

Buchanan **St Joseph River** Waterfront

MASTER PLAN

PREPARED FOR THE CITY OF BUCHANAN
FEBRUARY 2024 BY ABONMARCHE



Acknowledgments:

Thank you to the many residents that participated in the process and provided the valuable input and guidance for the development of this plan.

We would like to recognize the efforts of the Buchanan Waterfront Master Plan Steering Committee. These volunteers spent many hours reviewing, commenting and providing guidance through this process. This plan could not have been developed without their leadership.

Steering Committee:

Jerry Flenar
Micheal Rowland
Jeanne Harris
Frieda Hughes
Fran Tuite
Phil Thorton
George Burgoyne

Mayor Sean Denison, City of Buchanan
Ashley Regal, City of Buchanan
Richard Murphy, Community Development, City of Buchanan

A special thanks to the AEP Foundation for providing the funds to undertake this project

Additional consultation was provided by:

Andrews University, Professor Andrew von Maur, and the Andrews University Design Studio students that prepared the “A Vision for Buchanan” Plan. Their work along with the community input gathered during that process inspired the work done in this plan.



303 River Race Drive
Goshen, Indiana 46526
574-891-0641

Project #23-0355

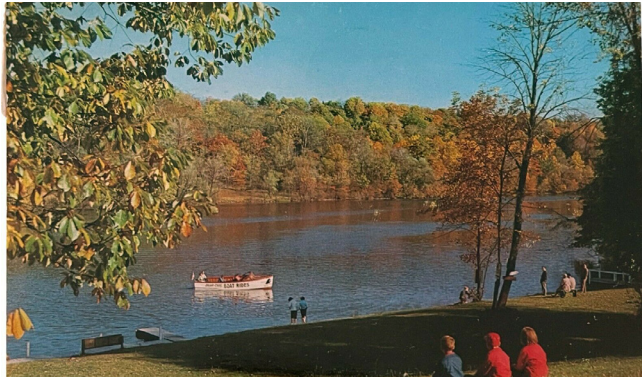
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Appendix: Survey results, promotional materials for workshop
and draft master plan designs

Introduction

Water is the reason Buchanan exists. Over a thousand years ago, the thriving Potawatomi people inhabited the banks of the St. Joseph River. Later in the 1800's, Buchanan was an early, beautiful mill town that relied on tributaries of the St. Joseph River including McCoy's Creek to produce flour. In more recent times, Clark Manufacturing put Buchanan on the global map making axles for tanks and heavy machinery. Throughout the 20th Century, Buchanan was a key player in the most successful industrial corridors on the planet. Life was very good.



In 1983, Clark Manufacturing and their approximately 3,500 jobs abruptly left Buchanan due to globalization. Times were very tough, and the City has been trying to find their way ever since. Now Buchanan is amidst an economic comeback, and is doubling down on access and enjoyment of precious natural resources, the St. Joseph River, the adjacent wilderness, and public access areas. This investment in quality of life and in the community's special relationship with nature will benefit generations to come. Throughout its history, residents and visitors have experienced Buchanan through the community's natural water resources. The City has a culture built around the water. A big part of the Buchanan comeback story is to get back to that era by building better connections to the water.

Today, the City of Buchanan owns approximately 20 acres and roughly 2,000 linear feet of shoreline as public access on the St. Joseph River called Buchanan Riverfront Park. To further its goal of revitalizing the city, local leaders and the community has come together in an effort to leverage the underutilized water assets and have a vision to reestablish this primal connection to public access areas and waterways to provide more opportunities for human interaction with nature.

The study area is illustrated in the map on the next page. It shows the property owned by the City of Buchanan but also the privately owned parcel between the City's Landing and the Bluffs and the property owned by American Electric Power (AEP). The City of Buchanan has partnered with the AEP Foundation and Abonmarche Consultants to create the vision for this approximately 50-acre area to achieve the community's desire to reconnect to the St. Joseph River.

The project vision is the creation of a Buchanan waterfront experience that is reminiscent of that felt within our national parks, but on a smaller scale. It will serve as a model to other waterfront towns in Michigan and the region that can be replicated, resulting in aggregate benefits to inland riverfront communities as well as to our coastal communities. The City of Buchanan, just 15 miles upstream from Lake Michigan, can become a model to many other inland Michigan riverfront communities that could choose to embrace a similar effort to restore, protect, and reengage with their waterfronts.

