

Chapter 4: WATERFRONT AND COASTAL RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

Washburn's waterfront is perhaps the City's most defining quality. This chapter provides an analysis of Washburn's waterfront and coastal resources. It also describes goals, objectives, policies, maps, and programs that will help Washburn enhance and sustain its waterfront and coastal resources.

INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

NATURAL RESOURCES

Lake Superior

The clean and clear water of Lake Superior is one of the region's most important natural resources. Residents and visitors enjoy the beauty and recreation opportunities that the lake offers. Yet, the City of Washburn and other government agencies must address several lake related issues to ensure Lake Superior remains a strong asset to Washburn and the region.

Lake Superior's water is relatively clean and clear, yet high levels of PCBs and mercury have prompted fish consumption advisories. PCB levels in the lake have been dropping since they were banned in 1976, but PCBs are still found in the lake and care must be taken to ensure that no new PCBs make their way into the lake. Most of the mercury deposited in Lake Superior likely comes from coal burning power plants and mining operations. Reducing mercury levels involves a strong international effort. In recent years, good progress has been made in reducing mercury levels, but much work still needs to be done.



Washburn Waterfront (SWB, Inc.)

On a regional level, improperly managed storm water runoff adversely affects the water quality of Lake Superior and Chequamegon Bay in particular. The red clay soils in the region are highly susceptible to erosion. During the spring thaw and heavy rains, runoff washes these soils into the bay causing the water to be turbid and adversely affecting coastal plants, fish, and water quality. Storm water runoff also carries fertilizers, pesticides, oils, and other pollutants into the bay. Proper

storm water management reduces and treats runoff so that the water entering the bay is cleaner. If pollution from runoff is to be reduced, Washburn and neighboring jurisdictions in the Chequamegon Bay Watershed must be diligent in preparing and implementing best management practices for storm water runoff.

Washburn's wetlands, creeks, and ravines contribute to the water quality of Chequamegon Bay. Wetlands, in particular, help filter runoff before it enters the lake. Refer to Chapter 7 of the Comprehensive Plan for a more detailed discussion of Washburn's wetlands, creeks, and ravines.

The water level of Lake Superior fluctuates. However, the water level has generally been declining since the early 1990s. In 2006, the lake was at its lowest recorded level. While Washburn has a relatively deep harbor compared to Ashland, dropping water levels could potentially hurt Washburn's commercial dock and the marina.

Coastal Erosion and Sedimentation

Coastal areas are susceptible to erosion and sedimentation, which can adversely affect plants, fish, water quality, recreation activities, and the stability of structures near coastal bluffs. Some erosion and sedimentation occurs naturally, but poor development practices can magnify erosion and sedimentation problems. Consequently, Washburn should coordinate with other government agencies to implement measures to reduce erosion and sedimentation hazards in the city and region.



Mouth of Thompson Creek (Bayfield County ShoreViewer)

The mouth of Thompson Creek can fill with sediments. While some sedimentation is natural, the City, landowners, and developers in the Thompson Creek watershed should strive to implement measures that will reduce sedimentation where possible.

Bluffs are also susceptible to erosion. Storm water runoff and/or structures too close to the edge of a bluff can potentially destabilize a bluff and cause massive slumps. For the most part, structures in Washburn appear to be setback a reasonable distance from the edge of bluffs. Bluffs in the northeast coastal area of the city tend to have rock outcroppings and a good covering of native vegetation that help stabilize the bluffs (see side photo). However, bluffs in the central coastal area tend to have clay soils with very little native vegetation at the top of the bluffs. As a result, the beginning signs of erosion are evident on some parts of these bluffs (see the photo on the following page).



Vegetated Bluff in Northeast Coastal Area of Washburn (SWB, Inc.)

Again, some degree of erosion and sedimentation occurs naturally. However, where possible, the City, landowner, and developers should implement measures that will reduce erosion and sedimentation.

