

Ashland

WISCONSIN

Lake Superior's Hometown



Waterfront Development Plan

Summary Report
Revised March 2002



City History

The City of Ashland was a boomtown in the 1890's when the City was the leading port for shipping the abundant natural resources in the region. At one time, the population of the City was estimated to be 16,000. The city was the center of a rich forest of white pine extending from Superior to Hurley. Sawmills lined the waterfront from 1890 to 1920. During this period there were up to 16 commercial docks on the waterfront.

Iron ore shipped from Ashland was mined from the veins that extended from the Gogebic Range of the Upper Peninsula to the Mesabe Range of Minnesota. The mining activity in the region lasted until the 1950's. During World War II over 6,000,000 tons of iron ore was shipped from the Soo Line Ore Dock.

"This flourishing city is beautifully located on the south shore of Chequamegon Bay, the finest harbor on the Great Lakes, and large enough to float the entire fleets of the world. The last U. S. census report shows Ashland to be the third largest shipping port on the Great Lakes, being surpassed only by Chicago and Buffalo. It is the great railroad center of northern Wisconsin, and is already the terminal of five great railway systems, viz.: -Chicago & Northwestern, Wisconsin Central, Chicago-St. Paul-Minneapolis-Omaha, Northern Pacific, and the Canadian Pacific. It is generally understood in railroad circles that the Great Northern and the Chicago, Milwaukee St. Paul will enter the city at no distant day. Besides rail communications, Ashland has several steamship lines with boats making regular stops on their trips up and down the lakes. We may name among the leading manufacturing industries, The Ashland Iron and Steel Works, with its great charcoal blast furnace, the largest in the world; five saw mills, planing mills, two sash door and factories, three foundry and machine' shops, several cigar factories, a brick yard, three companies that quarry and ship the celebrated Lake Superior Brownstone, a stove board and screen door factory, a brewery, and many successful wholesale houses that supply a large range of territory."

Laura J. and J.M. Turner, 1898

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Waterfront Development Plan

Prepared for:
The City of Ashland
Revised 2002

Plan Description and Goals

Introduction

The Ashland Waterfront Development Plan Update is a long-range vision for the redevelopment of the Ashland waterfront. The object is to update the Waterfront Development Plan of 1994. It is intended to both evaluate the current validity of the Plan's recommendations and provide a set of updated development recommendations for four specific target areas based upon new data available and progress since the previous plan.

This plan rests upon two primary goals:

- 1) To build upon the successes of previous plans in order to illustrate the potential for the Ashland waterfront to become a major tourist destination on the South Shore of Lake Superior in synergy with the regional tourism industry.
- 2) To elevate the standard of community resources for the citizens of Ashland by providing recreational and cultural facilities, better access to Lake Superior and a broader employment and tax base.

Target Development Areas

The primary focus of this plan is to refine development objectives for four target development areas identified by the City as the most desirable areas for redevelopment. These areas include:

Project Process

To facilitate the creation of a community-led vision, participation in the Ashland Waterfront Development Plan Update included City officials, a Waterfront Task Force and input from the community via public involvement meetings. During initial meetings with City representatives, preliminary issues and target areas were discussed and a Waterfront Task Force was named. Subsequent meetings with the Task Force introduced the goals of the plan, the target redevelopment areas and project schedule. A three-day workshop held in November 2001, served as the forum for developing a vision for the waterfront development areas through interactive work sessions with the City staff Steering Committee and the Waterfront Task Force. A tour of target area sites with these groups also stimulated the generation of development ideas. As a part of the workshop, a public meeting was also held to outline the project process and to solicit ideas from the community. From this workshop a defined vision for each of the target areas was crafted and refined by the consultant team. Following presentation of these refined plans to the City Steering Committee, Waterfront Task Force and the public, during meetings in February 2002, this plan was finalized.

- Reiss Coal Dock
- Former Wastewater Treatment Plant and Adjacent Land
- Historic Soo Line Ore Dock
- Clarkson Dock

Plan Prepared By
SmithGroup JJR

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Historic Soo Line Ore Dock

Create a tourist destination with a regional draw that celebrates Ashland's industrial past and Lake Superior's national importance

- Develop a Great Lakes Shipping and Mining Interpretive Center
- Link an Ore Freighter or Research Vessel to the Interpretive Center
- Restore or Reconstruct a Section of the Railroad Trestle
- Improve Kreher Park and Expand Swimming Beach

Former Wastewater Treatment Plant

Expand the existing Municipal Marina and create a public park, maritime services, education and visitor center that serves as the centerpiece of the Ashland Bayfront.