It is the intent of this Master Plan to outline a strategy to assist the City of Buchanan in achieving its overall goal of providing a higher quality of life, and improved health and wellness, while creating new economic opportunities surrounding this enhanced community asset.

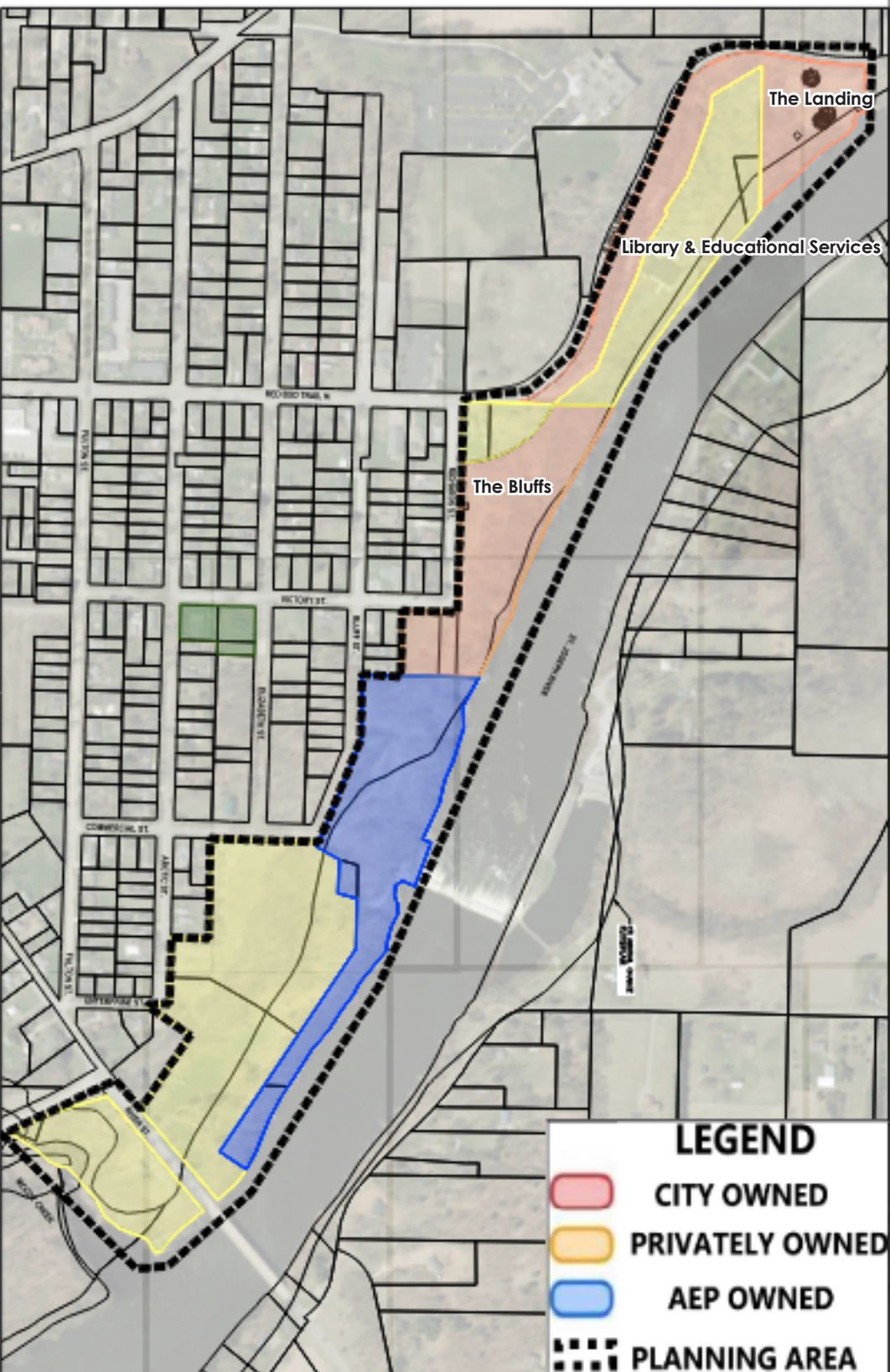
Project Overview

The purpose of the Buchanan Waterfront Master Plan is to assist in the community's goal of making Buchanan a riverfront city again by bringing back the river culture that the City was built upon. This project furthers that goal by providing two plans for how the area could be re-imagined and revitalized to create a safe, attractive and functional asset for the community. The planning process provided the opportunity for the City of Buchanan, in partnership with residents, local organizations, property owners, and outdoor advocates to investigate ways to leverage the approximately the 50-acres of land along the St. Joseph River in this section of Buchanan. The process started with a few overarching objectives of creating a Master Plan that:

- Reestablishes the connectivity to the water by creating better and safe pedestrian access to the river and surrounding natural areas by building a trail system and vista areas.
- Creates an enhanced experience for recreational activities including fishing, kayaking, boat access, river cruising, interpretive signage, etc.
- Safeguards the local ecosystems and shoreline along the St. Joseph River.
- Upgrades the existing public boat ramp and park area on River Front Drive (referred to as the Landing) to better serve the community through improved public access to the river, an accessible kayak launch, and more opportunities for human interaction with nature.
- Provides for adequate stormwater management.
- Respects and protects cultural and historical assets in the area.
- Connects the approximately 20-acres and roughly 2,000 linear feet of shoreline owned by the City of Buchanan to improve access and connectivity between the Landing and the Bluffs. These areas are identified in red on the project area map on page 8.
- Is consistent with the goals of "A Vision for Buchanan" and reinforces the Buchanan Brand.
- Establishes pedestrian connectivity to Downtown Buchanan, the surrounding neighborhoods, and the regional trail network.

The following two Master Plan design options are a result of the collaborative efforts of the members of the Buchanan Waterfront Master Plan Steering Committee and the residents and stakeholders of the City of Buchanan with technical support and assistance from Abonmarche Consultants. The following report provides a summary of the process and iterative nature of this project. The appendices to this document provide all of the process drawings, survey data, and public engagement materials.





LEGEND

- CITY OWNED
- PRIVATELY OWNED
- AEP OWNED
- PLANNING AREA

- NOTE:**
1. EXISTING HORIZONTAL DATA IN REFERENCE TO NAD83 MICHIGAN STATE PLANE, SOUTH ZONE, US FOOT.
 2. EXISTING VERTICAL DATUM IS NAVD83
 3. ALL PLANS ARE BASED OFF LIDAR SURFACE, LIDAR DATA SURVEYED IN 2015.
 4. AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH IS PROPERTY OF GOOGLE EARTH, DATED (03/19/2019).

ABONMARCHE

93 W Main Street
Benton Harbor, MI 49022
T 269 927 2295
F 269 927 1017
abonmarche.com

South Bend
Gordon
Valkenburg
Hickert
R. Wojciechowski
Loftholme

Benton Harbor
Gordon
Valkenburg
Hickert
R. Wojciechowski
Loftholme

PREPARED FOR:
**BUCHANAN WATERFRONT
MASTER PLAN**

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SCALE: 1"=600'
JOB #: 23-0355
SHEET 1 OF 1

Project Process

The Buchanan Waterfront Master Plan was developed in consultation with community stakeholders through the 7 step process outlined below.



Buchanan Waterfront Master Plan

From the project purpose statement, guidance from the Buchanan Waterfront Master Plan Steering Committee, and feedback received during the public engagement process, the following key design principles and features were identified for the Waterfront Master Plan.

Design Principles

- Retain and protect the natural feeling of the area
- Safeguard the local ecosystems and shoreline along the St. Joseph River
- Respect and protect cultural and historical assets in the area
- Be kid/family/age/ability friendly
- Provide access and facilities for all water sports (motor and non-motorized)
- Reestablish the connectivity to the river by creating better and safe pedestrian access to the river and surrounding natural areas
- Create an enhanced experience for recreational activities including fishing, kayaking, boat access, river cruising, interpretive signage, etc.
- Must be consistent with the goals of "A Vision for Buchanan" and reinforce the Buchanan Brand.

