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PRESS RELEASE

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Sternberg estate endows river edge development in Wausau

The late Lawrence and Jane Sternberg believed in the importance of the Wisconsin River edge to the growth and development of downtown Wausau. Their vision for the future, their determination to leave a legacy to support that vision, and their generosity has now come full circle.

A \$1 million bequest from the Lawrence and Jane Sternberg estate will be added to the already established Lawrence and Jane Sternberg River Edge Development Fund at the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin, intended to provide for the development, enhancement, and beautification of the Wisconsin River edge in Wausau.

“This is exciting news for the City of Wausau,” Mayor Jim Tipple said. “This monumental gift will make it possible for us to complete the downtown loop of the River Edge Parkway from Scott Street and Stewart Avenue to the Bridge Street Bridge. It will enhance the river edge and increase the focus on the resources that make our community special.”

“This is the largest estate gift we have received in our 20 year history,” noted Linda Prehn, president, Community Foundation board of directors. “We take our stewardship responsibility very seriously. We are honored to play a significant role in the shaping of our beautiful natural resources and in realizing this vision for the Sternbergs and their heirs.”

Phil Valitchka, chairman, City of Wausau River Edge Commission, understands the importance and complexity of this project. “We have been fitting together the pieces for the downtown loop since the mid 1990s. There have been many technical conversations to plan it and diplomatic missions to secure easements for public access. The Sternbergs are making it possible for us to complete this unique feature of the Parkway with a beautified natural edge, a recreational trail and a timely transportation alternative in the business district,” he said.

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“This is a dream-come-true gift for the people of Wausau. Through it, we can all enjoy the unique value the Wisconsin River contributes to the place we live. Jane Sternberg saw this as a founding member of the River Edge Commission in the 1970s. We are deeply grateful to the Sternberg’s for their vision, generosity, and commitment to our community. Their legacy will always be special for us,” Valitchka said.

Peter Knotek, assistant director, Wausau and Marathon County Park Department, said the gift enables the City to focus and prioritize downtown Parkway development and accelerate the timeline to complete it. “Developing the River Edge Parkway has always been a cooperative effort among city departments. We are excited about our role in designing and managing this effort.”

The Sternbergs lived several houses away from Jean Tehan, executive director of the Community Foundation. She remembers conversations with them about their dreams for river edge development and their legacy intentions. “I didn’t know the significance of the amount they were thinking. This is wonderful. My commitment to them goes beyond the signed documents outlining the Foundation’s responsibilities. They were my neighbors and friends. It is a welcomed personal obligation for me to make sure their wishes are fulfilled,” Tehan said.

The Sternberg’s children, Ben and Nancy, have been participating in discussions to ensure their parents’ dream of a beautified river edge in the downtown area will be realized. “Their input has been essential to the process,” stated Tehan.

The Community Foundation board has been entrusted by the Sternbergs with the responsibility of assessing needs, and monitoring progress and results of river edge development efforts.

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