- Incorporate a "Harbor Island" Breakwater System
- Expanded Marina with a New Harbormaster Building
- Renovation and Re-Use of the Existing Treatment Plant Buildings to House: Marina Support Facilities, a Community Visitor's Center, a Great Lakes Education Center and Museum and Meeting Facilities
- Create a Demonstration Stormwater Treatment Basin
- Expand the existing boat launch to six lanes with 90 trailer parking spaces
- Improve Linkages to Downtown along Pearlis and Ellis Avenues

Reiss Coal Dock

Create a year-round community amenity to hold events such as Bay Days and Book-Across-the-Bay and take advantage of the deep water channel to serve Great Lakes cruise ships.

- Cruise Ship Terminal with Entrance Plaza and Downtown Shuttle Drop Off, Arrival and Maintenance Buildings
- Community Festival Grounds
- End of Dock Plaza and Marina Overlook
- Extended Waterfront Trail through Festival Grounds
- Day Use Parking Area

Clarkson Dock

Relocate the Recreational Vehicle park from Kreher Park and create a natural preserve on the Bay City Creek estuary

- Create 40 gravel RV sites with utilities, a service area, children's playground and multiple picnic and gathering pavilions
- Maintain the Bay City Creek estuary as a natural area with a rustic open air pavilion and connections to the existing waterfront trail



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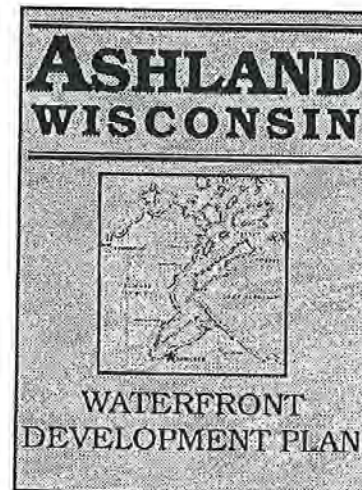
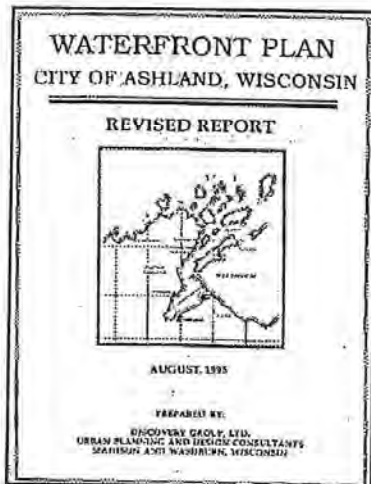
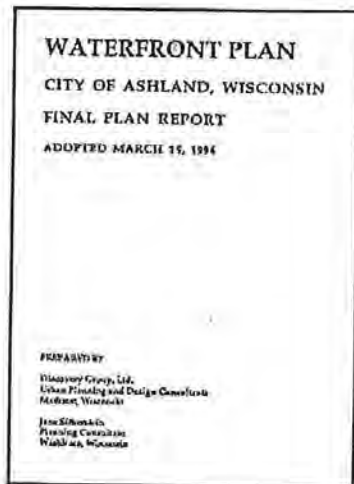
"This branching city is beautifully located on the south shore of Chequamegon Bay, the finest harbor on the Great Lakes, and large enough to float the entire fleets of the world. The last U. S. census report shows Ashland to be the third largest shipping port on the Great Lakes, being surpassed only by Chicago and Buffalo. It is the great railroad center of northern Wisconsin, and is already the terminal of five great railway systems, viz., Chicago & Northwestern, Wisconsin Central, Chicago-St. Paul-Minneapolis-Omaha, Northern Pacific, and the Canadian Pacific. It is generally understood in railroad circles that the Great Northern and the Chicago, Milwaukee-St. Paul will enter the city at no distant day. Besides rail communications, Ashland has several steamship lines with boats making regular stops on their trips up and down the lakes. We may name among the leading manufacturing industries, The Ashland Iron and Steel Works, with its great charcoal blast furnace, the largest in the world; five saw mills, planing mills, two sash door and factories, three laundry and machine shops, several cigar factories, a brick yard, three companies that quarry and ship the celebrated Lake Superior Brownstone, a stone board and screen door factory, a brewery, and many successful wholesale houses that supply a large range of territory."

Laura J. and J.M. Turner, 1895



Plan History

This update to the Ashland Waterfront Plan traces its history back to a planning process initiated by the City in 1993. The Waterfront Plan was formally adopted by the City Council in March of 1994. At that time, little was known about the extent or nature of the contaminants at the former wastewater treatment plant site. Once information became available from preliminary testing at the site, a Revised Waterfront Plan was published in August of 1995. From that document a poster plan was created to summarize the plan recommendations.





