a road be "built commencing at St. Cloud and running by the most feasible route to . . . the Red River." Once this new infrastructure was in place, the Burbanks expanded their business, beginning a stagecoach line that carried mail and express packages, and hauled goods. Their routes covered territory from St. Paul all the way up to the Red River Valley. By 1865, the Burbanks shipped more than 1,000 tons of freight annually, specializing in government transportation and contracting until the firm closed in 1874.[30]

But the roads, and then the railroad, and then the automobile, stripped the role of the Mississippi as a transportation corridor. The first car came to St. Cloud in 1899, and soon, its owner, Steve Tenvoorde, had converted his bicycle shop into a garage and opened the state's second automobile dealership.

Although railroad tracks and highways crisscrossed the landscape, they did not attempt to fit into their natural surroundings. In 1910, St. Cloud acquired this strip of land along the east bank of the Mississippi, inspired by a national Garden City Movement. To develop a plan that incorporated a scenic drive, the city turned to Phelps Wyman, a visionary landscape architect. As a young man, Wyman had worked in the office of the Olmsted Brothers. He later taught landscape architecture at the University of Illinois, and in 1917, was advising the Minneapolis Park Board while maintaining a private practice. His plan for the new Riverside Park was designed for the express purpose of providing residents with a place to enjoy nature. — "The general appearance," he wrote, "should be that of a place far from civilization and notable for its rugged wilderness."

While not exactly rugged wilderness, Riverside Park, creates a sense of harmony between the land, the river, and the road.

FOOTNOTES

[29] William Bell Mitchell, History of Stearns County, Minnesota (Chicago: H. C. Cooper Jr. & Company, 1915), I: 441-448; Demian Hess, Minnesota Military Roads National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, St. Paul.

[30] Christina H. Jacobsen, "The Burbank-Livingston-Griggs House: Historic Treasure on Summit Avenue," Minnesota History 42 (1970), 23-33.

LIVING BY THE RIVER

At first, everyone in St. Cloud and Sauk Rapids lived within walking distance to the river. As the town grew more prosperous, some of the finest homes were erected on the high bluffs overlooking the Mississippi. These included the elaborate mansion of Minnesota's Lieutenant Governor, C. A. Gilman, built near Hester Park — land that he gave to the city and which was named after his wife. In the 1880s, businessman Nehemiah Clarke bought a picnic grounds known as Pine Gardens, now 356 Third Street, and built his magnificent brick home, with a view to the river below. Henry Clay Burbank's gracious Italianate mansion stood near the river, close to where the Granite City Crossing stands today.

A. C. LaMothe Ramsay married into one of St. Cloud's richest and most staunchly Catholic families: the Foleys. So it is not surprising that, in 1889, he built one of the city's finest homes across the street from Holy Angels Church — the year that it was designated as the first cathedral of the new diocese of St. Cloud. Ramsay's new house, designed by Allen Hussey, the city's finest architect, took full advantage of its beautiful location. A local newspaper described it: It has a commanding situation, giving a view up the river to the bend at Sauk Rapids with a delightful glimpse of that pretty village. The house fits its site admirably, being picturesque in design, with gables, towers, outlooks, and jutting windows, and withal, is very homelike.[31]

Ramsay began the city's first hospital in 1885 — a small private venture, and then convinced the Sisters of St. Benedict to take over its care and management. St. Benedict's Hospital opened just in time. On April 14, 1886, a violent cyclone swept through the city and hundreds of its victims were treated by Dr. Ramsay and the Sisters. The hospital had earned its place in the community, with Dr. Ramsay as chief surgeon. Ramsay's hospital had a continuing impact on the Mississippi. Long after his death, the Benedictine Sisters opened the St. Cloud Hospital along the west bank of the river in 1928. Since then, it has grown into one of the region's largest medical facilities.[32]

As St. Cloud grew in the 20th century, and the automobile made it convenient to drive to a house away from the city center, the river bluffs still beckoned many of the city's elites. In 1916, Bishop Joseph Busch, one of the Midwest's best-known prelates, had a new house erected on Third South. Currently the St. Cloud Chancery Office, the house was one of the earliest and best designs of St. Cloud architect Louis Pinault.

A bit further south, the street known as Highbanks Place was one of the last major changes to the neighborhood. It was an almost park-like setting until the mansion of Thomas McClure burned to the ground in 1922. Soon after, the area was subdivided into sixteen lots, and over the next decade, period revival houses sprang up for well-to-do owners. None was more charming than the elegant Chateauesque

style house at 37 Highbanks Place, built in 1931 by local architect Nairne Fisher.

After World War II, the open farm lands up and down the river came under intensive development as residential property, with new roads and public utilities expanding.

FOOTNOTES

[31] Quoted in "On the River," manuscript, Stearns History Museum, 1978.

[32] William Towner Morgan, Earth, Wood, Stone: Central Minnesota Lives and Landmarks, 84-85.

DAMS

In 1858, Jane Grey Swisshelm wrote that "there is a magnificent but unimproved water power here."[33]

Almost as soon as the city was settled, local residents looked for a way to harness the power of the river, but it took the leadership of Josiah West to push the project through to completion. West, a tireless civic promoter, was postmaster for more than twenty years and also served president of the library board. But the dam, wrote William Mitchell, was "one of the ambitious purposes of his life."

The 10th Street Dam was completed on January 1st, 1886, run by the St. Cloud Water Power and Mill Company. When finished, the dam stood 750 feet long, and rested on 2,500 large oak piles, six feet apart, driven sixteen feet into the bed of the river. The new dam proved to be an immediate boost to local business, helping to attract the Tileston Milling Company to relocate from Faribault to Saint Cloud. All told, it supplied power to five mills.[34]

In 1908, Albert G. Whitney bought the St. Cloud Public Service Company and its dam. He also owned the city streetcar lines and tapped into the dam's power to help expand the trolleys into new neighborhoods. By 1914 the demand for electric power had grown so much that a steam plant was added to run the generators when the river was low. Soon after, a local newspaper editor wrote, "The dam across the Mississippi river generates the power that not only lights the city and propels the cars on the street railway, but keeps in motion the machinery of most of our manufactories."[35]

In 1924, Northern State Power bought the dam and the streetcars. It was rebuilt in 1970 and currently generates power for the XCel grid while also serving as a classroom for hydrology students at St. Cloud State.

One of the most dramatic changes in the ecology of the river took place in 1906, when construction on the Sartell Dam began. This massive undertaking, intended to supply power for the Watab Pulp and Paper Company, resulted in the death of seven workers during construction. When completed, dam created a reservoir, replacing shallows with high banks.

The dam's ripple effect altered the region's economy as well, with the paper mill providing hundreds of new jobs and forming the foundation for a new town: Sartell. Before that, as Thomas Sartell noted, "There were very few buildings of any kind along the way."[36]

FOOTNOTES

[33] Quoted in "On the River," manuscript, Stearns History Museum, 1978.

[34] William Bell Mitchell, History of Stearns County, Minnesota (Chicago: H. C. Cooper Jr. & Company, 1915), II: 1527.

[35] Albert N. Marquis, "Albert Gideon Whitney," in The Book of Minnesotans: A Biographical Dictionary of Leading Living Men of the State of Minnesota (Chicago: A. N. Marquis & Company, 1907), 552.

[36] Thomas Sartell, "The Mississippi River: The River, The Stumps," in History of Sartell, Minnesota: Lumber, Paper, Valves, and Progress (Sartell, Minn.: City of Sartell, 2006), 118.

MUNICIPAL SERVICES

The Mississippi River has been many things to the people of the region — a transportation corridor, a place for recreation, and an engine for industry. Over the years, it also brought water to city homes and washed away it waste.

In the early years, drinking water came from springs and wells — and not the Mississippi — although the city's first sewer pipe ran straight from downtown into the river. The first pump house, with an intake on the river, was built in 1884 — mainly for the fire department's use — but as the city grew and the demand for drinking water increased, the plant was sold to a private business. That company built a 125-foot tall water tower on 3rd Street North between Ninth and Tenth Avenue.[37]

However, following an outbreak of cholera in 1903, city leaders decided that a municipal water system was needed. Although it was a major capital investment, they argued that "the people of St. Cloud can go to any faucet and drink without any danger of typhoid fever or other diseases." And, eventually, "the revenues will be applied to reducing taxes instead of filling the coffers of eastern corporations."[38]

In 1908, the new city water department built a new pump house close to this spot — located on the north side of town before the water passed through the city and its potential contaminants. Even then, one hundred years ago, city leaders recognized that the needs of the city for drinkable water had to be balanced with a desire to keep access to the river open to the public. And so began a delicate balancing act — with the pumphouse coexisting next to a new city park, located on land acquired from Charles Gilman, who insisted that it be named after his wife, Hester. A local newspaper declared, "the view of the Mississippi is one of the best."[39]

The new pump house was barely completed when the city shifted to a series of newly-drilled wells. Complaints grew about the hardness of the well water. By the 1920s, following construction of a filtration plant, local citizens again got their water from the Mississippi — and the new network of sewers and water mains led to the loss of the city's once prolific springs and wells.

In 1957, a new water treatment plant opened here at Hester Park, followed by a major expansion in 1991. At the time, there was a serious public debate about the new construction. A rapidly expanding metropolis needed millions of gallons of water a day, but a bigger facility would alter "one of the most beautiful spots in Stearns County," as a writer called in 1907. The resulting plan nestled the plant under a man-made bluff, balancing the multiple, and often competing, public

interests about the best use of the region's great natural resource — the Mississippi River.[40]

FOOTNOTES

[37] "Hester Park History," St. Cloud Daily Times, March 5, 1947.

