

Clearing some misconceptions

River project supporters focus on education

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How to educate more people about the vision and ideas surrounding development along the NorthFork River as it meanders through Norfolk dominated discussion at the meeting of river supporters Tuesday.

"There are just a lot of misconceptions about what we are trying to achieve," said Jim Miller, former mayor of Norfolk who has headed the ad hoc group for over a year.

Commonly referred to as the Riverwalk committee, some board members have argued that such a name helps contrib-

ute to the misconceptions. It is not just an effort to develop a new exercise trail nor to emulate San Antonio's river walk, supporters say.

"This is not just one project," said Stan Staab, executive director of the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District in Norfolk. "It is a series of things that will evolve and develop for years."

Board members have pointed to the economic development potential of land along the river corridor, citing projects

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JOHN STAPPERT
BOARD MEMBER

like the Nucor Detailing center and NPPD Call Center currently under construction on the southern reaches of the corridor.

They also have cited potential recreation and environmental improvements as well as other commercial and residential development potential along the often-ignored resource.

"A LOT OF people have a misconception that we are trying to spend public or city funds to develop projects along there," said John Stappert, a board member.

Rather, the goal is to develop incentives and ideas for private investment. Only a small sliver of funds that will be spent on river development will be public funds, he said.

That is why the group recent-

Design a logo

To help give the North-Fork river development plan a more distinct public image, the committee has announced a contest to select an identifying logo for the process.

Artists, students, designers and others can submit ideas for possible selection as the official identifying logo for the group.

Deadline for entry is Dec. 5.

Contest rules, prizes and other information can be accessed at www.northforkne.com.

ly signed a contract with HDR Consultants of Omaha to draft a master plan and ideas for river development that will work best for Norfolk.

The river group continues to solicit funds for the \$350,000 engineering study, which HDR has agreed to conduct in phases. Funding for the first two phases of the study has been raised and the consultants are working on those documents, which will be available early next year.

An economic development grant application through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development for partial funding for the industry and business analysis phase of the master plan is also being prepared by Tom Higgenbotham of the Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District.

Meanwhile, Miller said he is pleased by the attention and positive comments he has heard following last week's announcement of the HDR contract signing.

Board member Mark Hall said he has been approached recently by a couple of businessmen with access to the river, who have expressed interest in investing in business expansions there and will be investigating river access rules and procedures.

Also at Tuesday's meeting, Hall was elected to head up a steering committee to work with HDR on the drafting of the master plan. He said several community leaders and interested individuals have already volunteered to serve on the committee.