Introduction

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Background Studies and Analyses

Several previous studies were utilized during the formation of this plan. These included:

- Waterfront Plan, City of Ashland (1994) Discovery Group Ltd.
- Revised Waterfront Plan, City of Ashland (1995) Discovery Group Ltd.
- Historical/Architectural Resources Survey, City of Ashland, Ashland County (2001) Heritage Research Ltd.
- Comprehensive Environmental Investigation Report, (1997) SEH INC.
- Supplemental Investigation Report, (1998) SEH INC.
- Baseline Human Health Risk Assessment, (1998) SEH INC.
- Ecological Risk Assessment, (1998) SEH INC.
- WDNR and Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services Fact Sheets related to the Ashland/Northern States Power Lakefront site. (2000-2001)

Target Development Areas

The primary focus of this plan was to refine development objectives for four target development areas identified by the City as the most desirable areas for redevelopment. These areas include:

- Reiss Coal Dock
- Former Wastewater Treatment Plant and Adjacent Land
- Historic Soo Line Ore Dock
- Clarkson Dock

(A) Reiss Coal Dock

- Great Lakes Cruise Ship Terminal
- Community Festival Grounds

(B) Former Wastewater Treatment Plant

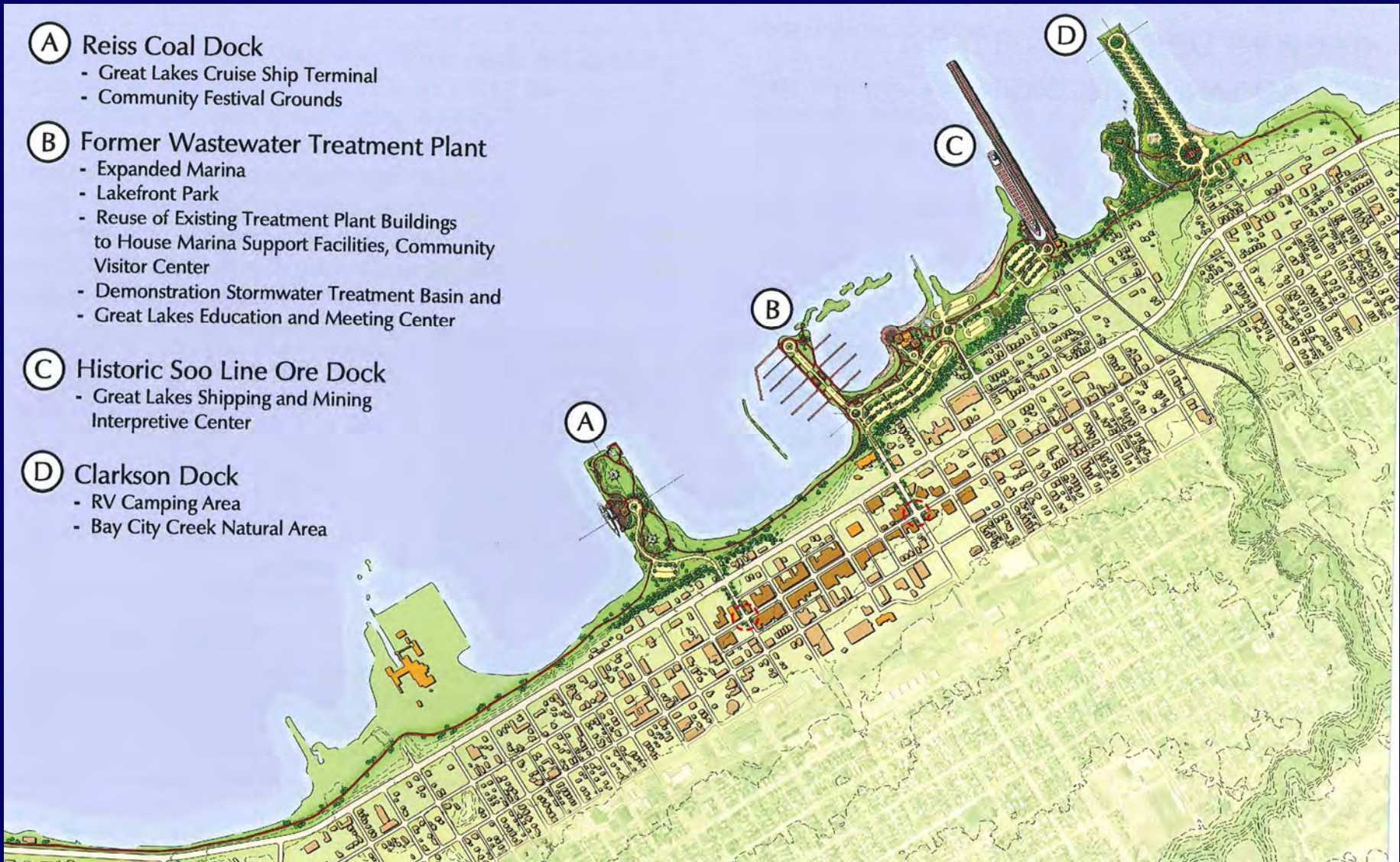
- Expanded Marina
- Lakefront Park
- Reuse of Existing Treatment Plant Buildings to House Marina Support Facilities, Community Visitor Center
- Demonstration Stormwater Treatment Basin and
- Great Lakes Education and Meeting Center