Coastal Plants and Animals

The Chequamegon Bay area contains natural features that are unique to the Great Lakes region. The Nature Conservancy identifies that the area is home to 137 plant and animal species and 33 natural communities of special concern. While not all of these species and natural communities are present in Washburn, Washburn's land use decisions can enhance or adversely affect existing and future plant and animal communities within Washburn and the surrounding area.

In the early 1800s, a mixture of white pine, white spruce, balsam fir, paper birch, poplar, quaking aspen, and white cedar dominated Washburn's coastal area. Today, native plant species still dominate the northeast and southwest coastal areas in Washburn (see side photograph). However, the central coastal area from the commercial dock to the Thompson's West End Park is mostly devoid of significant stands of native trees (see side photograph). The central coastal area was originally cleared in the 1800s for industrial development and the railroad. Presumably, parts of this area remain relatively open to accommodate redevelopment and to maximize views of the lake. However, signs of succession are beginning to occur as quaking aspens and other trees are slowly establishing themselves in parts of the area that are not mowed or maintained.

Native coastal vegetation provides many benefits. Vegetative buffers along the shoreline and adjacent to creeks and ravines help reduce erosion and filter sediments and pollutants. Vegetation also helps maintain the integrity of the bluffs along the waterfront. While non-invasive, non-native plant species may be used in coastal areas, native vegetation has the advantage of being well adapted to the soils, climate, and other local conditions. Native plant species typically require less maintenance than non-native species. Vegetation, particularly native vegetation, provides important habitat for coastal animal species. Vegetation also helps screen and enhance views. Enhancing and maintaining coastal vegetation is a very important part of a coastal management plan.

Plants and animals that are not native to the habitat they are found in are considered exotic species. Because they are not native, they have little or no predators or competition to keep their numbers in check. As a result, they often flourish to the extent that they severely damage or destroy native species. Once established, exotic species are difficult to control and they are difficult to eliminate.



Top of Bluff in the Central Coastal Area of Washburn next to the Marina showing Signs of Erosion (SWB, Inc.)



Native Vegetation in the Northeast Coastal Area of Washburn (Bayfield County ShoreViewer)



Lack of Native Vegetation in the Central Coastal Area of Washburn (Bayfield County ShoreViewer)

Some common exotic species include purple loosestrife and zebra mussels. In early 2003, a White Perch, which is considered an exotic fish, was caught in Chequamegon Bay. Eurasian watermilfoil, an aquatic invasive plant, has been found in Washburn's harbor. Contact the Wisconsin DNR or the University of Wisconsin Extension Service for a more detailed description of exotic species in Washburn.



Purple loosestrife growing in Washburn's Coastal Area (SWB, Inc.)

Besides adversely affecting native species, exotic species can severely damage the economic and recreational value of the City's coastal resources. As exotic species become more established, the cost of controlling them becomes greater. Once established, exotic species can have a devastating effect on recreation and tourism, including fishing and boating. Therefore, the City should work diligently with appropriate agencies to reduce exotic plant and animal species.

VIEWS TO AND FROM THE LAKE

Several areas in Washburn provide good views of Lake Superior. Perhaps the best public views of the lake are from the Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail, Thompson's West End Park, Memorial Park, and the marina. West Holman Lakeview Drive and West Harbor View Drive run parallel to the lake and provide good views in several (but not all) locations. In addition, many of the roads that run perpendicular to the lake (most notably Washington Avenue and Central Avenue) provide nice glimpses of the lake. Several private properties, including properties near the waterfront and properties in the higher elevations of the city, also have excellent views of the lake.



Good View of the Lake and Marina from the Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail (SWB, Inc.)

Unfortunately, in certain areas of the city, existing development blocks views (or diminishes the quality of views) of Lake Superior. For example, the commercial dock, the Bayfield County Highway Department stockpiles, and the boat storage facilities near Central Avenue give the waterfront in this area an industrial appearance. Native plantings and other landscaping in this area could enhance views of lake while screening unattractive uses. To some extent, trees can block views of the lake, but tree branches can be selectively pruned in areas where views of the lake are desired.



View from Harbor View Drive of the Back of the Boat Storage Buildings with a Glimpse of the Lake in the Background (SWB, Inc.)