[38] Ed O'Brien, Water plant, park have tangled history," St. Cloud Times, July 8, 1991; "St. Cloud's New Pumping Station and Proposed North Side Park," St. Cloud Journal Press, December 26, 1907.

[39] "Park Project Discussed," St. Cloud Daily Times, November 27, 1907.

PARKS

John L. Wilson is often called the "father of St. Cloud". When the three settlements along the river consolidated in 1856, Wilson suggested that it be named after Napoleon's summer palace, a Paris suburb on the left bank of the Seine River. He might be called the father of the city's park system as well, since his donation of land became Central Park — St. Cloud's first. It is now known as Barden Park.

In an effort to preserve the scenic beauty of the Mississippi River, the city developed four parks along the river: Empire, Hester, Wilson, and Riverside. Located between Fourth and Fifth Avenues North, Empire Park was the city's second park, added in 1880. It is believed to have been named for James J. Hill, the "Empire Builder," whose Great Northern Railroad line ran north of the park property. Empire Park had the distinction of hosting visits from national leaders, including former Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft.[41]

Wilson Park was acquired in 1921 and was originally known as North Riverside Park. In 1932, it was named Wilson Park in 1932 — not to honor St. Cloud's founder, but his brother, Joseph Patrick Wilson. During the 1930s, it was used as a tourist camp, complete with a bathing beach on the river. In recent years, it has become a favorite picnic area.

The largest acquisition park land occurred between 1910 and 1920 when more than fifty-two acres of land along the river were acquired in south St. Cloud. This area, which became known as Riverside Park, was developed to provide open space for recreation. By 1930, when Munsinger Gardens was created, St. Cloud had acquired one hundred and thirty acres of land for public use.[42]

FOOTNOTES

[41] Gertrude Gove, editor, St. Cloud Centennial Souvenir Album (St, Cloud, Minn.: St. Cloud Centennial Committee, 1956), 58.

[42] "How St. Cloud Obtained Its Finest Park," St. Cloud Journal Press, January 5, 1915.

ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY

St. Cloud, rapidly becoming one of Minnesota's major cities in the 1860s, gained a major coup when it was awarded the Third State Normal School, joining the colleges in Winona and Mankato.

But where would it be? The board visited six sites in St. Cloud, finally selecting the Stearns House — an imposing three-story hotel in the Lower Town area. One important factor was the natural beauty of the location, situated on a high bluff overlooking a vast sweep of the Mississippi River. The city provided the surrounding five-and-a-half acres for the new school.

Intended as a place to train teachers, the new college opened its doors in 1869. As the college grew, adjacent property was acquired and new buildings were constructed. Lawrence Hall (1905, 2003), is the oldest building on St. Cloud State University's campus. [43]

The first two generations of college buildings were built along the bluff, and the school's first woman president, Isabel Lawrence, praised educational benefits of the schools "picturesque view down the Mississippi River."[44]

After World War II, with the student body bolstered by the veterans attending on the G.I. Bill, St. Cloud State expanded at a rapid pace, with new construction often turning its back on the river to the east. But in recent years, the University, through its science programs, has contributed to an increased understanding of the river.

FOOTNOTES

[43] William Towner Morgan, Earth, Wood, Stone: Central Minnesota Lives and Landmarks, 64-65.

[44] Isabel Lawrence, quoted in Edwin H. Cates, A Centennial History of St. Cloud State College (Minneapolis: Dillon Press, 1968), 148.

MUNSINGER GARDENS

To build a garden, it took a piece of land, and a man who liked flowers.

The piece of land was the site of the H. J. Anderson saw mill along the Mississippi River. Once it had been one of the city's leading industries, and called "the best north of Minneapolis," but after two disastrous fires, Anderson called it quits.[45]

The property sat idle until 1910 when the city of St. Cloud began purchasing the surrounding property for a new park and a scenic road. "It will be St. Cloud's best advertising card," the St. Cloud Journal Press declared. "It will bring many people to the city to enjoy it and it will spread the fame of St. Cloud as the most beautiful of cities far and wide." A contest was held to name the park, with a grand prize of five dollars, and the winner was "Riverside."[46]

The man who liked flowers? When Joseph Munsinger was appointed the city parks superintendent in the 1930, he did not seem to be a likely choice. He had worked as a plumber and then a city fireman, and had no training in horticulture or garden design. But he loved flowers and had served on the park board.

There was little money in the city budget during those early years of the depression, but then Franklin Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration came to the rescue. Munsinger designed the flower beds and the rock-lined paths while WPA workers turned Munsinger's plans into reality. Among the centerpieces of the garden were the lily pond, the rock garden, and the wishing well — all built at this time. A little tourist cabin was moved to the site for use as a WPA office, and has remained there since.

Once the gardens were established, Munsinger built a greenhouse and began the tradition of growing plants for the gardens.

In 1938, the city named the "flower part of Riverside Park" for Munsinger. When he died eight years later, the St. Cloud Times said,
The work he did for the city was not a job, but a labor of love, and to it he gave his talents in planning and execution generously year after year with such astounding results. Most men when they die leave only memories and a marker at their grave, Joe Munsinger's memorial will be a living and perpetual one in the park system of which he was truly the father. [47]

FOOTNOTES

[45] "H. J. Andersen's St. Cloud Saw Mill," St. Cloud Daily Times, July 30, 1890.

[46] "Naming the Park," St. Cloud Daily Times, November 10, 1915; "Board Names New Park 'Riverside'," St. Cloud Daily Times, November 17, 1915.

[47] J. P. Munsinger, Father of Park System, Is Dead," St. Cloud Daily Times, April 26, 1946.

CLEMENS GARDENS

Across the street on a terrace just above Munsinger Gardens, an empty lot was going up for sale in 1988. St. Cloud business owner Bill Clemens, and his wife, Virginia, heard about it and purchased the property, offering it to the city. You see, they lived next door, and since Virginia suffered from multiple sclerosis and the couple did not travel much, the Clemens looked to help maintain a quiet and attractive neighborhood, and as Bill Clemens said, to give something back to the city.

The offer came a perfect time. The city owned adjacent property and had already begun construction of a formal garden. Soon after accepting the gift, the park staff decided to move the rose garden, begun in Munsinger Park, to the new lot to take advantage of the full sun.

Learning about these plans, Bill Clemens contacted the Parks Department, proposing to pay for the rose bushes, landscaping and planting costs, plus the salary of a gardener. That generous financial support from the Clemens family has continued through the years and now includes a two million dollar endowment.

The success of the Virginia Clemens Rose Garden led to the adoption of a master plan for the site, that, in the end, it would include six gardens. It has a different feeling that the Munsinger Garden, which is oriented toward the natural landscape and the river. The Clemens Gardens, on the other hand, take its traditions from the classical gardens of Europe, using a more formal design.

In six different gardens, red-bricked paths radiate out from a central fountain or raised circular planting, dividing gardens into symmetrical quadrants. A black iron treillage at one end of the gardens creates a dramatic counterpoint to the Clemens Rose Garden at the other end. In between, the gardens are filled with a wide variety of hardy Minnesota annuals and perennials.

The most recent addition to the gardens is a gazebo sheltering a statue of Bill and Virginia Clemens. What originated as a gift to his wife has turned into a lasting gift to the city of St. Cloud. As Dave Morreim said, "Some men give their wives roses, but Bill Clemens gave his wife 1,100 rose bushes."[48]

Thomas Sartell wrote, "We took the Mississippi for granted. It was always just there, in every season and in many guises, always in sight, always appealing, always beckoning, and always fulfilling in many ways."[49]

Taken for granted, yes. For years, the Mississippi was neglected, first as the railroads reduced the river's importance to the local economy, then as industry and housing encroached on its shore line. In the last quarter century, the surrounding towns grew dramatically.

In recent years, however, that has changed. In 1976, a twelve-mile stretch the Mississippi River from St. Cloud to Anoka was added to Minnesota's Wild & Scenic Rivers Program. There is a growing awareness that the quality of life for this region is inextricably linked to its greatest natural resource, and that careful planning will be needed to nurture the "always appealing, always beckoning, always fulfilling" Mississippi.

FOOTNOTES

[48] "Virginia Clemens, 77, St. Cloud area benefactor," Star Tribune, September 2, 1998; Susan Davis Rice, Minnesota Gardens: An Illustrated History (Afton, Minn.: Afton Historical Society Press, 2000), 91; Tammy Jo Riebe, "Clemens Stays Quiet over Plans for Gardens," St. Cloud Times, July 11, 1993.

[49] Thomas Sartell, "The Mississippi River: The River, The Stumps," in History of Sartell, Minnesota: Lumber, Paper, Valves, and Progress (Sartell, Minn.: City of Sartell, 2006), 113.

