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APA Report Addresses Waterfront Redevelopment, River Restoration

WASHINGTON, DC — Cities and developers investing millions to revitalize downtown riverfronts should help ensure success by incorporating ecological principles into their projects, according to the authors of the new report, *Ecological Riverfront Design*.

Co-published by the American Planning Association (APA) as one of its signature Planning Advisory Service reports, *Ecological Riverfront Design* presents a comprehensive set of recommendations for integrating pollution prevention and habitat improvements into riverfront redevelopment efforts.

"It makes good business sense for communities and developers to restore the river while rehabilitating properties along the bank," said Betsy Otto with American Rivers, lead author of the report. "People spend time and money in attractive environments that emphasize natural beauty and wildlife. They avoid places where they smell sewage and see only concrete and pavement."

Ecological Riverfront Design is written for planners, mayors, developers, investors, government officials, river advocates, and others who are planning or evaluating redevelopment efforts. The report draws lessons from more than 30 riverfront revitalization and restoration efforts across the country (see list below).

The report provides a set of essential ideas, case studies, and best management practices that can help communities achieve their vision of waterfronts that draw people downtown to shop, work, play, and live. Riverfront design principles covered in the report include:

- Preserving natural features and functions
- Buffering sensitive natural areas
- Restoring riparian and in-stream habitats
- Using nonstructural alternatives to manage water resources
- Reducing hardscapes
- Managing stormwater on site and use nonstructural approaches;
- Balancing recreational and public access goals with river protection
- Incorporating information about a river's natural resources and cultural history

"Without pollution control and sewage treatment, riverfront retail and residences would be out of the question," said Katheen McCormick, one of the report authors. "Waterfront redevelopers can do their part by using landscaping techniques to reduce stormwater and trash running into the river from their properties."

Riverfront revitalization is not a new trend. Cities have been redeveloping neglected industrial waterfronts into parks, residences, retail, and commercial spaces for more than 30 years. These efforts typically involve cooperative partnerships between local governments and developers, and a mix of tax incentives and direct investment.

Waterfront redevelopments in Chattanooga and Baltimore have become sources of both jobs and hometown pride, inspiring other cities to imitate the formula for luring suburban residents and businesses downtown. Some estimate that developers will invest half a billion dollars to revitalize riverfronts during the first half of this decade alone.

"Recycling neglected riverfronts is the cornerstone of many cities' efforts to compete with sprawling suburbs," Otto said. "We offer some recommendations on how to do it right. When river protection and restoration are an integral part of the design, cities get a better overall result."

Clouds on the Horizon for Riverfront Redevelopment Efforts

While urban rivers are still generally cleaner today than they were in the 1970s, cities and developers have reason to be concerned about two worrisome trends: reduced enforcement of federal clean water laws and regulations and decreased investments in sewage infrastructure nationwide. Because funding for waste treatment is not keeping up with growing populations and aging systems, EPA officials warn that sewage levels — and odors — in urban rivers could return to 1970s levels by 2016.

"Riverfront redevelopment partnerships are part of a larger watershed picture," Otto said. "Revitalization efforts

won't be successful if we don't safeguard the water quality improvements that drew people back to their rivers in the first place. Communities can help ensure success by reminding their state and federal representatives about their aspirations for an attractive, inviting river."

Copies of *Ecological Riverfront Design* may be ordered by calling the APA's Planners Book Service (312-786-6344); by subscribing to APA's Planning Advisory Service; or online at www.planning.org/bookservice/description.htm?BCODE=P518.

Members of the press wanting a review copy of the report should contact APA Public Affairs Coordinator Denny Johnson at 202-349-1006 or by e-mail to djohnson@planning.org.

Cities Profiled in depth:

Chicago, Chicago River

Portland, Oregon, Willamette River

Cities with case studies:

Los Angeles, Los Angeles River

Napa, California, Napa River

San Jose, California, Guadalupe River

Hartford and East Hartford, Connecticut, Connecticut River

Detroit, Rouge River

New York City, Bronx River

Chattanooga, Tennessee River

Redmond, Washington, Sammamish River

Early riverfront revitalization pioneers:

San Francisco, Sacramento River

Denver, South Platte River

Chicago, Chicago River

Boston, Charles River

New Bedford, Massachusetts, Acushnet River

Baltimore, Patapsco River

San Antonio, Texas, San Antonio River

Other cities mentioned:

Berkeley, California, Strawberry Creek

Pueblo, Colorado, Arkansas River

Washington, D.C., Anacostia River

Louisville, Ohio River

Montgomery County, Maryland, Sligo Creek

Augusta, Maine, Kennebec River

St. Paul, Minnesota, Mississippi River

Omaha, Nebraska, Missouri River

Teaneck, New Jersey, Hackensack River

Cleveland, Cuyahoga River

Tulsa, Oklahoma, Mingo Creek

Philadelphia, Schuylkill River

Pittsburgh, Nine Mile Run

Murray City, Utah, Jordan River

Milwaukee, Milwaukee River

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