Most people that come to Washburn do so via Bayfield Street. However, it is virtually impossible to see the lake from Bayfield Street (State Highway 13).

Furthermore, few cues direct people to the lake from Bayfield Street. As a result, the lake is hidden to tourists and passersby that may be unfamiliar with Washburn. Washburn would benefit by providing better visual and functional connections to the lake from Bayfield Street.

Although people often emphasize the need to provide good views of the lake, people should also recognize that views from the lake are important too. Building height and style, utility towers, and vegetation greatly affect the appearance of Washburn from the lake. As stated earlier, there is a lack of trees in the central coastal area of Washburn. While some may feel the lack of trees promotes views of the lake, others may feel the lack of trees in this area adversely affects the views from the lake and from the Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail. The City should implement strategies to protect and enhance views to and from Lake Superior.



Native Plantings Could Help Enhance the View from Lake (SWB, Inc.)

ACCESS TO THE LAKE

Public access to Lake Superior is important to the residents of Washburn. Fortunately, Washburn owns roughly 1.5 miles of waterfront that is available for public use. Thompson's West End Park, Memorial Park, and Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail (which runs through a 200-foot wide lakefront parkway buffer along Lake Superior south of West Holman Lakeview Drive) make up the bulk of the public land. These parks and trails provide numerous recreation and cultural opportunities for residents and visitors. Refer to Chapters 5 and 6 for additional information about the waterfront trails and parks.



Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail (SWB, Inc.)

Access to the waterfront is relatively easy. Parking areas exist in the parks and key locations along the walking trail. Much of the walking trail is ADA accessible. Parts of the trail branch off and bring people to beaches that line the waterfront. A snowmobile/ATV trail runs along the former railroad right-of-way and provides access to the waterfront. Washburn's waterfront can also be accessed by boat. Public boat ramps exist at Thompson's West End Park and the marina.



Boat Ramp at the Marina (SWB, Inc.)

Although Washburn has a relatively large amount of public waterfront property, there is little connection or synergy between the waterfront and the downtown businesses on Bayfield Street. Again, Washburn would benefit by providing better connections between the downtown and the waterfront.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail does an excellent job of preserving and telling the history of the waterfront. Remnants and interpretive signs help residents and visitors learn about Washburn's past. Washburn also has numerous events, like Book Across the Bay, the Inland Sea Kayak Society Symposium, Pumpkinfest, Superior Vistas Bike Tour, and Brownstone Days that take place in Thompson's West End Park and that have a tie to Lake Superior. Yet more can be done to bring people to the lake and connect them with this valuable resource. Refer to Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 for additional information regarding cultural resources.



Interpretive Sign along the Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail (SWB, Inc.)

EXISTING WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

The following provides an overview of existing development in the waterfront area. Refer to Figure 4-1: Existing Waterfront Development for the locations of the uses described below. Also, refer to other chapters in the Comprehensive Plan for additional information.

Public Parks and Open Spaces

Memorial Park, Thompson's West End Park, and the Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail make up the bulk of Washburn's waterfront. These parks and open spaces provide tremendous recreation opportunities for residents and visitors. Refer to Chapter 6 for additional information.

Washburn Marina

The City of Washburn owns the Washburn Marina, but leases the management of the marina to a private operator. The marina has 138 slips and four to eight transient moorings. The marina also has a maintenance building, a ship store with offices and a lounge, a fuel dock and pump out, a 150-ton travel lift, washrooms, picnic facilities, and other amenities.

The Harbor Commission prepared a strategic plan for the future of the marina that identifies the following proposed enhancements to the marina:

- Build a separate restroom/shower/laundry;
- Establish wireless Internet/broadband (planned to be installed March 2007);
- Attract vacation cruise boats;
- Explore long-range adequacy of marina buildings;
- Establish a marketing plan;
- Work with City in planning development of Central Avenue and Omaha Street;



One of Several Secluded Public Beaches along Washburn's Waterfront (SWB, Inc.)



Boat Slips at the Washburn Marina (SWB, Inc.)