St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor Plan
PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE PRIORITIZATION SUMMARY (10/27/2010)

EVENTS/TOURISM

New Tourism Destinations

Cultural Facility
- Develop an environmental learning /interpretive center on the south end of the SCSU campus within SR boundary (include fresh water aquarium)
- Develop an art museum in St. Cloud (include river related art)

River Boat
- River boat cruise/taxi/ferry to SCSU and Munsinger Gardens
- St. Cloud - Wilson Park for river boat/taxi headquarters (development)
- Develop a riverboat/dinner cruise in downtown St. Cloud

Expansion of Current Events

Festivals/Events
- Work with local universities to create/expand cultural events (hold events in river locations, where possible)
- Change name of Granite City Days to include river in the name (i.e. Granite City River Days)
- Add a river related event to Granite City Days
- Tie the Downtown Art Crawl to the river (i.e. art crawl focused on a river art theme, outdoor art show at Civic Center on outdoor balcony overlooking river)
- St. Cloud Lemonade Art Fest – Incorporate SCSU Riverwalk behind buildings into event (i.e. hourly guided walks highlighting the history of the river, add river related children's activities to event, etc.)
- Continue/expand Sauk Rapids River Day (Rapids Food Fest)
- Continue/expand the Mississippi Music Fest

On-Water Events
- Winter festival on the river (feature ice sculptures, speed skating, etc.)
- Continue Sauk River canoe/kayak event during Granite City Days

Promotion of Events and River Amenities

Festivals/Event
- Hold a Mississippi River Book Festival (Civic Center or/Riverview location)
- Hold a story telling festival in a river park (i.e. feature Garrison Keillor or get permission to use his stories)

Community Marketing
- Increase the prominence of the river in St. Cloud's rebranding efforts
- Promote river related publicly available amenities at the St. Cloud Hospital (existing public dining room and conference center/community rooms overlook the river, create rooftop gardens, install a St. Cloud area tourism kiosk in the main lobbies)
- Include more river related events/activities in the St. Cloud Official Visitor's Guide
- Create a program through the City and/or CVB to offer regional promotion and marketing assistance for any river-related events or tourist attractions in St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids, and Sartell
- Promote historic buildings close to the river (bed and breakfasts, Downtown St. Cloud)
- Leverage marketing and promotions of the Mississippi River Trail and the Great River Road to expand promotion of St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids, and Sartell
- Promote the river as the Mississippi Headwaters stretch

Capital Improvements
- Way finding- parks/trails/riverbank signage
- Develop consistent signage promoting the river and river related amenities
- Boating – urban river map with access points, points of interest, etc.
- Stencil "Share the Road" symbol on existing bridges and roadways, where appropriate
- Water trails - promotion
- Add info kiosks along river

St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor Plan
PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE PRIORITIZATION SUMMARY (10/27/2010)

ECO-SYSTEM PROTECTION/RESTORATION

Storm Water Management

- Reduce stormwater runoff entering the river to improve water quality and aquatic wildlife habitat by implementing low impact development standards, such as decreasing the amount of impervious (hard) surface on properties, narrowing the width of neighborhood streets, installing rain gardens/barrels, installing permeable paving products, and planting trees
- St. Cloud - Repair/restore known erosion areas along the river corridor; particularly the bank within the designated Wilson Park dog park
- Monitor the river for soil erosion issues and restore the sites promptly (i.e. stormwater outfalls and wake erosion)
- St. Cloud – Restoration of St. Cloud Hospital river shoreline
- Create a unified design standard for infiltration/runoff volume to protect water quality (non-degradation)

Shoreline Restoration

- Sartell – Restoration of shoreline of public parks with river frontage (Linear and Rotary Parks)
- St. Cloud - Restoration of shoreline of public property with river frontage (Wilson and Hester Parks, Munsinger Gardens, Beaver Island Trail, and bluff of Civic Center)
- Encourage vegetative buffers on upper river banks with steep slopes
- Sauk Rapids – Restoration of shoreline of public parks with river frontage (South Side, Lions, Sauk Rapids Municipal, Island View Parks)
- Combat invasive species within the river corridor
- Restore areas adjacent to the shoreline by installing continuous native vegetative buffers

Acquisition of Natural Areas

- St. Cloud – East Bank of the River - Acquire properties, remove the structures, restore property to its natural state north of the Veterans Bridge to the railroad tracks
- Sartell - Acquire the Dehler property for a “natural” park (e.g. property along Sauk River near Wal-Mart and Whitney Park)
- Acquire private land to expand existing parks along the Watab Creek, Sauk River, and Mississippi River
- St. Cloud/Sartell – Dehler property connecting to Whitney Park
- St. Cloud/Sartell/Sauk Rapids – From CentraCare Plaza, under Hwy 15 to Felicity Park, then to Epic property to Sauk River

Protection of Green Corridor

- Identify and protect remaining natural areas within the river corridor (i.e. island habitats and small wood lots)
- Protect and expand ‘wildlife corridor’ connections by increasing the amount of native plant life within the river corridor. Seek ways to connect green spaces to provide habitat and natural migratory corridors for wildlife

Use of Green Building/Site Design Standards

- Utilize green building techniques and materials (LEED) for redevelopment projects (public and private) that are adjacent to the river
- Encourage compact urban development in all of the communities and counties along the urban river corridor

Amendment of Existing River Corridor Regulations

- Create consistent shoreland regulations for all governmental entities utilizing the alternate DNR shoreland regulations
- Amend St. Cloud, Sartell, and Sauk Rapids’ Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) Ordinances to provide increased protection of river habitats
- Expand and protect areas that are under the MN DNR Wild and Scenic River regulations

Enforcement of Existing River Corridor Regulations

- Ensure adequate enforcement of existing local ordinances (i.e. City of St. Cloud Sediment/Erosion Control Ordinance, City of St. Cloud Land Development Code, and St. Cloud Code of Ordinances)

St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor Plan
Planning Advisory Committee Prioritization Summary (10/27/2010)

ACTIVE RECREATION/TRAILS

Connectivity of Existing and Future Trails

- Connectivity of trail systems
- Lake Wobegon trail connection
- St. Cloud - Entire Eastside of River (preference to Westside i.e. Civic Center)
- Civic Center to Hester Park trail connection
- St. Cloud – Beaver Island Trail connection to south St. Cloud city limits
- Nature trails
- Construct a multi-use trail crossing on the SCSU campus that connects the Beaver Island Trail south and north of campus
- Trail along the western side of County Rd. 1 from Sauk Rapids Bridge to Heims Mill
- St. Cloud - Civic Center and Empire Apartments
- St. Cloud – SCSU and Clemens/Munsinger Gardens
- Accessible trails between Clemens and Munsinger Gardens
- Enhance Riverwalk at SCSU
- St. Cloud - St. Cloud Hospital
- Link trails within Riverside Park

Water Access Opportunities

- Pedestrian crossing level underneath current bridge decks
- River crossing at water level
- Floating boardwalk
- Floating bridge from Riverside Park to Beaver Islands

River Programming/Activities

- Hold a “Tri-City Triathlon” (biking, running, and canoe/kayak in and along the river in St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids, and Sartell)
- Hold a canoe, kayak or crew race on the river
- Develop a safe place for swimming in the river
- Hold dragon-boat races on the river
- River- related photo contest – partner with local and regional media publications (Times, Herald, Newsleader) to promote and announce
- Hold year round/seasonal bird watching events in river parks (60% of all North American birds/326 species use the Miss. River Basin as their migratory flyway)
- St. Cloud/Sartell/Sauk Rapids - Enhancement of portage access at Sartell dam, Sauk Rapids, and St. Cloud dam
- Whitewater recreation
- Preservation/enhancement of existing/new fishing amenities along river
- Swimming/aquatics
- Create kids river-related summer camps through each community’s Park & Recreation/Community Education programs
- Promote “river daycations” (one day trips on the river)
- Hold a small mouth bass tournament on the river
- Re-route the Earth Day Half Marathon to more closely follow the river corridor (run through St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids and Sartell)
- Hold an ice fishing event above Sartell dam
- Sartell Mayor’s 5K run – Riverside Dr. route – and/or hold registration/other related activities by river
- Hold a geocaching event in a park on the river (include Boys Scouts/Girl Scouts/4-H)
- Create a River Parks Passport program (get stamps on a passport for visiting all the parks in Sartell, Sauk Rapids and St. Cloud that are on the river)
- Hold an arts/crafts sale in Riverside Park (combine with existing Munsinger/Clemens garden art sale)
- Geocaching
- St. Cloud – Public access to river by south St. Cloud city limits
- Hold a bike race that includes river trails

St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor Plan
Planning Advisory Committee Prioritization Summary (10/27/2010)

URBAN DEVELOPMENT/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Target Area Plan - Mississippi River Bluffs Regional Park

- Construct river overlook in Mississippi River Bluffs Regional Park
- St. Cloud - Restoration of Mississippi River Bluffs Regional Park – oak savannah and natural grass prairie
- St. Cloud - Restoration of Mississippi River Bluffs Regional Park – great lawn and wet meadow
- Canoe and boat launch in River Bluffs Regional Park
- Free campsites for long distance canoe enthusiasts
- Develop active recreation sites in River Bluffs Regional Park
- Install fishing pier in River Bluffs Regional Park
- Construct fenced dog park in River Bluffs Regional Park

Target Area Plan – Sauk Rapids Downtown

- Sauk Rapids – Fischers trailer park property (redevelopment)
- Install aesthetic features to enhance active recreation and trail amenities in Downtown Sauk Rapids
- Sauk Rapids - River Avenue between Lions and New Bridge
- Sartell – Heims Mill property for canoe/kayak rentals (redevelopment)
- Sauk Rapids – Just south of Municipal Park – kayak and canoe rentals, river education facility, high end housing (redevelopment)
- Sauk Rapids – Downtown riverfront for high quality multiple family housing (redevelopment)
- Sauk Rapids – Promenade enhancements