Design Features

- Upgrade the existing boat launch and park area (referred to as the Landing) to better serve the community through accessible public access to the river, a handicap accessible kayak launch, and more opportunities for human interaction with nature
- Provide for adequate stormwater management
- Improve access and connectivity between the Landing and the Bluffs
- Establish pedestrian connection from the area to Downtown Buchanan, the surrounding neighborhoods, and the regional trail network
- Develop a trail in the woods including overlooks and an elevated boardwalk. Established trails can help reduce erosion and protect this sensitive area.
- Explore the opportunity for a community boat house
- Promote use of low-impact construction techniques
- Improve general maintenance
- Include a restroom
- Address safety issues

Inspiration Images



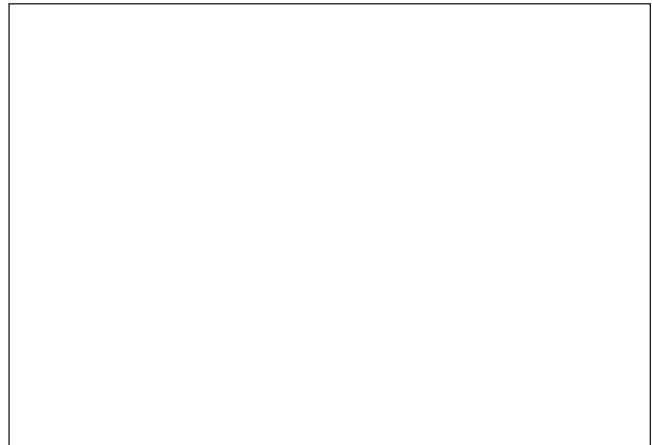
When preparing the Master Plan options, it was decided that:

- The existing restroom on the Bluff should be removed and a new facility provided at the Landing.
- Equestrian and mountain bike trail uses were not acceptable due to the steep slopes and potential erosion risk and that those uses would be better provided on the McCoy Creek Trail.

Some identified site constraints included:

- Trail and access details will be impacted by the steep slopes in the area
- The access road is in very poor condition and is too narrow to accommodate vehicle traffic and pedestrians safely and comfortably.
- The Landing area and access road were not designed to manage stormwater and this contributes to condition issues.
- There is limited parking at the Landing due to the current size of the property.
- A second drive into the Landing from Red Bud Trail would be beneficial, but limited space and grade changes will make this challenging.
- Construction and maintenance cost will need to be considered when designing the Master Plan.

Existing Conditions



Master Plan Option 1

This plan option focuses on key design principals and provides many of the key features and amenities identified during the process. The large scale drawing includes the overall plan with two areas (The Landing and The Bluffs and Richard Street) highlighted and enlarged. These same areas are included in more detail on pages 11 and 12.

Overall Master Plan

- Identifies proposed locations for wayfinding, directional, and monument signage
- Identifies a proposed new entry and exit configuration for the Launch
- Identifies potential private development sites at the Library and Educational Services Building on River Front Drive (referred to by some as the Former Smitty's Mariana) and along Redbud Trail
- Identifies connection to McCoy Creek multi-use trail through Northside neighborhood via sharrows and sidewalks
- Identifies connection to Downtown via Redbud Trail
- Identifies potential riverfront multi-use trail connection along public and private property
- Identifies possible easement for connection to Riverfront Park
- Identifies potential trail routes on the existing AEP owned parcel (shown as green dashed line)
- Bike paths/shared use trails, sharrow on access road - I