Insert Figure 4-1: Existing Waterfront Development

- Provide boat washing and fish cleaning stations;
- Enhance the appearance of the marina with landscaping and boat storage improvements;
- Provide additional recreation facilities; and
- Explore the possibilities of developing camping and RV sites at the marina.

Refer to the Harbor Commission's Strategic Plan for additional information.

Commercial Dock

The City's commercial dock is one of the last working bulk cargo docks in the area. The City received a grant to improve the dock. Under the conditions of the grant, the City agreed to maintain the dock for commercial use for a set period. The dock serves an important function and provides economic benefits, but the dock is not very attractive and it could benefit from landscape screening.

Old Pumphouse

The City no longer uses the old pumphouse to pump water. However, the building is an attractive, brownstone building on the waterfront that has great potential for public use. For example, it could potentially house community art classes, a small nature center, or similar uses.

County Facilities

The Bayfield County Highway Department and the Bayfield County Forestry Department have facilities on Central Avenue, which leads to the waterfront. While the facilities do not appear to create excessive noise, traffic, or similar problems, the exterior storage associated with these uses visually detract from the waterfront. In addition, the City believes that this area is more suited for a mixture of commercial, residential, and public open space use, than it is for public works or industrial type uses. The City and Bayfield County have discussed relocating the Forestry Department facilities to the Highway Department site. This would free the Forestry Department site for redevelopment in a manner more consistent with the City's vision for the area. In spite of the County's investment in the existing Highway Department facility, there is strong



Existing Boat Repair Building and Outdoor Storage at the Washburn Marina (SWB, Inc.)



View of Commercial Dock from the Marina (SWB, Inc.)



Old Pumphouse (SWB, Inc.)



Bayfield County Highway Department Storage and Stockpiles (SWB, Inc.)

community support for the County to move the facility. The City and County will work to resolve or improve this situation. For example, in the short term, the City and County will work together to explore ways to consolidate, relocate, or screen existing exterior storage.

VFW Facilities

The VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) has facilities south of the Bayfield County Highway Department and northeast of the marina. The existing facilities do not appear to create specific problems for the waterfront, but neither do they appear to take full advantage of their location near the waterfront. Consequently, the City and VFW should explore opportunities to relocate the VFW to a more suitable location and explore public use of this area in a manner that relates to the waterfront.



VFW Facilities near the Waterfront (SWB, Inc.)

Residential and Commercial Development

Lakeshore residential development exists in the northeast and southwest corners of Washburn. A few lakeshore residential properties exist just south of the Athletic Fields Complex. Most existing residential development near the waterfront is adjacent to the Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail. These residences do not have private access to the lake, but they have good views of the lake and good access to the Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail.



Residences adjacent to the Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail (SWB, Inc.)

Several commercial uses exist near the waterfront. A motel and a restaurant overlook the marina and the Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail. Commercial boat storage facilities are located adjacent to the marina.

The existing residential and commercial developments near the Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail, as well as the commercial boat storage facilities, do not appear to create excessive noise, traffic, or similar problems. However, some argue that the building and site design of these developments should relate better to the waterfront. This suggests that site and building design guidelines may be beneficial for properties near the waterfront.



Commercial Development adjacent to the Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail (SWB, Inc.)

Vacant City Land

The City of Washburn owns four tracts of vacant land near the waterfront. These areas have the potential for commercial and/or residential use as well as public recreation use. Alternatively, some or all of these tracts could be left in an undeveloped state. Residents have expressed a variety of opinions on the best use of these areas. Refer to Appendix A and the following section of this chapter for more information regarding public opinion on how to use these areas. Regardless of how they are used, these areas hold tremendous value for the future of Washburn.



Vacant City Land North of Harbor View Drive (SWB, Inc.)

ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND PUBLIC INPUT

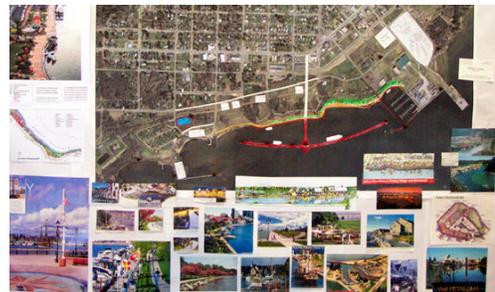
The City of Washburn developed and grew because of its waterfront. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the value of the waterfront was tied to its ability to process and ship the area's natural resources. Although the waterfront industries of the past are no longer present, the waterfront is as important to Washburn today as it was in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Today, the waterfront holds tremendous economic value, but its economic value is now closely integrated with the natural and social values of the waterfront.

As part of this planning process, the City asked residents of all ages to illustrate their vision for Washburn. Many children and adults prepared wonderful illustrations and vision statements (see side photos for examples). A common theme among the expressed visions is that Washburn should have an attractive waterfront that residents and visitors can use and enjoy. Washburn residents agree that the waterfront is important to the future of Washburn. However, throughout this planning process, residents expressed a variety of opinions on how to balance and integrate the economic, natural, and social components of the waterfront. For example, some residents expressed a strong desire to grow Washburn's economy and attract more people to the waterfront by emphasizing commercial and/or residential development along the waterfront. Other residents also expressed a strong desire to grow Washburn's economy and attract more people to the waterfront by emphasizing preservation and enhancement of the natural qualities of the waterfront, rather than commercial and/or residential development.

Respondents to the community survey conducted as part of the comprehensive planning process identified the importance of the waterfront to the community.



An Example of the Vision of Washburn and the Waterfront as expressed by Children (SWB, Inc.)



An Example of the Vision of Washburn and the Waterfront as Expressed by a Resident (SWB, Inc.)

The following list summarizes key survey results as they relate to the waterfront. Refer to Appendix A for detailed survey results.

Residents were given a list of potential planning activities and asked if the City should encourage action on those activities. Of those activities directly related to the waterfront, respondents indicated that the City should either strongly encourage or encourage the following:

- Public access to the lakeshore (83.7%)
- Lakeshore preservation (80.5%)
- Waterfront development (53.9%)

When asked to rate the value of various natural, cultural, and historical resources in Washburn, the top three resources that had high value to respondents related to the waterfront:

- Surface water quality along the lakeshore (73.3%)
- Public access to Lake Superior (70.7%)
- Scenic views of Lake Superior (67.3%)

The survey also asked residents their opinion for the best use of four tracts of public land near the waterfront. Refer to Table 3-B in Chapter 3 for a detailed summary of the results. The survey results showed a range of opinions, but most respondents indicated a desire to include public recreational uses in all subject areas. Most also indicated that commercial, residential, or a mixture of commercial and public recreational uses are desirable uses particularly in the Omaha Street and Central Avenue areas. Roughly half of the respondents indicated that they would like to see the area around West Holman Lakeview Drive (49.4%) and the area west of West End Park (40.9%) used primarily for public recreational uses or left in an undeveloped state.

In conclusion, Washburn residents agree that the waterfront is important to the future of the city. They agree that the waterfront holds economic, natural, and social value. Most agree that public access to the lake, preservation of the lakeshore, and scenic views of the lake are important. However, there is less agreement regarding the type, extent, and location of commercial and/or residential development that would be desirable or acceptable in the waterfront. The Comprehensive Plan attempts to provide a “win-win-win” solution that balances the economic, natural, and social components of the waterfront.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following goal is a broad statement that reflects the City’s vision for its waterfront. It represents the end that the City is striving to attain. The following objectives are specific, measurable, intermediate ends that are achievable and mark progress towards the goal. The following policies are key actions intended to accomplish the stated objectives.

Goal: Washburn’s waterfront promotes a strong and sustainable economy, protects and enhances natural resources, and provides public access and recreation opportunities to residents and visitors.

Objective 4.1: Use land in the waterfront in a manner that promotes a strong and sustainable economy.

Policy 4.1a: Support the efforts of the Harbor Commission to enhance the Washburn Marina and provide appropriate use of the commercial dock.