Target Area Plan - Sartell Corridor

- Sartell – Holiday Gas station and Dollar Store area (redevelopment)
- Sartell – North of Sartell dam for marina and boat lift rental (redevelopment)
- Sartell – Heims Mill property for canoe/kayak rentals (redevelopment)
- St. Cloud – Riverfront east of County Rd. 1 north of Sauk Rapids bridge for “view” uses such as a restaurant (redevelopment)
- Sartell - Riverfront east of County Rd. 1 across from Wal-Mart/Epic Center for mixed use project (redevelopment)
- Sartell – Riverfront east of County Rd. 1 north of Bridge of Hope for multiple commercial uses (redevelopment)

Target Area Plan - St. Cloud Downtown West Bank

- Riverfront restaurant/coffee shop
- Develop a “river gateway” that provides connectivity and gathering place in downtown St. Cloud
- St. Cloud - Civic Center expansion to improve its river focus (redevelopment)
- Install aesthetic features to enhance active recreation and trail amenities in Downtown St. Cloud
- Boardwalk shops with patios/umbrellas
- St. Cloud – Riverfront opportunity created by relocating Kelly Inn’s tower to south along road (redevelopment)
- Downtown St. Cloud trail access
- St. Cloud - Increase public use/community space within Civic Center along river (redevelopment)
- Northstar hub within walking distance of river
- River amenity hotel
- St. Cloud – Downtown west bank parking lot south of Kelly Inn area for restaurant and river oriented hotel (development)
- Casino
- St. Cloud – West Bank of the River - Acquire properties, remove the structures, restore property to its natural state north of Veterans Bridge to the Cathedral property
- Incorporate public art into active recreation and trail opportunities
- St. Cloud - From downtown bridges to river
- Trail hubs/plazas (downtown Kelly Inn parking lot)
- St. Cloud - Empire Apts – high end condos, mixed use housing, commercial (redevelopment)
- St. Cloud –Downtown
- Professional office space
- Museum
- St. Cloud - New transit hub within walking distance of river to minimize auto dependence of riverfront sites (redevelopment)
- Quality high density housing

St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor Plan
Planning Advisory Committee Prioritization Summary (10/27/2010)

Urban Development/Economic Development cont.

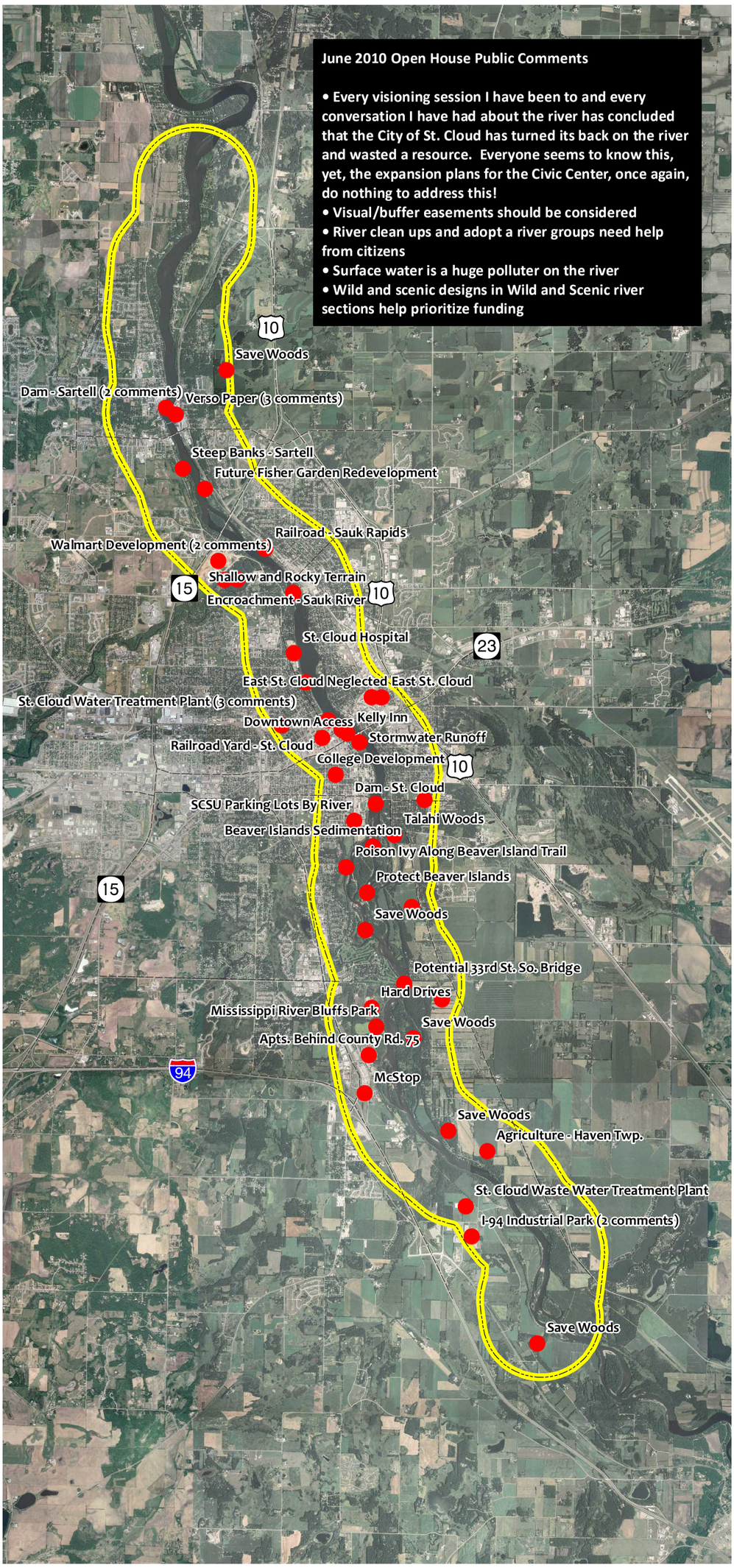
Target Area Plan – St. Cloud Downtown East Bank

- St. Cloud – Downtown east bank south side of E St. Germain from river to Riverside Dr SE (redevelopment)
- St. Cloud - East bank public plaza feature at E St. Germain bridgehead
- St. Cloud – Bridge mounted river viewing platform
- St. Cloud - Downtown east bank HRA Riverside Apartments (redevelopment)
- St. Cloud – Downtown east bank between railroad and E. St. Germain for high quality multiple family housing (redevelopment)
- St. Cloud – East bank public plaza and viewing feature at termini of 2nd Street SE

Target Area Plan – Cathedral Field

- St. Cloud – Cathedral field for amphitheater with public plaza
- St. Cloud - Cathedral field for mixed use with restaurant and boat docking (development)
- St. Cloud - Continue Hester Park to Cathedral site (redevelopment)

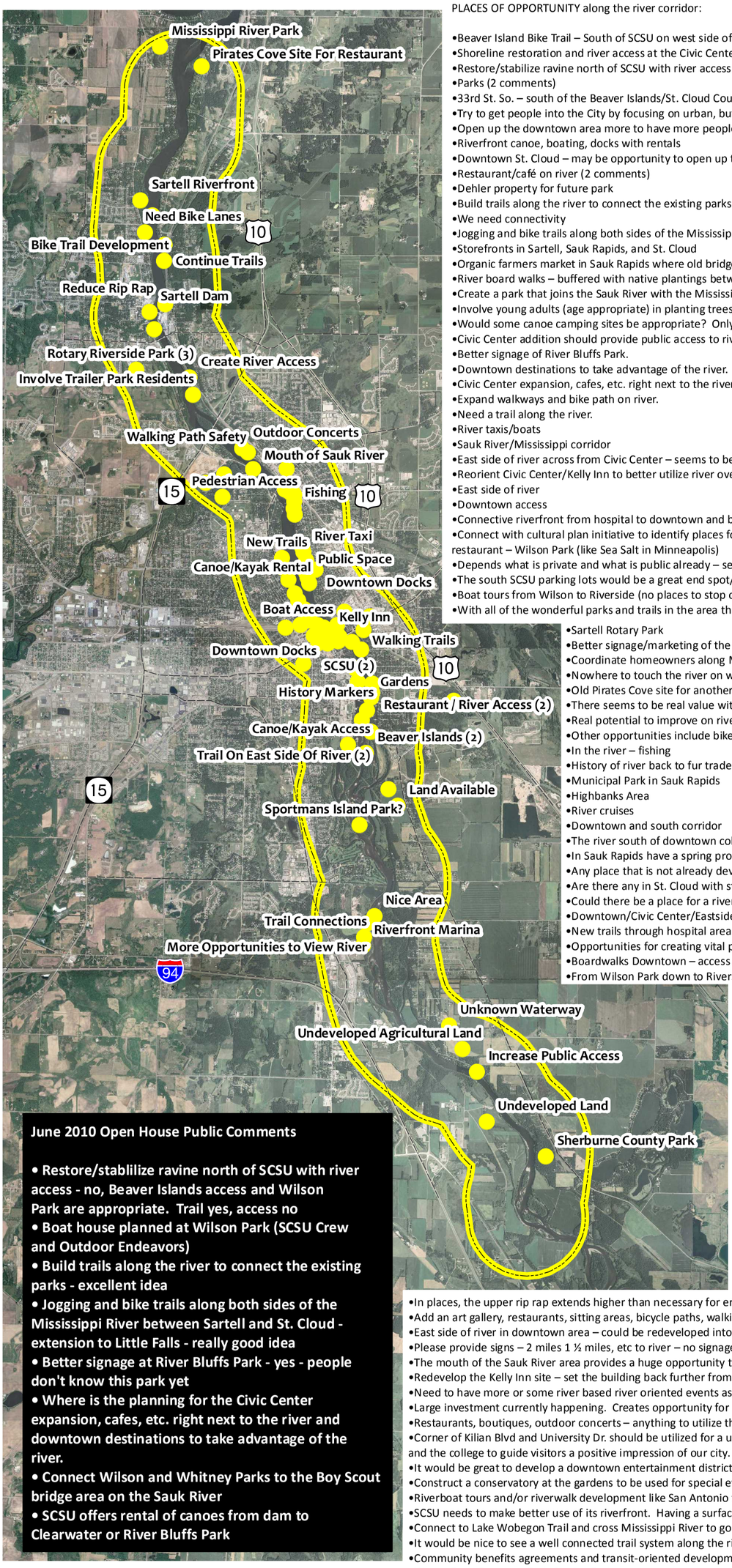
May 2010 Kickoff Luncheon Input - Concerns