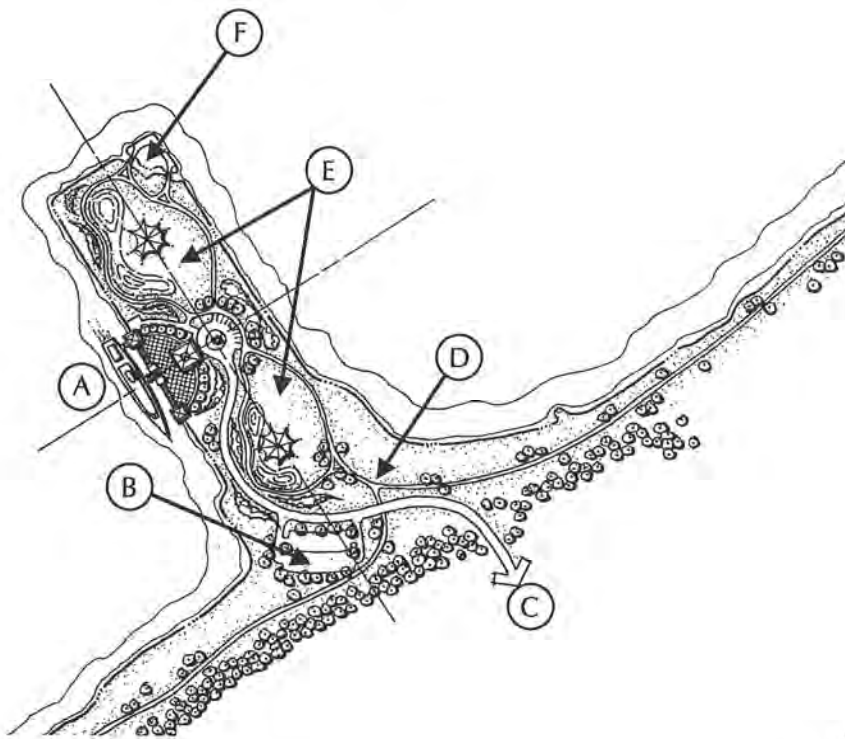
(C) Historic Soo Line Ore Dock

- Great Lakes Shipping and Mining Interpretive Center

(D) Clarkson Dock

- RV Camping Area
- Bay City Creek Natural Area





Ashland Waterfront Plan

Reiss Coal Dock Target Area

SmithGroup JJR

- (A)** Cruise Ship Terminal with Entrance Plaza, Maintenance and Arrival Buildings.
- (B)** Parking Area
- (C)** Link to 6th Avenue West and Downtown Shuttle
- (D)** Extension of Waterfront Trail
- (E)** Community Festival Grounds
- (F)** Plaza and Marina Overlook

Reiss Coal Dock

Introduction

Currently owned and operated by the Reiss Coal Company as a storage and transfer facility for coal. The dock extends 1200 feet into Lake Superior and includes coal piles and two permanent buildings on the site. The buildings and coal piles are currently active and do serve their functions of coal storage and transfer, predominantly in the service of the Excel Energy Bay Front Plant immediately to the west. However, they are a detraction from the visual quality of the waterfront; and they produce coal dust pollution that affects a large surrounding area.