Policy 4.1.b: Promote economic development by providing land near the waterfront for a well-planned, mixed-use development that allows people to live, work, and shop in an area that has convenient access to the amenities of the waterfront.

Policy 4.1.c: Acknowledge that public access and use of the waterfront, as well as preservation of land in a natural state, are legitimate land uses that provide economic benefit to the community by enhancing Washburn's quality of life and sustaining the waterfront for future generations.

Policy 4.1.d: Promote tourism and enhance downtown businesses by strengthening the connection of the downtown area to the waterfront.

Policy 4.1.e: Prepare and implement design guidelines or standards that promote sustainable development consistent with the natural character of the waterfront.

Policy 4.1.f: Work with Bayfield County to relocate the existing Forestry Department facilities and enhance the function of the Highway Department facilities in order to promote redevelopment in the area that is consistent with the City's vision.

Objective 4.2: Protect and enhance the waterfront's natural resources.

Policy 4.2.a: Implement best management practices to reduce erosion and sedimentation.

Policy 4.2.b: Work with government agencies to control exotic and invasive plant and animal species.

Policy 4.2.c: Enhance the natural landscape on public land in the waterfront while considering views to and from the lake.

Policy 4.2.d: Increase public awareness of the importance of the waterfront's natural resources by integrating interpretive nature signs and exhibits into the Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail.

Objective 4.3: Provide public recreation opportunities and public access to the waterfront.

Policy 4.3.a: Develop and implement a plan for the public open space next to the commercial dock. Explore ways to link the public open space to the Athletic Fields Complex.

Policy 4.3.b: Develop and implement a plan for public use of the pumphouse in a manner that takes full advantage of its waterfront location.

Policy 4.3.c: Work with various organizations and government agencies to promote waterfront events that meet the needs of residents and that help promote economic development.

Policy 4.3.d: Develop and implement a plan to provide additional community meeting and events facilities along the waterfront.

Policy 4.3.e: Develop and implement a plan to provide a safe, clean, and cost-effective shuttle between the marina and downtown areas during peak times.

WATERFRONT AND COASTAL RESOURCES PLAN

This section summarizes and expands on the concepts and actions discussed in the inventory and analysis section, and the goals, objectives, and policies section of this chapter. It presents an illustrative concept of the waterfront area that includes a mixture of commercial and residential development, preservation and enhancement of significant natural resources, and promotion of social and cultural activities.

The Waterfront and Coastal Resources Plan is a general plan that conveys the City's vision for the waterfront. The City will prepare detailed plans before implementing specific parts of this Plan. For example, the Plan shows proposed enhancements to the marina, but the City will need to prepare detailed plans for the proposed enhancements. The Waterfront and Coastal Resources Plan presents a framework that will guide future planning efforts. It is not intended to

In general, the Plan promotes mixed-use development in the Central Avenue/Omaha Street area and it considers possible mixed-use development north of West Holman Lakeview Drive. The Plan also strongly promotes protecting and enhancing the natural resources associated with the waterfront, and it promotes public recreation opportunities and public access to the waterfront. The following sections describe each of these aspects of the Plan in more detail.

MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CENTRAL AVENUE/OMAHA STREET AREA

Figure 4-2 shows an illustrative concept plan for the overall Central Avenue/Omaha Street area. Enlarged plans of specific areas are shown later in this section. The following provides a general description of the concept for each of these areas.

Central Avenue from Bayfield Street to West Omaha Street

Although Bayfield Street and West Omaha Street are nearly one-half mile from the shore of Lake Superior, the Plan emphasizes the need to improve the connection between the downtown area and the waterfront. The overall objective is to provide an attractive downtown business district that relates to the waterfront (see Figure 4-3).

Key elements of the Plan include the following:

- Promote the downtown area along Bayfield Street as the heart of the business community. Encourage enhancements to existing buildings, infill development that relates to the existing character of the downtown, and streetscape enhancements that improve the function and appearance of the downtown. Develop attractive directional signs that guide people to the waterfront.
- Develop Central Avenue into a parkway with pedestrian walks and plantings to beautify the area and frame views of the lake. Enhance other streets that lead from Bayfield Street to the lake with pedestrian walks and plantings as well.
- Explore opportunities to provide additional public parking and potentially a transit center (or node) that would help encourage building infill development along Bayfield Street. The transit center (or node) could also be used as a park and ride lot and could provide an area for charter busses.