PLACES OF CONCERN along the river corridor:

- Rail road yard north of Cooper Ave. Industrial activity in this area, will it effect ground water resources?
- NE St. Cloud stormwater runoff
- Sauk River streambank erosion and water quality runoff into the Mississippi
- SW runoff/erosion of ravine north of SCSU (old drainage of St. Cloud into the river)
- St. Cloud Water Treatment Facility (educational opportunities, state endorsed source water)
- Verso (educational opportunities, state endorsed source water)
- St. Cloud Wastewater Treatment Facility (educational opportunities, ultimate "green recycling" facility)
- Sauk River/rapids
- Pollution from cities and citizens
- Walmart/Sam's Club development
- Farming practices in small farms near cities
- Continuing development on flood plains/low lands/wetlands
- Little awareness of the Great River Road – a National Scenic Byway going through the heart of this area
- Any areas that are undeveloped may have pressure to develop. Through there may be an opportunity to develop that may be positive it is necessary to guide the process to ensure shoreland protection, open space, preservation happens.
- All wooded portions of the corridor should be preserved.
- We have no easily accessible water for people who want accessibility
- The compost site has taken over the entire river terrace on the north end of River Bluffs Park
- Plant environments
- Water quality of both the Mississippi River and Sauk River – drinking source for the City of St. Cloud
- Stormwater runoff - increase volume, flooding, and erosion
- Encroachment on the river front on the outskirts of city limits
- Bank restoration on major parks along the river
- Sustainability relates to the flow of the river, which partly depends on groundwater withdrawals and development of water resources. The U.S Geological Survey has done some research on that for part of this river reach and have proposed more.
- I hope as much emphasis will be put on "saving" what nature has left and enhance this versus only restoring areas that are gone.
- Where woodlands now exist along the corridor, I hope all efforts will be made to "restore" and save them and put into Buckthorn removal and other exotics, design gentle walking paths in area where the woodland extends to a bluff overlooking the river. Perhaps have view point but protect the bank from erosion.
- Save in any designs within the wild and scenic river section of the corridor the essence of wild and scenic.
- This river is a major migratory bird pathway, so hopefully the diversity of plant species along it can be stewarded and enhanced. Also, marshy areas adjacent to the corridor are important for waterfowl (ducks, herons, egrets, rails, etc)
- Some areas, especially where heavily paved, converted to lawns, etc. could serve for more intense direct human use and if planned well can replace much lawn with prairie – also paved areas can become stepping stone like area – more pervious surface
- Please give some sense of access and stewardship to all the other living things that depend on this river and this corridor versus humans. There are place we can go and have minimal impacts on the other organisms dwelling there, but some places and the species in them can not handle many visits
- While all this planning is occurring I believe is the time to develop some curriculum for local schools on what can be done here.
- Since several governmental units are working together, consider hiring a real naturalist who could focus on educating the public on the natural systems, etc.
- If playgrounds are part of the final plan how about designing a playground that relates to nature
- The area below the dam, which is designated Wild & Scenic River. This section of the river is unique and the only stretch that protects the river in its natural state.
- DAMS – political conservatives who are against planning and think the word "sustainability" is a four letter word.
- Water level south fo Beaver Islands – too low?
- Lack of riverfront shops and restaurants
- Still new in town – not enough known to comment
- Lack of access from downtown
- Lack of connection with Lake George
- East side and north of St. Germain – condemnation would be relatively inexpensive
- Can you do a virtual tour of the shorelines as going down the river to help with planning?
- We need to see a virtual tour of the river as it flows through the region because we don't see much of it in downtown St. Cloud
- The Munsinger/Clemens.Riverside Park neighborhood due to the future outcomes of the University Dr. corridor area.
- The downtown area facing/acknowledging/accessing the river
- No restaurants or commercial activity

May 2010 Kickoff Luncheon Public Input - Opportunities



PLACES OF OPPORTUNITY along the river corridor:

•Beaver Island Bike Trail – South of SCSU on west side of Mississippi River. Extend to the Lake Wobegon Trail.
•Shoreline restoration and river access at the Civic Center
•Restore/stabilize ravine north of SCSU with river access
•Parks (2 comments)
•33rd St. So. – south of the Beaver Islands/St. Cloud County Club/SCSU
•Try to get people into the City by focusing on urban, but the south area is undeveloped and a good opportunity.
•Open up the downtown area more to have more people using the river for recreational uses
•Riverfront canoe, boating, docks with rentals
•Downtown St. Cloud – may be opportunity to open up the river view and access (3 comments)
•Restaurant/café on river (2 comments)
•Dehler property for future park
•Build trails along the river to connect the existing parks. This provides a wildlife corridor as well as a human corridor.
•We need connectivity
•Jogging and bike trails along both sides of the Mississippi River between Sartell and St. Cloud – extension to Little Falls
•Storefronts in Sartell, Sauk Rapids, and St. Cloud
•Organic farmers market in Sauk Rapids where old bridge was located
•River board walks – buffered with native plantings between river and boardwalk
•Create a park that joins the Sauk River with the Mississippi River via trails or boardwalk
•Involve young adults (age appropriate) in planting trees, designing playgrounds, developing where trails will go, removing buckthorn
•Would some canoe camping sites be appropriate? Only accessed by canoe
•Civic Center addition should provide public access to river where the economic area of the city lies?
•Better signage of River Bluffs Park.
•Downtown destinations to take advantage of the river.
•Civic Center expansion, cafes, etc. right next to the river (2 comments).
•Expand walkways and bike path on river.
•Need a trail along the river.
•River taxis/boats
•Sauk River/Mississippi corridor
•East side of river across from Civic Center – seems to be a development opportunity
•Reorient Civic Center/Kelly Inn to better utilize river overlook
•East side of river
•Downtown access
•Connective riverfront from hospital to downtown and beyond
•Connect with cultural plan initiative to identify places for public art/performing art and in creating a community vision outdoor restaurant – Wilson Park (like Sea Salt in Minneapolis)
•Depends what is private and what is public already – seems like more access could be available at the south end.
•The south SCSU parking lots would be a great end spot/park for a future phase of the 5th Ave. project/concept
•Boat tours from Wilson to Riverside (no places to stop or no bathrooms available)
•With all of the wonderful parks and trails in the area there is no connection from the urban corridors

•Sartell Rotary Park
•Better signage/marketing of the Riverwalk
•Coordinate homeowners along Mississippi regarding lawn maintenance and get their buy in – contributions?
•Nowhere to touch the river on west side, north of downtown – but there are places this could happen.
•Old Pirates Cove site for another restaurant
•There seems to be real value with the sidewalk along the river at Hester Park.
•Real potential to improve on river visibility and access to downtown.
•Other opportunities include bike trails
•In the river – fishing
•History of river back to fur trade
•Municipal Park in Sauk Rapids
•Highbanks Area
•River cruises
•Downtown and south corridor
•The river south of downtown cold be the location for more parks.
•In Sauk Rapids have a spring promo for the rapids featuring Class III and IV white water paddlers.
•Any place that is not already developed
•Are there any in St. Cloud with steep banks?
•Could there be a place for a riverwalk with shops and restaurants?
•Downtown/Civic Center/Eastside/SCSU
•New trails through hospital area from City Hall to Civic Center
•Opportunities for creating vital public spaces that reflect the community along the riverfront
•Boardwalks Downtown – access for boats, docks, rental of boats
•From Wilson Park down to Riverside – this stretch would be prime/amazing for economic opportunities.