Design Principles

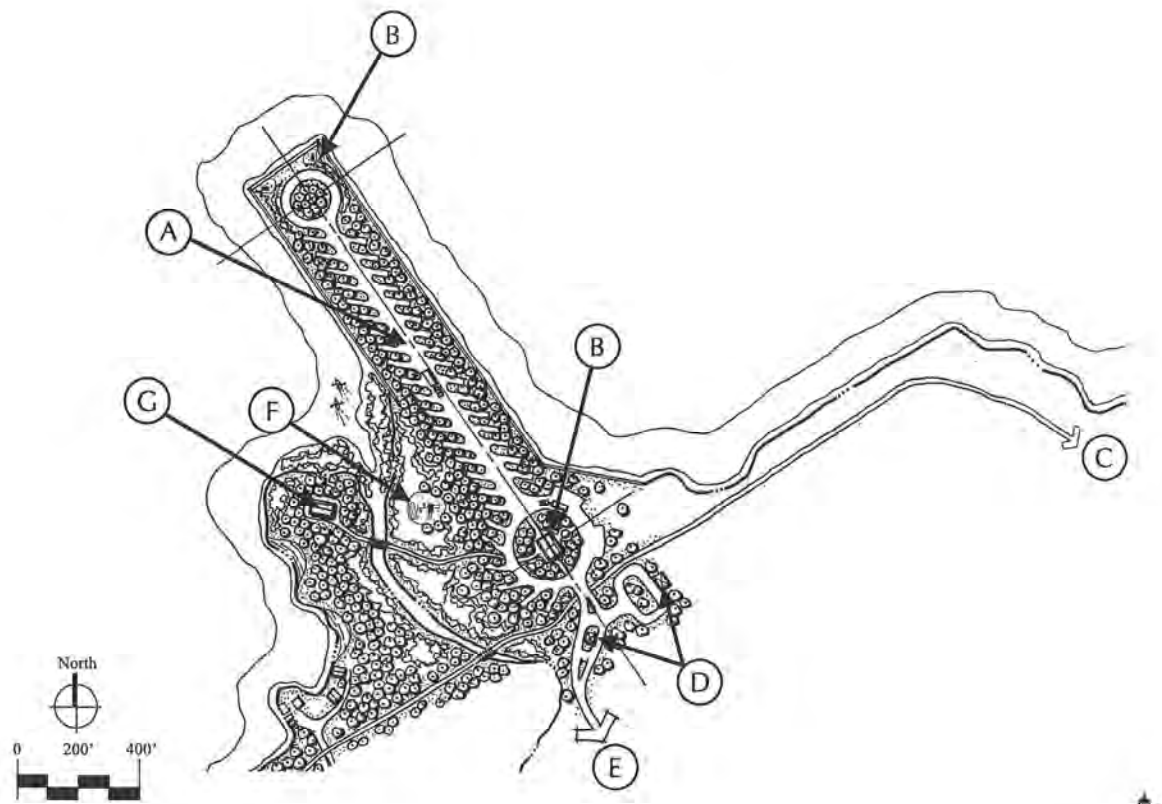
- Create a year-round community amenity from what is currently a detraction from the visual beauty of the Lake Superior shoreline.
- Take advantage of the deep-water channel by serving Great Lakes cruise ships.
- Create a new location to host events such as Bay Days and Book Across the Bay.

Redevelopment Concept

Proposed redevelopment of this site includes a ship terminal for Great Lakes cruise ships, community festival grounds in a park-like setting with multi-programmable zones for tents or gatherings and a perimeter baywalk.

Links to Downtown and the Central Business District

This site would continue to be linked to Lakeshore Drive via 6th Avenue West. Improvements to this roadway including trees, site furniture and upgraded crossings are recommended up to Main Street to provide a distinct linkage to City Hall and the Downtown Business District.



Ashland Waterfront Plan
Clarkson Dock Target Area



Clarkson Dock

Introduction

This unutilized waterfront property once served as a storage and transfer facility similar to the Reiss Coal Dock. The dock, currently owned by Koch industries, extends 1200 feet into Lake Superior. The dock has been vacant for 50-60 years and has been allowed to deteriorate to its current condition. The site appears suitable for redevelopment, however ownership and potential contamination issues would first need to be addressed.

