TACONITE HARBOR

AREA CHARACTER ANALYSIS:
Taconite Harbor has served for many years as a major iron ore facility on the North Shore. The harbor, the massive loading dock, and the railroad line are landmark structures that remind the visitor of the important role that the mining industry has played on the North Shore. Currently Minnesota Power Company has a power plant and owns a large tract of land at Taconite Harbor. The company is exploring development opportunities for its land and is entertaining the potential of ceding some land by Two Island River to the State for public use. Recently public access to Lake Superior has been provided at Taconite Harbor; a safe harbor and a boat launch have been built by the State of Minnesota.

DESCRIPTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS:
Two Island River
Railroad bridge at Hwy. 61
Proposed village site
Taconite ore dock facility

TACONITE HARBOR: OBLIQUE VIEWS

THE VILLAGE CENTER SITE FROM LAKE SUPERIOR
EXISTING BOAT LAUNCH
ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS:

Taconite Harbor is the best example of the industrialized landscape on the North Shore. The drawing shows the nature of the human interventions that created this landscape. The elements include the:

- Massive ore dock facility,
- Manmade harbor with its sea walls,
- Power plant,
- Utility corridor, and
- Rail line with its "s" curve that dominates the landscape as it crosses Highway 61 three times while moving down the slope to the harbor below.

TWO ISLAND RIVER:

This scenic river:

- Bisects the Taconite Harbor Area.
- Flows into Lake Superior at the harbor just east of the boat launch and the safe harbor, and
- Has a very picturesque and unique inland waterfall.
RAIL LINE
"S" CURVE
SAFE HARBOR
FORMER SETTLEMENT
NSSD HWY.61
PROPOSED VILLAGE SITE
ORE DOCK FACILITY
POWER PLANT
POWER LINES
TWO ISLAND RIVER
PROPOSED
VILLAGE SITE
SAFE HARBOR
FORMER SETTLEMENT
THE VILLAGE CENTER PLAN:
Minnesota Power has preliminary plans to develop the area along the shore of Lake Superior west and south of the harbor for residential and commercial use. The plans incorporate the Gitchi-Gami Trail as a spine or armature from which the new Taconite Harbor Village will be organized. The plans were originally produced by Whorley Architects of Duluth and revised by the design team at the Center for Changing Landscapes. It suggests that the commercial development be grouped in a village center, creating an environment like those seen in Scandinavian coastal settlements. The design provides a scheme which seeks to capitalize on the development’s proximity to the Gitchi-Gami Trail and the North Shore Scenic Drive and to create a sense of place for the new community. The trail plays an important role in the center. The village center includes:

Marking the entrance on Highway 61 with a North Shore Scenic Drive cairn gate,
Bisecting the village center with the Gitchi-Gami Trail,
Making a paved village square that accommodates a variety of buildings,
Bounding the center with large parking lots on both its west and the east edges,
Using native North Shore plants and trees, and
Creating water features that treat storm water runoff.

The buildings at the village center include:

The Sawtooth Center as the focal point, and
Retail, office, restaurant, gas station, and a community center sited between the Gitch-Gami Trail and the parking lots.
DESIGN DETAILS:
A new village is created on the north shore of Lake Superior taking precedent from Scandinavian coastal settlements. This pedestrian-oriented design encourages social interaction. The village is carved out of the natural landscape and built around recreational infrastructures to create a “green” corridor from lake shore to Hwy 61. Designed for access to multiple amenities, the new village embodies the North Shore experience and serves as a model for community building. The village center details include:

- Bicycle racks of timber and steel,
- A storm water feature of local stone and native plants,
- Paved surfaces that define the village square,
- A timber village tower,
- Building massing and details that reflect the North Shore’s Scandinavian heritage, and
- Building materials that reflect North Shore’s timber and steel industries.
GITCHI-GAMI TRAIL SIGNATURE DETAILS:
A number of signature elements were designed to give identity to the Gitch-Gami Trail as it winds its way along the North Shore.

SIGNATURE KIOSK:
The trail kiosk is to be used at trailheads. It is made of timber and steel, two materials that have played important roles in the economy of the North Shore. Its concrete base is embedded with local stone, a material that is found all along the shore. The kiosk is designed to:

- Reflect the form of Scandinavian inspired coastal settlement buildings,
- Display the features of the larger landscape found at its location, and
- Enable both region and local interpretative material to be displayed.

NORTH SHORE SCENIC DRIVE SIGNATURE CAIRN:
This cairn is the identifying object for the North Shore Scenic Drive. It reflects the importance of rocks in the North Shore landscape and can be used to mark important public places along the shore. At Taconite Harbor two cairns flank the entrance road to the village center.

GITCHI-GAMI TRAIL SIGNS:
Two signs of timber and steel were designed for use along the trail. The larger sign may be used for a map or for interpretative materials at places of special interest. The smaller sign is for the Gitchi-Gami Trail logo and may be used periodically to identify the trail.