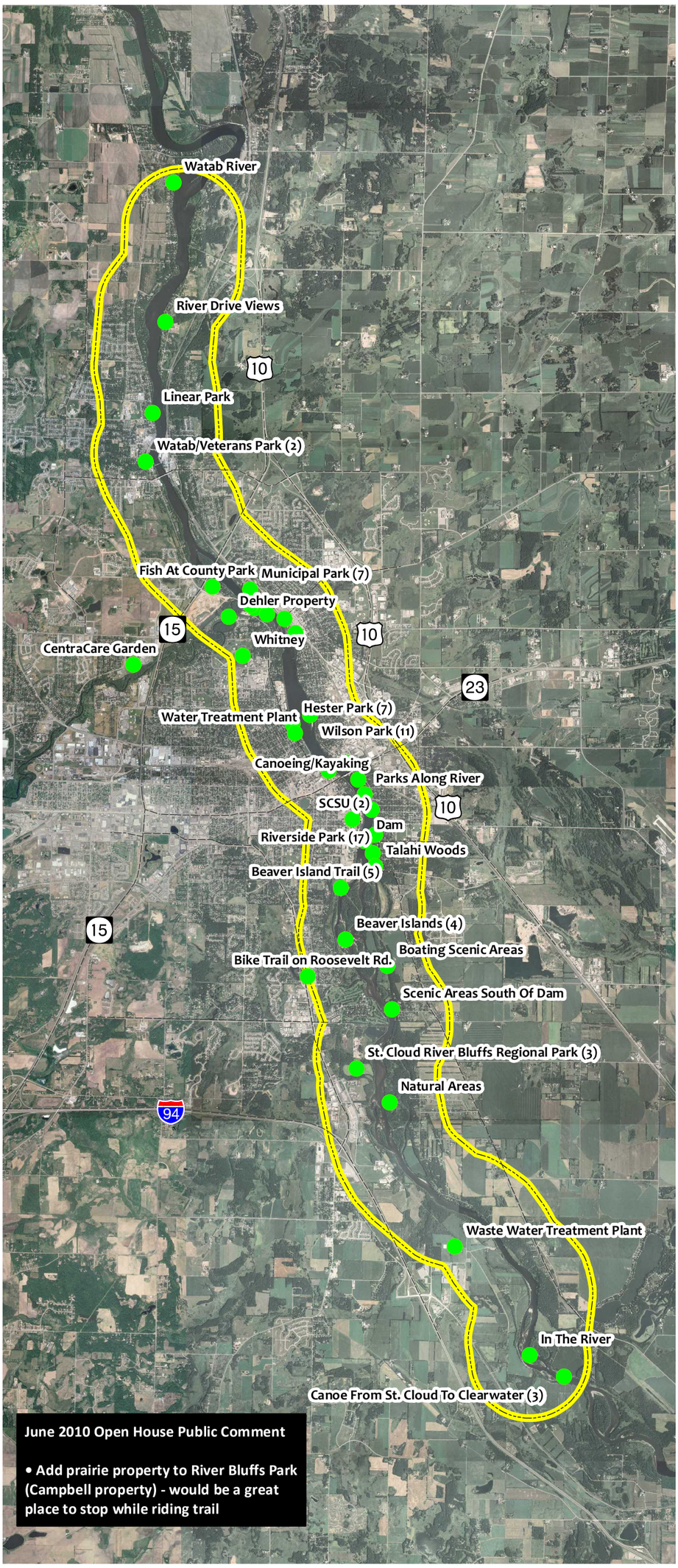
•Places to park or put a boat in
•More river access points and fishing piers
•A bike path on the east bank of the river
•Continuous trail
•Wilson Park offers tremendous opportunity for future connection
•Boat tours and cruises, renting canoes, pontoons, or kayaks.
•Sauk River and Watab River interacting with Mississippi
•Path to Sartell along river
•Rental of canoes to go from dam to Clearwater or River Bluffs Park
•The Mississippi River is one of the reasons I want to live here.
•Saving the wild and scenic river spaces
•First concern is ecology for all development
•Walking/biking trails connecting the area
•Scenic and nature sights – particularly educating children
•Expansion of the Civic Center should provide better access to the river
•Downtown St. Cloud – create lively commercial area with shops, restaurants, etc.
•Use of the river itself for public transport and recreation
•Retrofit stormwater practices .
•Opportunity to attract to downtown St. Cloud
•Acknowledge river as buildings are remodeled and added

June 2010 Open House Public Comments

• Restore/stablilize ravine north of SCSU with river access - no, Beaver Islands access and Wilson Park are appropriate. Trail yes, access no
• Boat house planned at Wilson Park (SCSU Crew and Outdoor Endeavors)
• Build trails along the river to connect the existing parks - excellent idea
• Jogging and bike trails along both sides of the Mississippi River between Sartell and St. Cloud - extension to Little Falls - really good idea
• Better signage at River Bluffs Park - yes - people don't know this park yet
• Where is the planning for the Civic Center expansion, cafes, etc. right next to the river and downtown destinations to take advantage of the river.
• Connect Wilson and Whitney Parks to the Boy Scout bridge area on the Sauk River
• SCSU offers rental of canoes from dam to Clearwater or River Bluffs Park

•In places, the upper rip rap extends higher than necessary for erosion control - replace with natural vegetation for wildlife habitat and aesthetics
•Add an art gallery, restaurants, sitting areas, bicycle paths, walking paths, and central hub for people to meet and enjoy the outdoors.
•East side of river in downtown area – could be redeveloped into a usable/accessible area – instead of apartment building
•Please provide signs – 2 miles 1 ½ miles, etc to river – no signage on how far to river in downtown area.
•The mouth of the Sauk River area provides a huge opportunity to connect parking in all three cities
•Redevelop the Kelly Inn site – set the building back further from the river, public green space between buildings and river.
•Need to have more or some river based river oriented events as part of Granite City Days or separate event
•Large investment currently happening. Creates opportunity for more river connection
•Restaurants, boutiques, outdoor concerts – anything to utilize the river to make it a lively place to enjoy.
•Corner of Kilian Blvd and University Dr. should be utilized for a unique restaurant to provide point of interest for Clemens gardens, all parks, and the college to guide visitors a positive impression of our city.
•It would be great to develop a downtown entertainment district like downtown Louisville, Kansas City, or Baltimore
•Construct a conservatory at the gardens to be used for special events, receptions, etc.
•Riverboat tours and/or riverwalk development like San Antonio would be good to consider on a smaller scale
•SCSU needs to make better use of its riverfront. Having a surface parking lot taking up a huge expanse of riverfront is a real waste.
•Connect to Lake Wobegon Trail and cross Mississippi River to go east in Benton County
•It would be nice to see a well connected trail system along the river.
•Community benefits agreements and transit-oriented development.
•Wilson Park, Riverside Park, Hester Park, flower gardens (make fishing pier where possible)
•The entire St. Cloud needs to better market the river and its unique opportunities.

May 2010 - Kickoff Luncheon Public Input - Visits



PLACES TO VISIT along the river corridor:

•Beaver Island Bike Trail – South of SCSU on west side of Mississippi River. Wish it could be extended to the Lake Wobegon Trail.
•River island by SCSU
•Parks
•St. Cloud Civic Center
•Beaver Island Trail
•Above Sartell/Verso Dam
•The parks along the river area a great place to go.
•Below the dam there is a great stretch of river that can be used for fishing and other recreational activities.
•St. Cloud Water Treatment Facility
•St. Cloud Wastewater Treatment Facility
•St. Cloud Hydro Facility
•Beaver Island Trail
•Downtown St. Cloud
•Munsinger Gardens
•Sartell Dam
•Clemens Munsinger Park and Riverside Park in St. Cloud
•Sauk Rapids Municipal Park
•Any place you can get to the shore.
•Bike path along the Beaver Island area and south
•The ground water in the northern part of the study area is on very sensitive soils that should be protected
•Storefronts
•New CentraCare garden where gardens are growing using organic standards
•The parks and trails – especially the new River Bluffs Park, as well as, Munsinger, Riverside, and Wilson Parks.
•Beaver Island Trail
•Wilson Park
•Pathway south of Kelly Inn to Beaver Island, Wilson, Riverside, and Hester Parks
•Clemens and Munsinger Gardens
•The gardens – what else is there? Hospital? Papermill?
•Clemens/Munsinger, Hester, Wilson, Riverside, etc. obviously and the informal area south of SCSU Talahi Woods along the Mississippi
River that people can get down to and touch/access the water.
•Being on the river itself by canoe or kayak etc. One can actually paddle up to Sauk Rapids downtown and enjoy oneself there.
•Consider a downtown St. Cloud to downtown Sauk Rapids paddle link.
•Parks
•Munsinger Gardens, Wilson Park, Riverside Park, Beaver Island Trail, and Hester Park
•All of our parks-bike trails-fishing opportunities-areas to enjoy and relax with nature along park paths area by the dam
•Downtown access
•Wilson Park, Riverside Park, Hester Park, and flower gardens
•Canoe from SCSU to Clearwater
•Confluence of Mississippi and Sauk River – most intriguing spot on river
•Ferry from Downtown Sauk Rapids to St. Cloud downtown to Munsinger Gardens
•Munsinger Gardens is a gem and no improvement is needed. Wilson Park offers diversity in park use with the dog park, it is a real asset
for those with pets.
•Between the four parks on the map, they offer a wide range of uses to accommodate different interests in the community. It would be a
true loss to make them the same.
•#1 attraction – Munsinger and Clemens Gardens
•River Bluffs Regional Park
•Bicycle/walking paths from bridge to bridge on both side of Mississippi
•Bicycle path to Clearwater on both sides of the river
•There are existing parks now to visit. Enhance and improve them
•All the parks, the walks
•We need a reason to visit in downtown!
•River bluffs
•As an out of towner, it is not obvious to visitors that the river even exists – the City could embrace the river and make it a selling point and attraction for visitors.
•Visitors who do know the river is here, find it very difficult to access
•River Bluffs Park
•Sauk Rapids water front – lots of access
•All of the parks, trails, and gardens