Figure 4-2: Conceptual Sketch Showing Preliminary Ideas for Redevelopment of the Central Avenue/Omaha Street Area

- Provide attractive and functional pedestrian walks that lead south from Bayfield Street to the waterfront. In addition, provide connections to an enhanced multi-modal trail and parkway that runs along the former railroad right-of-way.
- Strive to bury the existing three-phase power line in the former railroad right-of-way. However, the Plan can be implemented without burying the power line.
- Work with Bayfield County to relocate the existing Forestry Department facilities.
- Promote commercial development at the intersection of West Omaha Street and Central Avenue and the intersection of West Omaha Street and Second Avenue West.



Figure 4-3: Conceptual Sketch Showing Preliminary Ideas for Redevelopment of Central Avenue from Bayfield Street to Omaha Street

Central Avenue from West Omaha Street to West Harbor View Drive

The Plan envisions mixed-use development south of West Omaha Street and north of West Harbor View Drive (see Figure 4-4). This would give people an opportunity to live, work, and shop in an area that has convenient access to the amenities of the waterfront. Key elements of the Plan include the following:

- Promote mixed-use development that provides commercial uses at the street level with residential uses above. Typical commercial uses could include artist studios, graphic designers, architects, attorneys, dentists, gift shops, and coffee shops.

- Promote design guidelines or standards to guide development in a manner consistent with the vernacular architecture of Washburn. Promote sustainable building designs. Figure 4-5 shows an illustrative concept of how the buildings may appear.
- Promote sustainable site design that incorporates native plantings and low impact storm water design techniques.
- Promote pedestrian oriented development. Provide parking behind buildings, rather than in front of buildings.
- Explore the possibility of developing a public pedestrian mall that would help connect Bayfield Street to the waterfront. The pedestrian mall could be used for art shows, displays, and community events (see Figure 4-5).
- Work with Bayfield County to provide an attractive and effective landscaped screen between the Highway Department facilities and Central Avenue.
- Encourage development of this area as a master planned neighborhood, rather than allowing the area to develop piecemeal without a coordinated master plan.



Figure 4-4: Conceptual Sketch Showing Preliminary Ideas for Redevelopment of Central Avenue from West Omaha Street to West Harbor Drive



Figure 4-5: Conceptual Sketch Showing Preliminary Ideas for Potential Mixed-Use Development looking South along Central Avenue



Figure 4-6: Section through Conceptual Public Pedestrian Mall associated with Potential Mixed-Use Development



Figure 4-7: Section through Central Avenue looking towards the Potential Mixed-Use Development

South of West Harbor Drive and North of the Marina

The Plan envisions mixed-use development south of West Harbor View Drive (see Figure 4-8). It also envisions the expansion and enhancement of the commercial boat storage facilities associated with the marina. Key elements of the Plan include the following:

- Promote mixed-use development on the south side of West Harbor View Drive, similar to the proposed mixed-use on the north side.
- Continue the public pedestrian mall from the north side of West Harbor View Drive to the Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail. Provide a public pavilion at the intersection of the pedestrian mall and the walking trail. Enhance the native plantings along the trail and lakeshore.
- Construct a municipal boat storage building, possibly west of the existing privately owned boat storage buildings. Develop and implement design guidelines and standards for the storage building and surrounding site.
- Work with Bayfield County to provide an attractive and effective landscaped screen between the Highway Department facilities and Central Avenue.
- Work with Bayfield County and the VFW to relocate the existing VFW facilities to another area. Shift First Avenue East to the north to allow development of a public park on the waterfront. Develop a pavilion and passive recreation facilities that will serve the residents of Washburn and those who use the marina. Link the new park to the existing Athletic Field Complex.
- Provide an attractive, landscaped center island at the base of Central Avenue. This island will be designed to provide an attractive terminus to Central Avenue and entrance to the marina. It will also help screen the commercial dock.