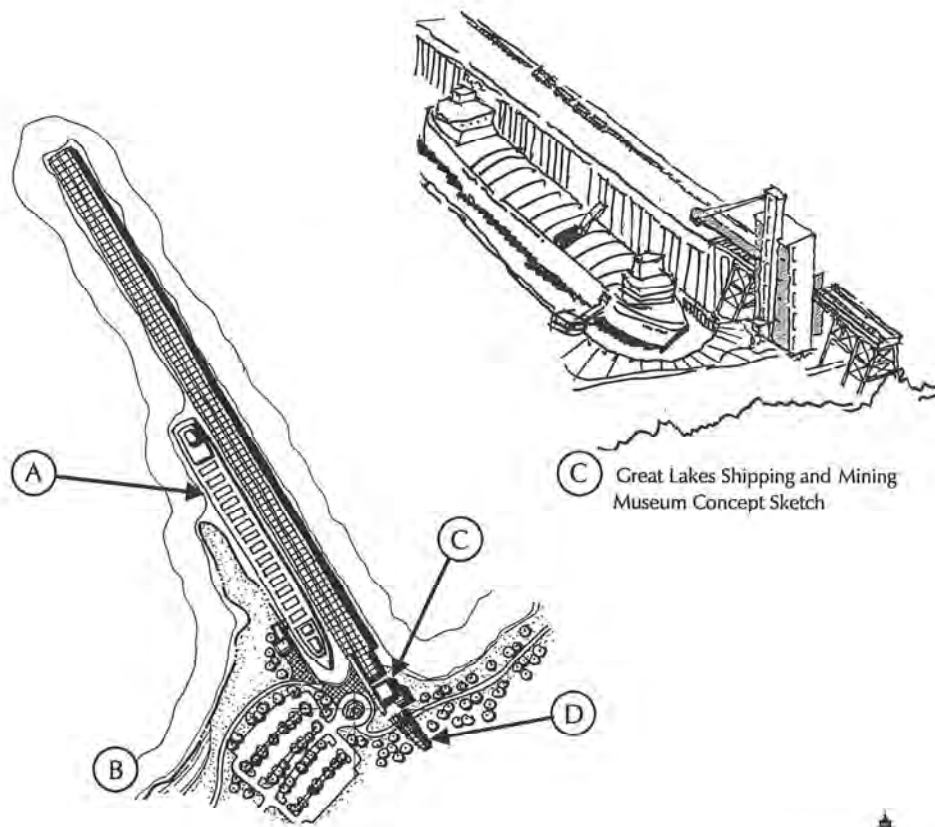
Design Principles

- Keep the Bay City Creek estuary area as a quiet natural preserve.
- Maximize public access to the bayfront.
- Maintain a revenue generating community attraction.

Redevelopment Concept

Proposed redevelopment of this site includes the relocation of the RV camping area from Kreher Park near the Ore Dock to this site. Included in this site are 40 RV camping pads with utilities, a park loop road, picnic and gathering pavilions, a children's playground, RV utility service area and a link to the Bay City Creek estuary (also known as "Gilligan's Island") natural area with an open air pavilion.

- (A) RV Camp Site Pads (Gravel) with Utilities and Asphalt Access Road
- (B) Multiple Picnic and Gathering Pavilions
- (C) Waterfront Trail Link to Bayview Park
- (D) Park Entrance and Utility Service Buildings
- (E) Link to Downtown Via 11th Avenue East
- (F) Playground
- (G) Small Open Air Pavilion on "Gilligan's Island"



Ashland Waterfront Plan

Ore Dock Target Area

SmithGroup JJR

- (A)** Ore Freighter or Research Vessel Linked to Interpretive Center
- (B)** Kreher Park and Swimming Beach
- (C)** Great Lakes Shipping and Mining Interpretive Center with Entry Plazas
- (D)** Restored or Reconstructed Interpretive Section of Railroad Trestle

Historic Soo Line Ore Dock Target Area

Introduction

The Historic Soo Line Ore Dock, currently owned by Canadian National Railroad, is a monolithic concrete and steel structure that extends 1800 feet into Lake Superior and stands over 80 feet high. This structure is a central identifying element along the Ashland waterfront and can be seen from virtually any point on the shoreline. The ore dock was formerly used to transfer iron ore and other products from rail cars to freight ships and is connected to a massive wooden rail trestle. The ore dock ceased operations in 1965. The ore dock has been categorized as eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places; and thus, the structure would be subject to designated redevelopment guidelines.