Riverfront Landscapes
Visual Preference Survey

Natural/Open Spaces

4.6

4.2

4.1

4.0

KEY: 1-Undesirable 3-Neutral 5-Desirable

Riverfront Landscapes
Visual Preference Survey

Active Open Spaces

4.5

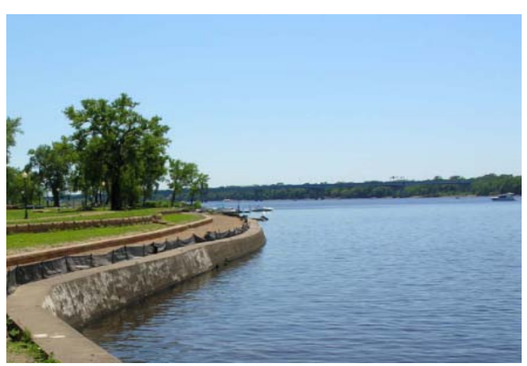
4.2

4.1

4.1

3.9

3.6



3.6

3.1

2.9

KEY: 1-Undesirable 3-Neutral 5-Desirable

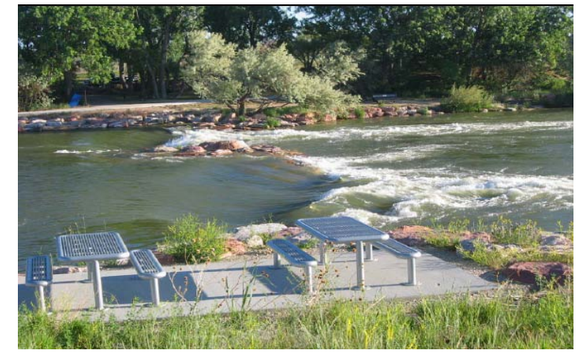
Riverfront Landscapes
Visual Preference Survey

Public Gathering Spaces

4.6

4.1

4.0



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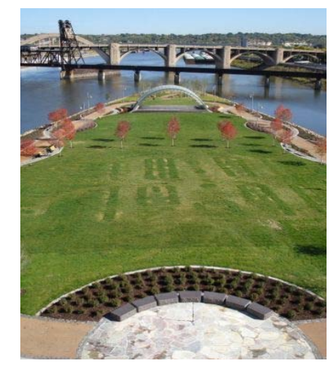

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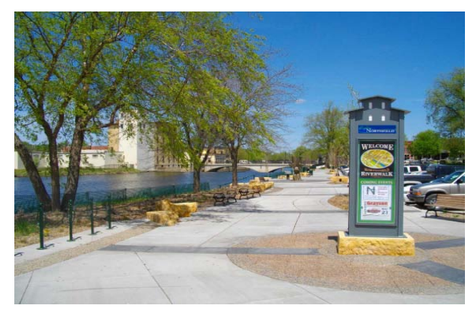


3.3

2.8

KEY: 1-Undesirable 3-Neutral 5-Desirable

Public Art

3.5

3.3

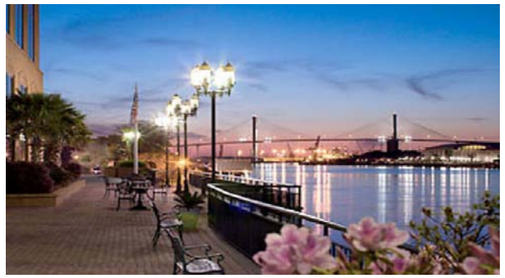
3.1

2.8

KEY: 1-Undesirable 3-Neutral 5-Desirable

Riverfront Landscapes
Visual Preference Survey

Built Environment



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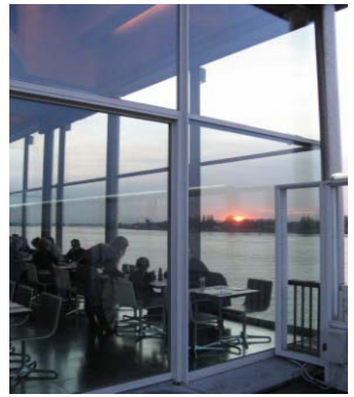

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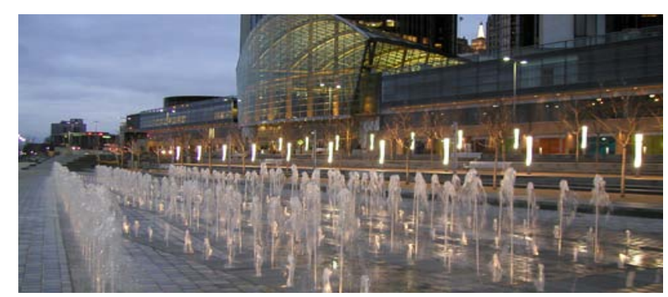
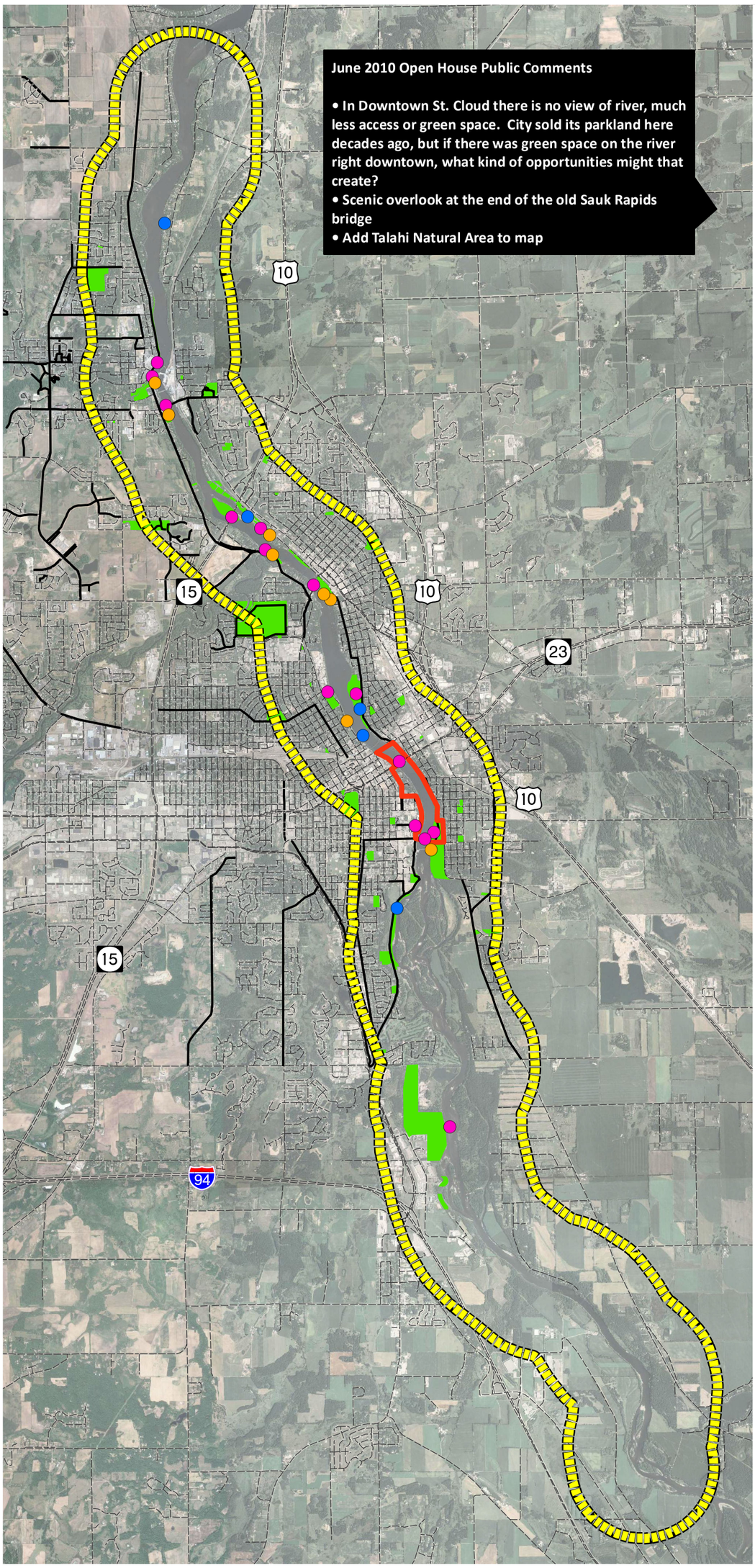