Figure 4-8: Conceptual Sketch Showing Preliminary Ideas for Area South of West Harbor View Drive

Marina and Commercial Dock Area

The Plan supports the efforts of the Harbor Commission to enhance the Washburn Marina and provide appropriate use of the commercial dock (see Figure 4-9). Key elements of the Plan include the following:

- Provide a new or enhanced marina building. Develop and implement sustainable design guidelines or standards for the building.
- Enhance site organization to provide better definition and separation of the various uses and to improve the functionality of the site.
- Provide an attractive and safe route for the Lakefront Walking Trail.
- Provide landscaped screening of the outdoor storage areas and implement sustainable site design measures including low impact storm water design techniques.
- Maintain commercial use of the commercial dock, but shift the dock's access drive to the west to provide additional parkland and additional landscaped screening of the dock.



Figure 4-9: Conceptual Sketch Showing Preliminary Ideas for Enhancement of the Marina and Commercial Dock Area

MIXED-USE NORTH OF WEST HOLMAN LAKEVIEW DRIVE

The Plan envisions mixed-use development in the former railroad right-of way north of West Holman Lakeview Drive. However, the City recognizes that it will be necessary to bury or relocate the existing three-phase power line in this area before mixed-use development could take place. Key elements of the Plan include the following:

- Work with Xcel Energy and developers to bury or relocate the existing three-phase power line.
- Maintain the existing multi-modal trail that runs through this area. Provide screening as needed.
- Maintain the Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail south of West Holman Lakeview Drive for public use.
- Promote sustainable building and site design guidelines or standards to guide future development in this area (see Figure 4-10).
- Consider views to and from the lake. In addition, consider the views of the existing properties north of the subject area (see Figure 4-11).



Figure 4-10: Concept Sketch of Potential Mixed-Use Development North of West Holman Lakeview Drive



Figure 4-11: Section thru Potential Mixed-Use Development North of West Holman Lakeview Drive

NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT

The Plan strongly promotes protection and enhancement of natural resources. Key elements of the Plan include the following:

- Enhance native vegetation in the waterfront while considering views to and from the lake. Key areas that could benefit from native plantings include the area between existing residential and commercial development and the Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail, the area surrounding the Bayfield County Highway Department, and the area surrounding the outdoor storage associated with the Washburn Marina (see side photo). In addition, work with other government agencies to control exotic and invasive plant and animal species.
- Implement low impact storm water design techniques and other best management practices to treat storm water runoff and reduce soil erosion and sedimentation.
- Increase public awareness of the importance of waterfront's natural resources by integrating interpretive nature signs and displays into the City's waterfront parks and trails.



Typical Area along the Lakefront Walking Trail that could benefit from Enhanced Native Plantings (SWB, Inc.)

PUBLIC RECREATION AND PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE LAKE

The Plan acknowledges that Washburn residents highly value public recreation opportunities and public access to the lake. Key elements of the Plan to enhance recreation opportunities and lake access include the following:

- Develop and implement a plan to create a public waterfront park north of the commercial dock. The park will include recreation opportunities that would serve Washburn residents and visitors, as well as those who use the marina. The park could include a multi-use shelter or pavilion that could house community events including outdoor concerts.
- Develop a plan for public use of the City's old pumphouse. This pumphouse is an attractive, brownstone building on the waterfront that has great potential for public use. For example, it could potentially house community art classes, a small nature center, or similar uses.
- Develop and implement a plan to provide additional community meeting and events facilities near the waterfront. For example, explore the possibility of developing a community center at Thompson's West End Park that could house events like the Inland Sea Kayak Symposium or provide a warming house for outdoor winter activities that take place in the park.
- Enhance pedestrian connections and streetscapes as described in the mixed-use development section earlier in this chapter.

CONCLUSIONS

Washburn's waterfront is important to the future of City. The Comprehensive Plan attempts to provide a "win-win-win" solution that balances the economic, natural, and social components of the waterfront.