



**Office of the Mayor
John T. Dickert**

City of Racine, Wisconsin

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May 7, 2010

Selection Committee
Small Cities Sustainability Award
Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative
177 North State Street, Suite 500
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Selection Committee:

Please accept the attached proposal for consideration of the 2010 *Small Cities Sustainability Award*.

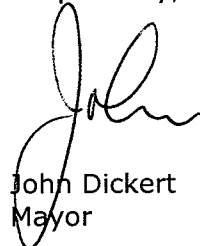
The City of Racine is committed to the preservation of Great Lakes St. Lawrence water resources and as such desires to incorporate the principles of sustainability into all aspects of how we do business whether that be in recreational opportunities for our citizens, educational programs for our school children, or in new construction and city redevelopment plans.

In partnership with the Root River Council and River Alliance of Wisconsin, with input from residents, stakeholders and City of Racine staff, the "*Back to the Root: An Urban River Revitalization Plan*" was developed to suggest ways for the redevelopment and revitalization of the Root River corridor within the City of Racine.. There were four interconnected recommendations developed as a result of this report: create a sense of place, stimulate economic growth; allow public access and interaction and improve water quality. The Park Recreation and Cultural Services Department (PRCS) along with its many partners has a particular interest in and is capable of making an immediate impact on improving public access and interaction with the river, and improving the water quality.

It is for this project that the city seeks funding through the Small Cities Sustainability Award program. The proposed canoe launch expansion project, if selected for funding, will provide a direct waterway connection to the DNR Steelhead facility located upstream from Island Park and the REC, expanding experiential-based educational opportunities within the City of Racine and further connecting the public to our natural environmental corridors.

Thank you for considering our proposal. In my absence, please contact Director Donnie Snow at 262-636-9451 or Donnie.snow@cityofracine.org with any questions you may have regarding this project.

Respectfully,



John Dickert
Mayor

Wege Small Cities Sustainability Best Practices Award

Creating Public Access and Environmental Stewardship

Racine a small industrial manufacturing community located on the shores of Lake Michigan and beautiful North Beach. It is a community in transition, in the midst of reinventing itself around two of its natural environmental corridors, Lake Michigan and the Root River. The river winds its way through several parks and diverse areas of the Racine community and is home to fishermen and recreation enthusiasts, canoers and kayakers.

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The City of Racine PRCS Department received funding in 2009 from the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program to install an additional canoe launch along the Root River, providing greater access to the river. Public access includes fishing, walking and cycling near the river's edge, boating and viewing the river from the shoreline. The long term plans for the Root River boat launch project includes expanding access in five parks in Racine County beginning in Island Park due its proximity to the Root River Environmental Education Community Center. Expansion of public access to, the Great Lakes watershed hinges upon available funding for the planning and design of the boat launches, informational signage, and the implementation of environmental education. Improving public access will encourage greater environmental stewardship as more residents become increasingly familiar with the myriad of environmental resources, recreational opportunities, and critical wildlife habitat the river provides.

Efforts to improve water quality, educate the public about flood plains, impacts of urbanization, and sources of pollution impacting the Root River and the Great Lakes has been a joint effort through a partnership between the City of Racine and the University of Wisconsin Parkside resulting in the establishment of the Racine Environmental Education Center (REC). The REC effectively increases handicap accessibility to a public canoe/kayak launch; promotes environmental education programs that enhance the outdoor learning experience by connecting the boat launch sites with local environmental education centers; and serves as a catalyst for economic and community development through promotion of eco-friendly tourism and recreation within Island Park (along the Root River) and on the Root River Pathway.