3.2

KEY: 1-Undesirable 3-Neutral 5-Desirable

Activities in Study Area



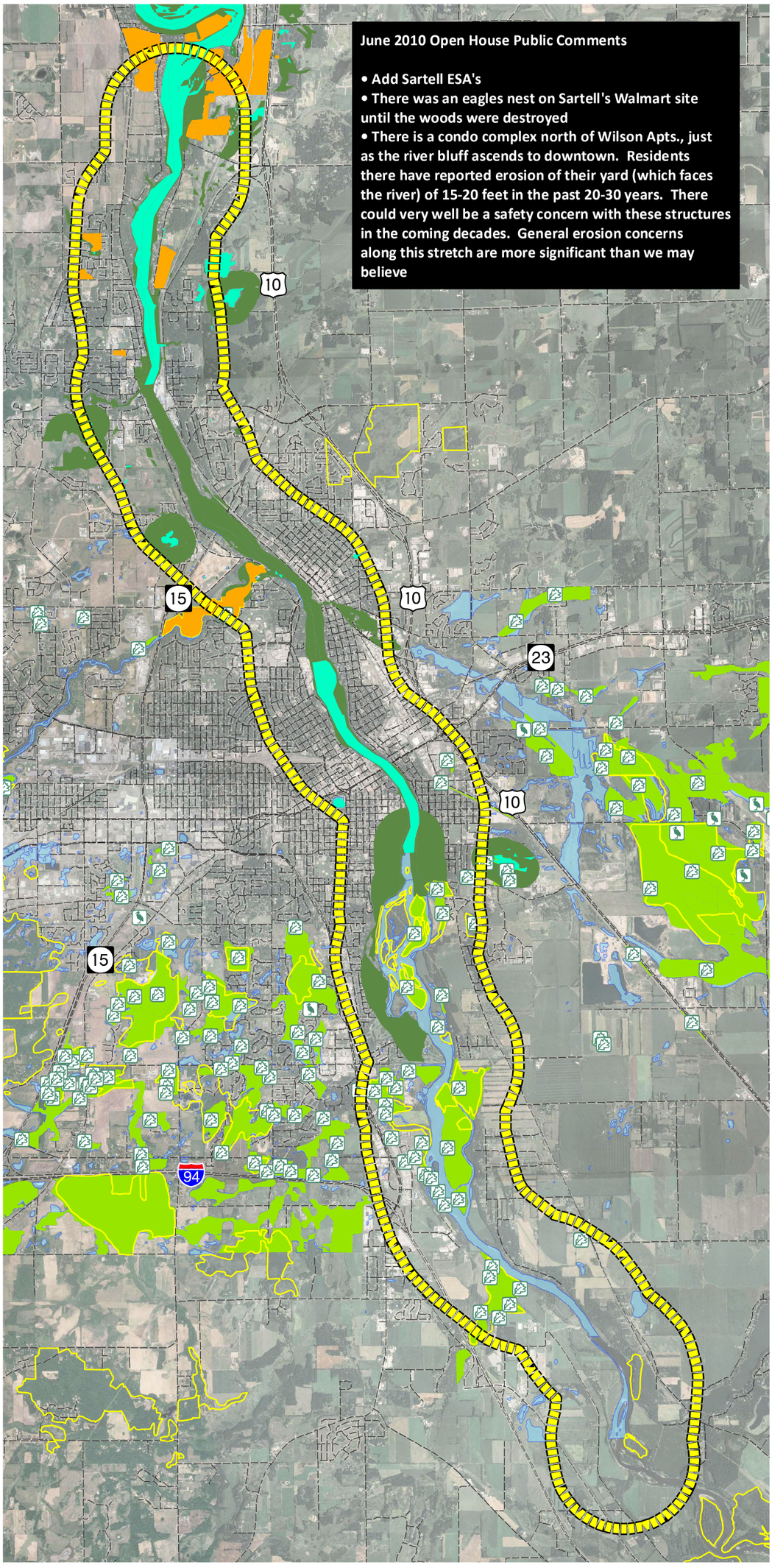
Legend

- Study Area
- Boat Landings
- Fishing Areas
- Scenic Overlooks
- Rose Walk Tour
- Bike Routes, Lanes, and Trails
- Parks

Project Partners:

City of St. Cloud Minnesota
Sartell
Stearns County Minnesota
Benton County, Minnesota
Sherburne County Minnesota
minnesota waters
Central Minnesota Community Foundation
Engaging People, Building Community
Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District
Emerging Leaders Forum of the Central Minnesota Community Foundation
Initiative Foundation

Environmental Features in Study Area



June 2010 Open House Public Comments

- Add Sartell ESA's
- There was an eagles nest on Sartell's Walmart site until the woods were destroyed
- There is a condo complex north of Wilson Apts., just as the river bluff ascends to downtown. Residents there have reported erosion of their yard (which faces the river) of 15-20 feet in the past 20-30 years. There could very well be a safety concern with these structures in the coming decades. General erosion concerns along this stretch are more significant than we may believe

Legend

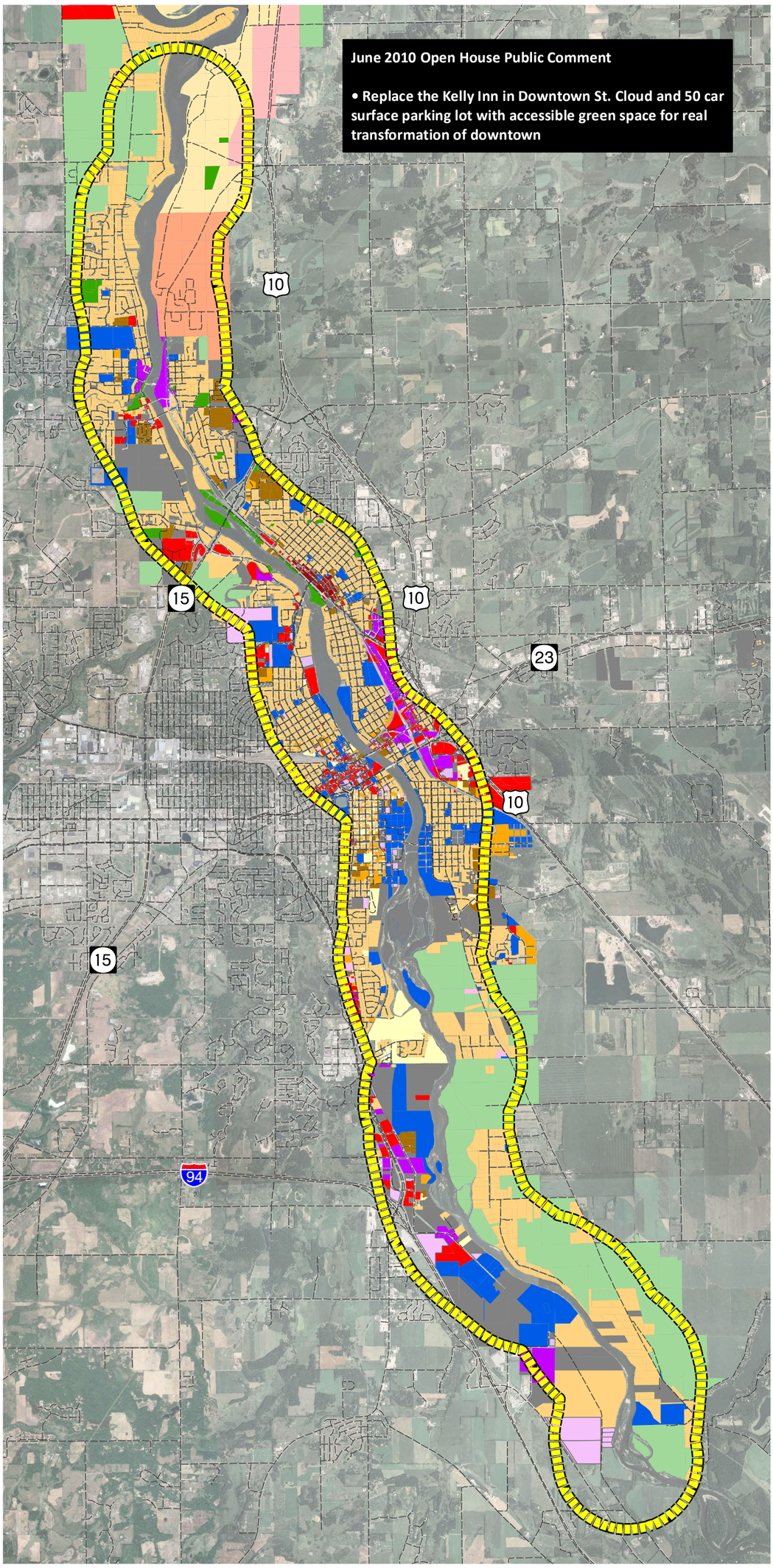
- Study Area
- Rare Species - St. Cloud
- Natural Sites - St. Cloud
- Highest Sensitivity Areas (MN DNR)
- Sensitive Land Areas (MN DNR)
- Sensitive Aquatic Areas (MN DNR)
- MN County Biological Survey 03 06 - St. Cloud
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas - St. Cloud
- National Wetland Inventory - St. Cloud

The City of Sauk Rapids Environmentally Sensitive Areas Ordinance doesn't specifically identify areas that are protected. Instead a level of five mlccs is used to identify unique and rare resources, which offers some flexibility from the City's subdivision standards in return for the developer protecting resources on their property.

Project Partners:

City of St.Cloud Minnesota
Sartell
Stearns County Minnesota
Benton County, Minnesota
minnesota waters
Central Minnesota Community Foundation
Engaging People, Building Community
Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District
Emerging Leaders Forum of the Central Minnesota Community Foundation
Initiative Foundation

Existing Land Use in Study Area



Legend

Study Area

General Existing Land Use

- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Commercial
- Public
- Industrial
- Vacant
- Agriculture
- Parks / Open Space
- Downtown Commercial - City of Sauk Rapids only
- Commercial / Industrial - Benton County only
- Seasonal Recreation - Benton County only
- Orderly Annexation Area - Benton County only
- Rural Residential - Benton County only

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