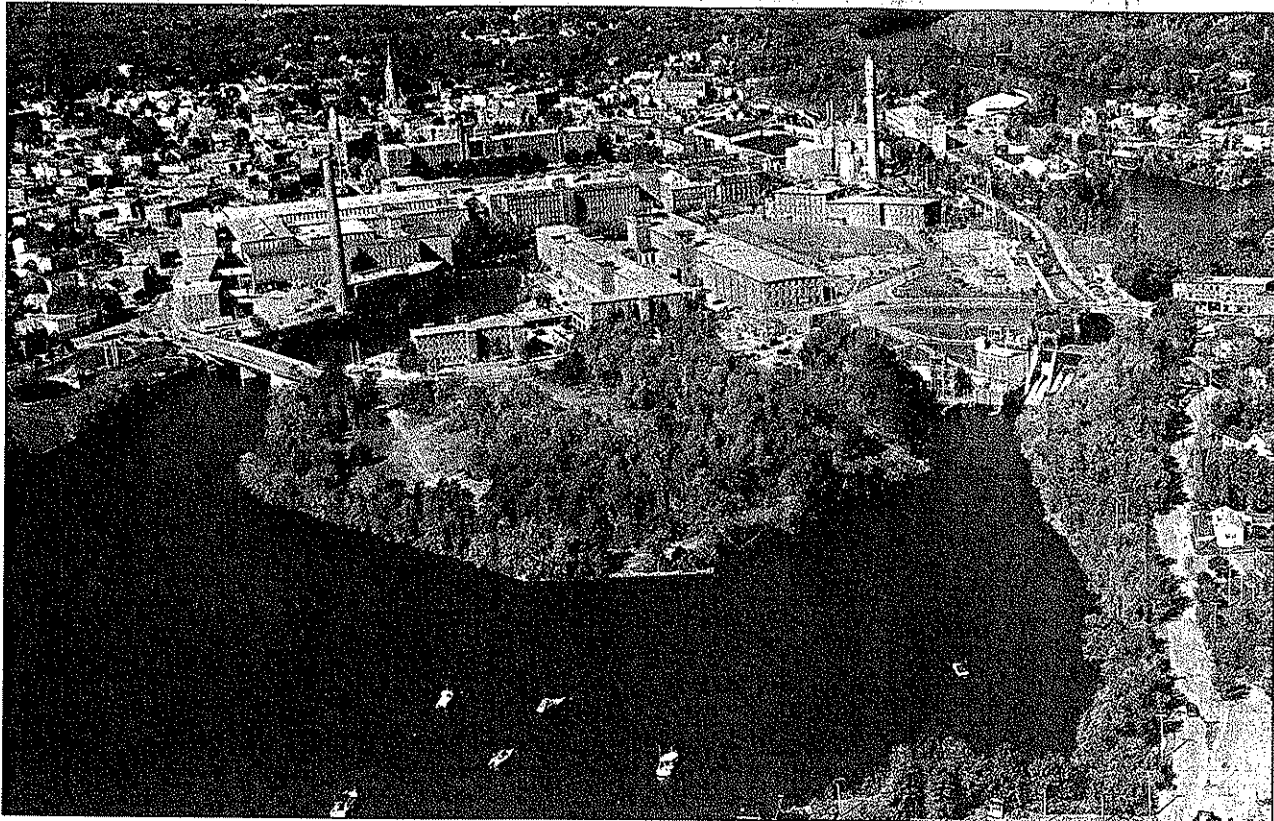


## BIDDEFORD'S WATERFRONT VISION

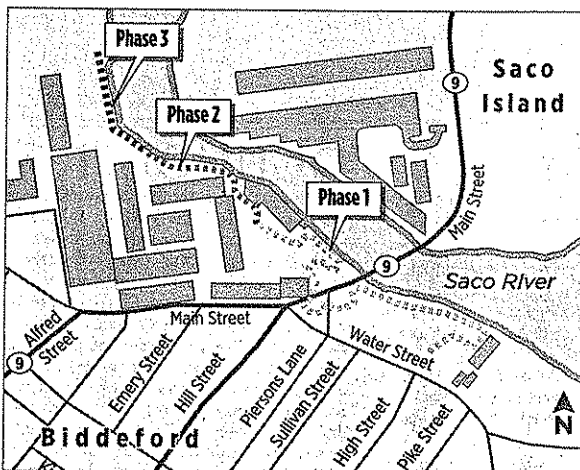


2006 Press Herald file photo

The Biddeford RiverWalk, planned to run along the Saco River and past mill buildings, above, will ultimately connect a park and a city-owned lot. A \$500,000 grant will fund the design of the first three phases and the construction of the first phase.

# A walk along the Saco

### Proposed Biddeford River Walk



SOURCE: City of Biddeford

STAFF GRAPHIC | MICHAEL FISHER

Plans call for the Biddeford river walk to eventually connect to the East Coast Greenway.

By ANN S. KIM  
Staff Writer

Work may begin this fall on the first part of a river walk that's planned in downtown Biddeford.

The river walk would run along the Saco River and past mill buildings. The route would ultimately connect Mechanics Park and the city-owned Diamond Match parcel, which is envisioned as an urban park.

"We look at this as a real catalyst for redevelopment," said City Planner Greg Tansley. "There's strong interest in how this is going to play out."

City officials and the Biddeford RiverWalk Coalition were scheduled to introduce the plans to the public Wednesday night. As the process moves forward, public input will be

sought on various aspects, from materials and lighting to public art and pocket parks.

The project has already secured a \$500,000 state grant through the Riverfront Community Development Bond program. That money is expected to pay for the design of the first three phases and the construction of the first phase.

The first phase calls for repairing a retaining wall and building a walk between the Water Street parking lot and the entrance to the North Dam Mill. The hope is to stabilize and fix the wall, part of North Dam, this fall before spring flooding damages it further, said Tansley.

The second section of the river walk would begin at the North Dam Mill and end at the opposite property line. That section would involve going through one of the buildings or creat-

Please see **WALK**, Page B4

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# WALK

Continued from Page B1

ing a cantilevered section of the walk off the building. Possibilities have been discussed with the property's owner.

The third section would extend the river walk to a building that will be demolished to make way for the Mills at Saco Falls, a work force housing project. A plaza is planned at the end point.

The walk would be for cyclists and pedestrians. Some alternate routes may be created in areas where the terrain isn't suitable for cyclists and the disabled.

In all, the three sections would be a little more than a third of a mile long. The long-term vision for the river walk includes connections to other neighborhoods, to Saco and to other trail systems, including Saco Bay Trails and the Eastern Trail – an effort to link South Portland to

Kittery and ultimately be part of the East Coast Greenway, stretching from Calais to Key West, Fla.

"It's this unique siting of a trail system that hooks up to local, regional and national trails, which is very cool," said Alix Hopkins, director of the Biddeford River-Walk Coalition.

The group has chosen the Wright-Pierce engineering firm to design the first three phases and Richardson & Associates as the landscape architect.

The group will explore funding options for the later phases of construction.

It will also seek partners that want to be involved in the river walk and its role in downtown revitalization. Hopkins can envision possibilities such as outdoor cafes, festivals and other amenities.

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