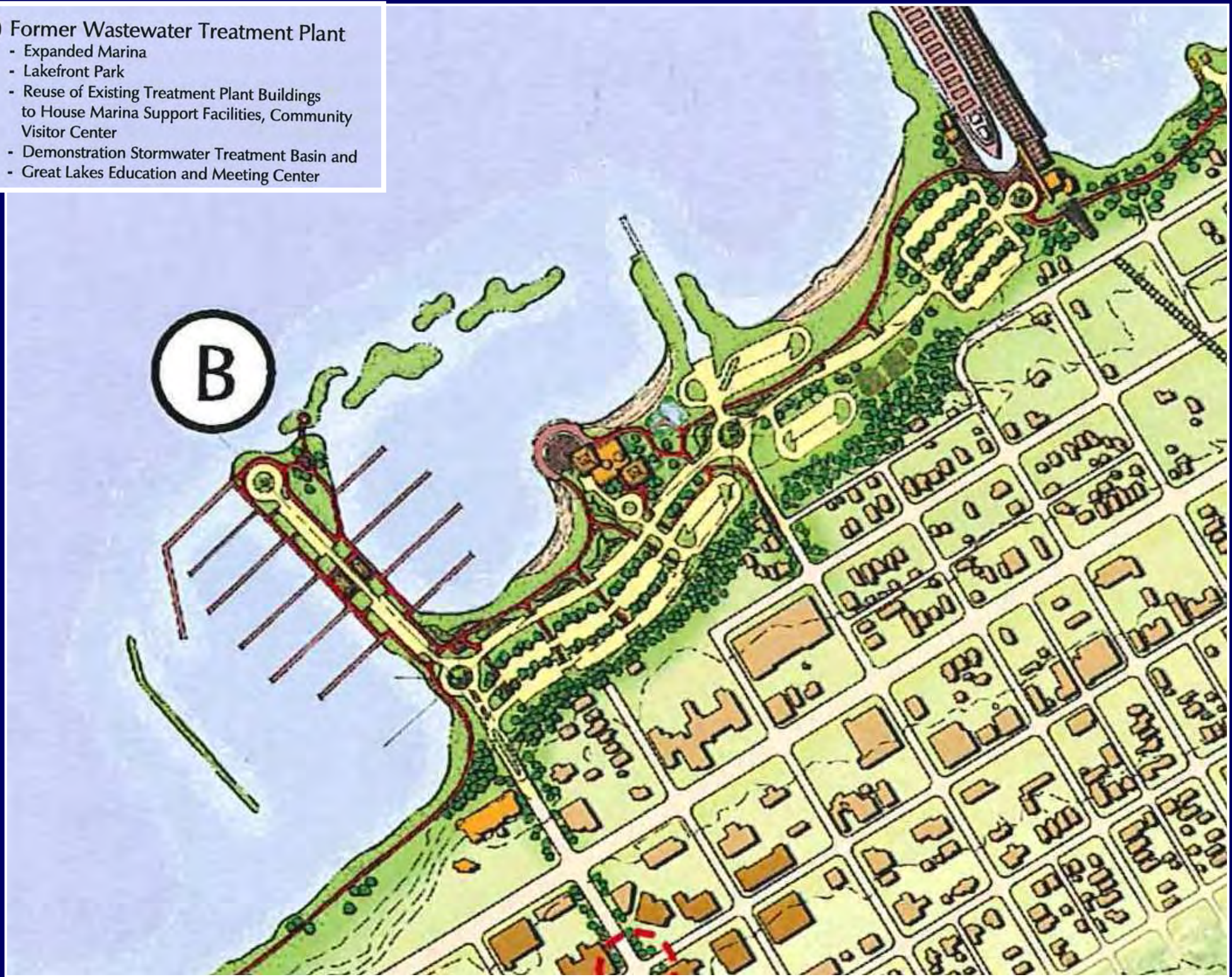
Design Principles

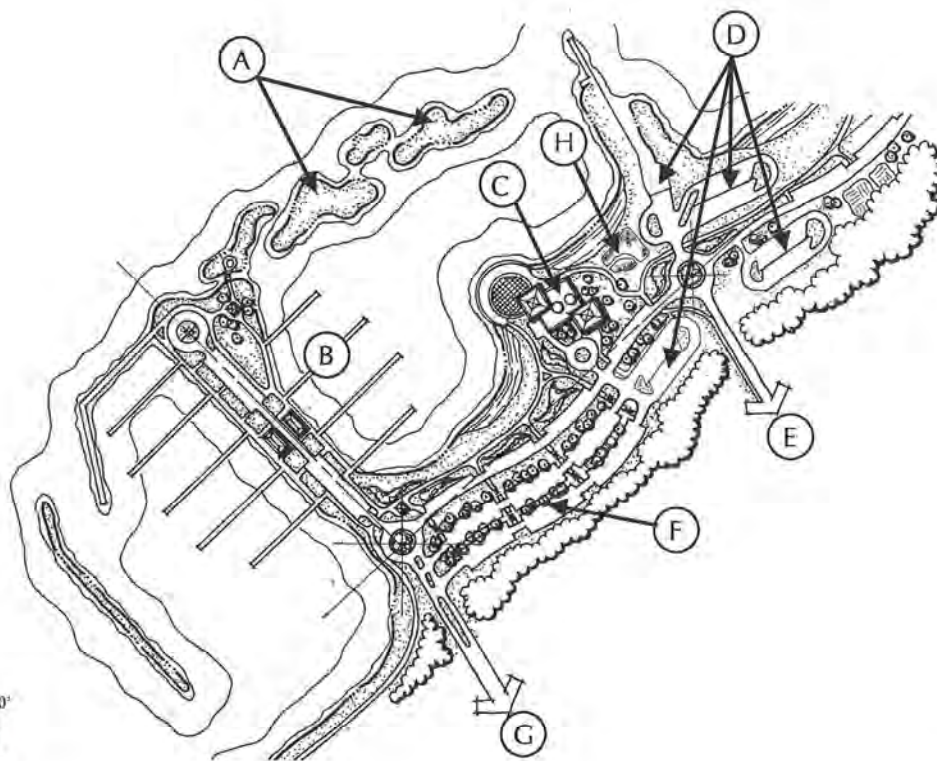
- Create a tourist destination with a regional draw that celebrates Ashland's industrial past and Lake Superior's national role.
- Relocate the current RV Camping Area to open up this unique City-owned park area to all Ashland residents and support the Ore Dock museum concept
- Focus on future use of the Ore Dock as a visual interpretive facility once it is found to be structurally stable and an appropriate maintenance program is developed.