The Landing

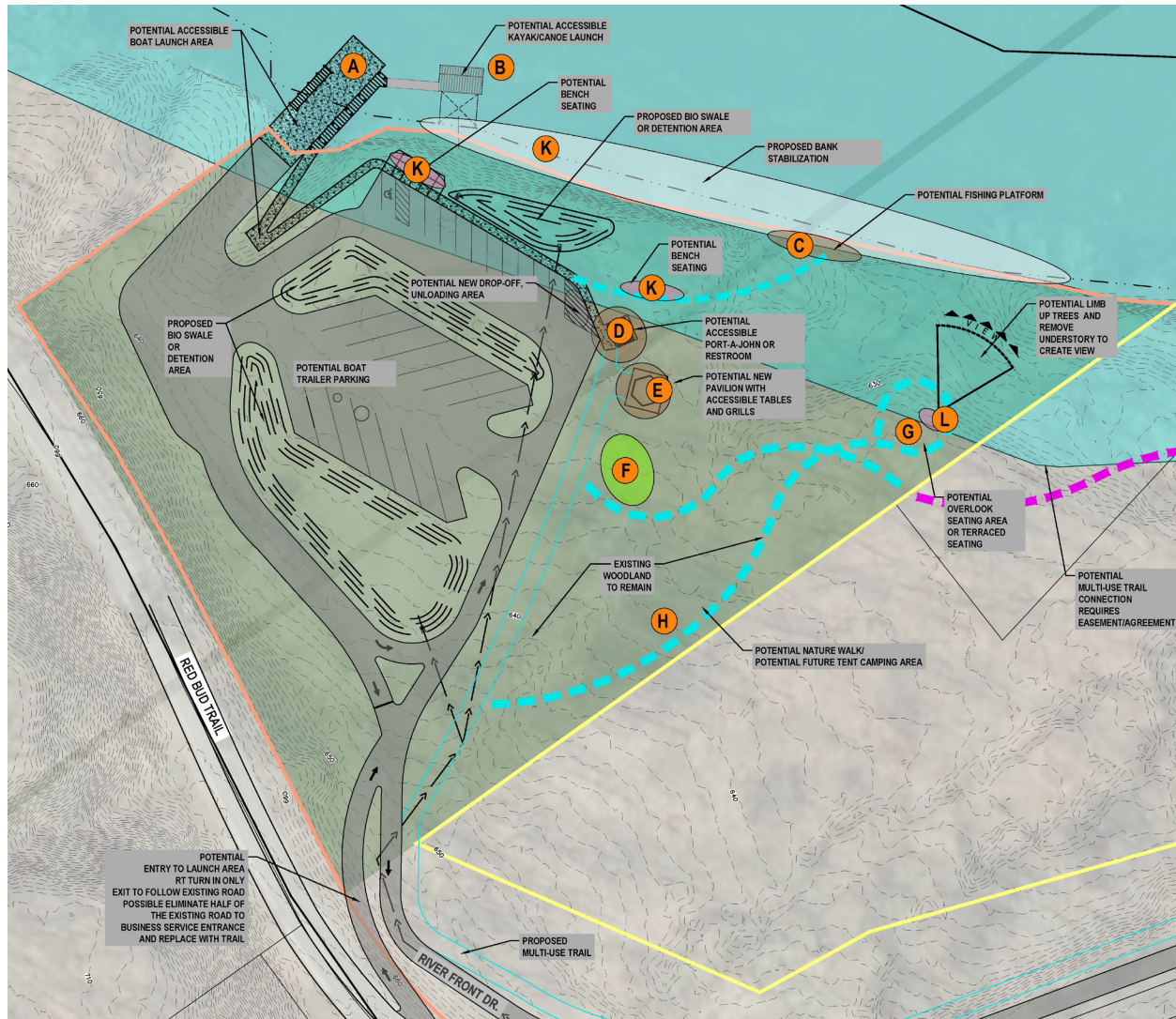
- Upgraded boat launch - A
- Accessible kayak/canoe launch - B
- Fishing platform, waterfront dock, steppers, boardwalk - C
- Restroom - D
- Picnic Pavilion - E
- Nature play area- F
- Overlook seating, amphitheater, terraced seating area - G
- Nature trail - H
- Riverfront seating, companion seating, and riverfront with bank stabilization - K
- Preserve trees while removing understory shrubs and limbing up trees to create view shed and vista - L

The Bluffs and Richard Street

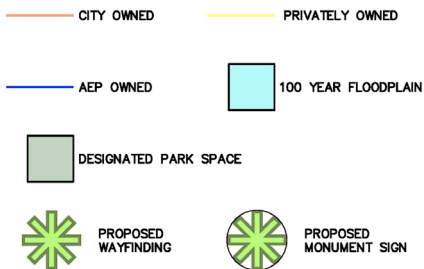
- Overlook seating, amphitheater, terraced seating area - G
- Bike paths/shared use trails, sharrow on road and pedestrians on sidewalks - I
- Boardwalk along the riverfront, slopes along the Bluffs with switchbacks - J
- Riverfront seating, companion seating, and riverfront with bank stabilization - K
- Preserve trees while removing understory shrubs and limbing up trees to create view shed and vista - L
- Roadway improvements on access drive - M
- Council Ring - N

Photo examples of the numbered amenities that could be incorporated into the final design for the area are provided on page 13.

