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## Just imagine

NORFOLK — There are not many events in our lives that impact us for years and generations. Getting married, raising children, pursuing a professional vocation are a few of these examples. Could you have imagined in the early 1990s that the Internet and World Wide Web would profoundly impact us in the areas of personal productivity, business development and marketing, to communicating around the globe?

Now is the time for our elected officials as well as private citizens to make an initial investment in the NorthFork Riverwalk Development Project. This unique project has many exciting opportunities since this natural resource can't easily be replicated. The public/private effort will benefit the community and area in many ways, transforming it into a regional destination for recreation, shopping, dining, business operations, living and learning. This economic and community development project will expand the historic downtown corridor and further integrate other culture centers.

The synergistic effect of the project ties together the campus of Nucor's new Detailing Operations Center in the south to the headwaters bounded on the north by the Norfolk Country Club and other city property. In addition the project is considering a method of bringing the trailhead of the nationally recognized Cowboy Trail into downtown Norfolk. The project encompasses over three miles of properties near a water resource that can be regulated like a water spigot and is protected by a multimillion-dollar flood control channel.

Just image yourself as a current or future grandparent walking with your grandchildren on a path next to a river where you stop for a refreshment, learn about the history of the area and experience new technologies for the future, buy a special piece of clothing to commemorate the day, play a round of golf, have a meal "on the water," shop for the next day's meal, take in an evening concert and return home . . . without having to use a car. Imagine the project's capacity to reinvigorate the entrepreneur culture that we are known for while endorsing transformational change that will benefit us in this world of ever accelerating rates of change. Final-

ly, imagine that our NorthFork Riverwalk gives us an opportunity to reverse a trend where our youth will consider establishing their livelihood where they were raised.

I invite Norfolkans to learn more about this investment in our future by visiting the Web site, [www.Visioning2026.com](http://www.Visioning2026.com). Lastly, contact your elected officials and share with them your community vision.

MARK HALL

Riverwalk project board member

## Make or break for river walk

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By LES MANN

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Without the support of the city, any plans for river development in Norfolk will be dead in the water.

That is why Jim Miller, a former Norfolk mayor, is calling next Tuesday's final budget hearing before city council a make-it-or-break-it event for members of the NorthFork Development board.

Miller, who is chairman of the group of community leaders that has been working for more than a year to generate support for river development, said the comments from council members during a presentation before the council's finance committee were positive, but he knows there are many needs in the community and many other interest groups with their hands out.

Yet, in the view of the members of the river development group, development of the water resource through Norfolk might be the best investment for the future of the community.

"If we want economic development, we have to have community development first," city council member Karl

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Reeder told the river development supporters at their meeting Tuesday. He said there are many recreational development needs in the city and a river development concept would be one of the good ones, along with his priorities: Memorial Field improvements and addressing swimming pool needs.

Reeder said he ranks recreational needs, street improvements "and a lot of other things" well above proposed expenditures for new city offices.

In addition, many at Tuesday's meeting joined Reeder in lamenting the long-standing Norfolk boast about having the lowest city property taxes in the state. That's not something to necessarily be proud of, he said, especially when you look around at the state of Norfolk's infrastructure.

J. Paul McIntosh pointed south to Columbus as an example of what reasonable property taxes will allow. "They have an economic machine going down there," he said.

The NorthFork river supporters will be seeking a commitment of \$160,000 from the city in addition to the more than \$50,000 in cash and pledges that has already been raised. River supporters would then use the city's and prior financial commitments to make additional large solicitations for the more than \$350,000 it will take to complete the engineering study and long-range comprehensive plan for development.

"As we go out and ask potential major contributors for additional dollars, these people want to know that the city is on board," said Darrel Novacek, who is heading up the fundraising committee for the river group.

Novacek agreed with Miller that the pending city budget decision would be crucial for the future of river development.