Redevelopment Concept

Proposed redevelopment of this site includes a relocation of the existing RV (recreational vehicle) camping area and the creation of a Great Lakes Shipping and Mining Interpretive Center. The concept of this center is to introduce a structural element which can celebrate the historical significance of shipping and mining to Ashland and the Nation and to allow visitors to experience the grand scale and appreciate the workings of the ore dock without the need to be in contact with the structure itself.

- B** Former Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Expanded Marina
 - Lakefront Park
 - Reuse of Existing Treatment Plant Buildings to House Marina Support Facilities, Community Visitor Center
 - Demonstration Stormwater Treatment Basin and
 - Great Lakes Education and Meeting Center





Ashland Waterfront Plan

Former Wastewater Treatment Plant Target Area

SmithGroup JJR

- (A) "Harbor Island" Breakwater System
- (B) Expanded Marina with New Harbormaster Building
- (C) Renovation and Re-Use of Existing Buildings to House Marina Support Facilities, a Community Visitor's Center, Potential Great Lakes Education (e.g. museum, fisheries/aquarium facility) and Meeting Facilities
- (D) Expanded Boat Launch and Trailer Parking Areas (Total of Six Lanes and 90 Trailer Parking Spaces)
- (E) Link to Downtown Via Prentice Avenue
- (F) Overflow Marina, Harbor Center and Boat Launch Parking
- (G) Link to Downtown Via Ellis Avenue
- (H) Demonstration Stormwater Treatment Basin

Former Wastewater Treatment Plant Target Area

Introduction

The former wastewater treatment plant, out of operation since 1992 sits on the bayfront just east of the Ashland municipal marina. The target area includes the plant buildings, and is bordered to the west by Ellis Avenue, to the east by Prentice Avenue and to the south by the bluff. The bay area north of the plant is included in this area as well. The buildings of the former plant are structurally sound and could support a wide variety of uses. Adaptive reuse of this site and these buildings will be contingent upon cleanup of contaminants that exist on the site. These efforts are discussed on page 6.

Design Principles

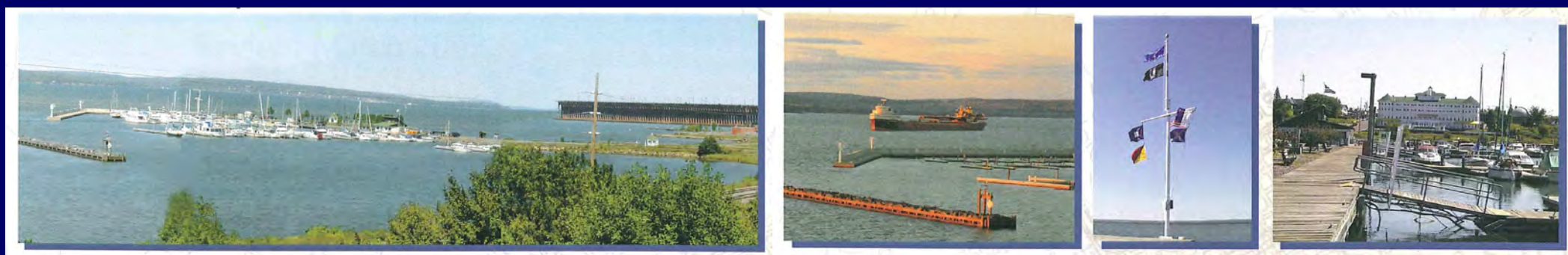
- Expand water and land-based marina facilities for the boating public in Ashland and to build upon the existing successful municipal marina.
- Reuse existing wastewater treatment plant buildings to create a multi-use community activity and education center.
- Work in tandem with the WDNR during mitigation efforts to maximize the benefits of cleanup efforts for the benefit of the community use of the bayfront.

Redevelopment Concept

Proposed redevelopment of this site includes an expanded marina with a "Harbor Island" breakwater system, public park lands, two sailing beaches (non-swimming), an adaptive reuse of the existing wastewater treatment plant buildings, expanded parking areas and a lakefront parkway.

Links to Downtown and the Central Business District

Ellis and Prentice Avenues currently serve as the access routes to this area. Future development should strengthen these linkages to the Downtown Business District through upgraded paving, street crossings, sidewalks, and the addition of street trees, lighting, signage and site furniture. The planned upgrades to STH 2 during the years 2006-2008 present an opportunity to integrate amenities and safer pedestrian facilities into these linkages.



What is the Waterfront Development Plan trying to accomplish?

- Develop areas of public access to Lake Superior
- Create the potential for Ashland's waterfront to be a major tourist destination
- Provide recreational and cultural facilities for the Ashland & the regional community
- Enhance natural areas and restore environmentally sensitive areas (coastal wetlands, steep slopes of Bay City Creek)
- Encourage economic development which will expand employment opportunities & the tax base