



Redevelopment Ready Communities®

Best Practices

Appendix: Waterfront Communities

Waterfront RRC defined

The purpose of these additional criteria is to provide waterfront communities seeking the Redevelopment Ready Communities® certification specific guidance related to the unique community planning, zoning and site development considerations that stem from being a waterfront community. For the purposes of these best practices, “waterfront communities” are defined as follows:

- Any community with Great Lakes coastline or
- Inland communities that derive significant economic development or tourism from their water bodies (inland lakes or rivers)

All Great Lakes coastal communities that are seeking RRC certification are required to meet these waterfront-specific evaluation criteria and obtain Waterfront RRC certification. Inland communities with lakes or rivers may choose whether or not to obtain the additional Waterfront RRC certification.

In addition to the Waterfront best practices outlined below, a companion document, “Waterfront Planning Toolkit and Guidelines,” is available with the Waterfront Communities Training Program to supplement these criteria with more detail on how to plan for waterfront development.

Waterfront Supplemental Best Practices

1.1—The Plans

Waterfront planning may occur through a variety of plans, including a special section in the overall master plan or a separately adopted waterfront, parks and recreation, public access, or redevelopment plan.

Evaluation criteria	Expectations
The governing body has adopted a master plan in the past five years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The master plan includes specific recommendations related to uses, activities or improvements associated with the waterfront and/or • A separate waterfront subarea plan has been adopted as part of the master plan or a downtown development plan.
The master plan identifies a strategy for redevelopment or a redevelopment plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The master plan (or waterfront plan) includes a description of assets, identifies areas or sites to enhance or redevelop, and describes land use or design concepts with specific targeted strategies and financing options to initiate that change.
The governing body has adopted a capital improvements plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CIP outlines specific funding opportunities to improve waterfront infrastructure, recreation facilities, and habitat value. • The master plan or waterfront plan identifies physical or capital improvements to support implementation of the plan including a description, timing, and potential funding. Where applicable, such projects shall have general support of the key agencies that would need to approve the project, or be based on their typical standards.
The governing body has adopted a downtown development plan, if applicable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The downtown development plan outlines opportunities to increase access, activity level, and development on the waterfront.
The governing body has adopted a special section in other plans on the waterfront or a separate waterfront subarea plan, if applicable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The waterfront plan has established boundaries of the development area. • The waterfront plan recognizes unique environmental assets and issues and acknowledges prior related agency plans. • The waterfront plan identifies any portions of the development area to be left as open or gathering spaces, and any potential and existing non-motorized links to recreational resources and the downtown/community center. • The waterfront plan considers any uses related to the waterfront including boating, restaurants, specialty retail, offices, corporate office, higher education institutions, residential, and mixture of above in a building. • If published separately, the waterfront plan coordinates with the master plan, redevelopment strategy/plan, downtown/DDA plan, public access plan, community recreation plan, and capital improvement plan. • The waterfront plan is accessible online. • The waterfront plan addresses tourism and economic development strategies. • The waterfront plan identifies current public access and how it can be improved. • The waterfront plan identifies potential use of the water for providing publically accessible and individual forms of transit. • The waterfront plan addresses greenway connections to regional trail networks and blueway linkages (water trails) between nearby waterfront communities.

Waterfront Supplemental Best Practices

2.1—Zoning Regulations

Zoning is a key tool to implement recommendations from the master plan. By providing waterfront-specific regulations, the zoning ordinance can help accomplish goals set forth during the planning process.

Evaluation criteria	Expectations
<p>The zoning ordinance includes a form-based, overlay, or PUD districts specifically geared to waterfront districts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoning permits uses that take advantage of waterfront location and does not permit or make non-conforming uses that are in conflict with the desired types of waterfront uses in the vicinity. • The districts consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Regulations for docks, piers, boat storage * Waterfront-sensitive height, sight lines, view protection requirements * Waterfront setbacks for buildings and parking lots * Incentives for public access easements where a plan identifies a need * Low-impact design stormwater approach where applicable * Allowance for an appropriate mixture of uses • The zoning ordinance meets the requirements of the state’s environmental statutes whereby the municipality assumes local administration of certain state regulations and permitting, if applicable.

Waterfront Supplemental Best Practices

3.2— Guide to Development

Waterfront development can be more complicated than traditional inland development because of additional permitting often required by outside agencies.

Evaluation criteria	Expectations
A “Guide to Development” is maintained online that explains policies, procedures and steps to obtain approvals.	The guide includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guidance for any special standards or regulations on operations or activities along the shoreline or in any special waterfront overlay district, including state and federal permitting requirements and procedures.

Waterfront Supplemental Best Practices

5.1—Redevelopment Ready Sites®

Waterfront properties come with their own unique development challenges that can become obstacles to redevelopment. A community can provide resources to help developers overcome those challenges.

Evaluation criteria	Expectations
A “Property Information Package” for the prioritized redevelopment site(s) is assembled.	The “Property Information Package” includes or identifies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Historic shoreline maps• Soil and slope conditions and maps• Resources for working with regulatory and resource agencies and organizations.

Waterfront Supplemental Best Practices

6.1—Economic Development Strategy

Balancing historic industrial land use patterns with tourism, residences, and public access are especially key in a waterfront-related economic development strategy.

Evaluation criteria	Expectations
The governing body has approved an economic development strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The economic development strategy provides guidance for retaining or changing land uses along the waterfront.

Waterfront Supplemental Best Practices

6.2—Marketing and Promotion

Marketing is especially important in waterfront communities to fully take advantage of their unique assets and economic development opportunities.

Evaluation criteria	Expectations
The community has developed a marketing strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The marketing strategy specifically addresses waterfront redevelopment site opportunities.• The marketing strategy is coordinated with other communities in the region to mutually promote tourism and economic development.