

Northern Kentucky Riverfront Commons Corridor Enhancement



Background

The river frontage along the Ohio River in Northern Kentucky has been transformed from an undeveloped swath of land to a regional destination bustling with activity. The shoreline was overgrown with brush and littered with driftwood and other debris, creating walking hazards and water barriers. The transformation began in 2004, when Woolpert was hired to develop the master plan for Riverfront Commons, a multipartner, collaborative endeavor that laid the groundwork for an 11.5-mile riverside corridor linking six cities across three counties. This plan has enhanced urban lifestyles across the linked communities and has provided a unified approach to economic development, which helps to unlock state and federal funding.

Challenge

The client, Southbank Partners, initially set out to build a pedestrian and bicycle trail along the river. This idea evolved into a grander vision, as reflected in the master plan, to develop a comprehensive system incorporating circulation and gathering spaces for events and outdoor activities. The goal was to enhance the urban core of the region and attract young professionals to the area. A broad support base of community leaders was needed to garner buy-in for the plan. The vision needed to be clearly communicated to public officials at the state and federal levels as well as stakeholders, including local business owners and residents, to benefit from funding opportunities and attract new private-sector investors.

Solution

From master planning and project management to bathymetric surveying and civil, structural, and electrical engineering, Woolpert has played a role in each development stage, including relocating a floating five-star restaurant. Woolpert helped the client obtain funding for a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers feasibility study to explore habitat restoration, riverbank stabilization and flood risk management. The team prepared guidelines to create unified theming and design standards to define the Northern Kentucky waterfront across the project area. In addition to completing the plans and designs for the connective, multiuse trail, Woolpert has assisted the different cities with grant applications for related projects.

CLIENT

Southbank Partners, Inc.

LOCATION

Covington, Newport, Bellevue, Fort Thomas, Ludlow and Dayton, KY

CHALLENGE

Develop comprehensive plan for economic development, circulation and shoreline stabilization

SOLUTION

- Environmental feasibility study
- Theming and design standards
- Trail and open space design
- Grant applications

BENEFITS

- Stabilized riverbank
- New investors and developers
- Additional recreational opportunities

SERVICES

- Planning
- Project management
- Surveying
- Engineering

Outcome

Woolpert continues to assist the client as Riverfront Commons evolves—additional projects are in the works. The transformation of the riverfront features an array of stores and restaurant to complement the greenway corridor. In Covington, the firm has planned and designed a 30,000-square-foot pedestrian and events plaza as well as a 12,000-square-foot gateway plaza with a sloping paved beach for direct water access. Woolpert is also working with a developer on plans to design and build a Skywheel that will tower over the pedestrian plaza in Newport.

Benefits

In addition to stabilizing the shoreline and increasing flood protection, the Riverfront Commons project has led to new residential and commercial developments in the impacted cities. Many residents now use the 15- to 20-foot-wide multiuse trail for exercise and the leisurely spaces for playing and enjoying stunning views of the river. The project has raised the quality of life on both sides of the river, and Southbank Partners has been able to leverage each successful phase to spark additional support and private investment in the communities along the corridor.