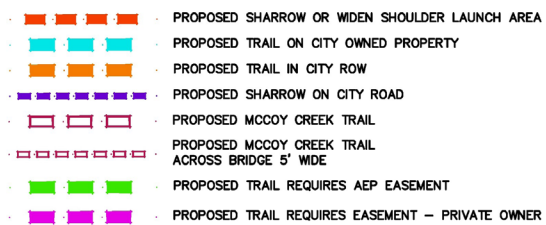
Enlarged Landing Area - Option 1



LEGEND



TRAIL LEGEND

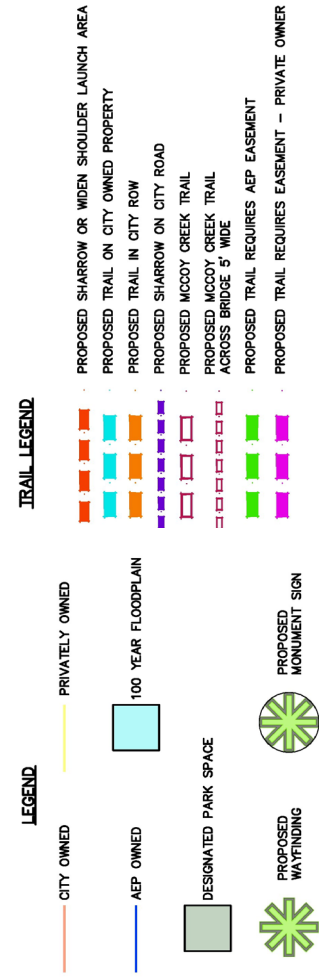


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- Riverfront seating, companion seating, and riverfront with bank stabilization - K
- Preserve trees while removing understory shrubs and limbing up trees to create view shed and vista - L

Enlarged Bluff and Richards Street Area - Option 1



- Bike paths/shared use trails, sharrow on road and pedestrians on sidewalks - I
- Boardwalk along the riverfront, slopes along the Bluff with switchbacks - J
- Riverfront seating, companion seating, and riverfront with bank stabilization - K
- Preserve trees while removing understory shrubs and limbing up trees to create a view shed and vista - L
- Roadway improvements on access drive - M
- Council Ring - N
- Identifies proposed locations for wayfinding, directional, and monument signage
- Identifies a proposed new entry and exit configuration for the Launch
- Identifies potential private development sites along river and Redbud Trail
- Identifies connection to McCoy Creek multi-use trail through Northside neighborhood via sharrows and sidewalks
- Identifies connection to Downtown via Redbud Trail



Potential Amenities Examples - Option 1



A BOAT LAUNCH EXAMPLES



B ACCESSIBLE KAYAK/CANOE LAUNCH EXAMPLES



C FISHING PLATFORM/WATERFRONT DOCK/ STEPPERS BOARDWALK EXAMPLES



D PORTA-JOHN AND RESTROOM EXAMPLES



E PICNIC PAVILION EXAMPLE



F NATURE PLAY EXAMPLES



G OVERLOOK SEATING, AMPHITHEATER TERRACED SEATING EXAMPLES



H NATURE TRAIL EXAMPLES



I BIKE PATHS/SHARED USE TRAILS, SHARROW ON ROAD-PEDESTRIANS ON SIDEWALK EXAMPLES



J BOARDWALK ALONG RIVERFRONT, SLOPED ALONG BLUFF WITH SWITCHBACKS, AND ELEVATED OBSERVATION AND VIEWING PLATFORM EXAMPLES



K RIVERFRONT SEATING, COMPANION SEATING AND RIVERFRONT WALKWAY WITH STABILIZATION EXAMPLES



L REMOVE UNDERSTORY AND LIMB UP TREES TO CREATE VIEW SHED AND VISTA EXAMPLE IMAGES



M ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS FOR DRAINAGE EXAMPLE



N COUNCIL RING FIREPIT EXAMPLES

Master Plan Option 2

In addition to all of the features listed in Option 1, Option 2 identifies potential private development on the former Smitty's Marina site (located between the Landing and Bluffs outlined in yellow). Some of the discussion included a potential mixed-use development including a community rowing facility, restaurant, coffee shop, community gathering space, event center, and others. The second drive into the site is also eliminated in this design to accommodate a multi-use trail the entire length of the access road as opposed to the sharrow shown on Option 1. This project will need to be a collaborative effort with the private property owner and local advocates. This concept is discussed in the Next Steps section on page 36.

The large scale drawing includes the overall plan with two areas (The Landing and The Bluffs and Richard Street) highlighted and enlarged. These same areas are included in more detail on pages 15 and 16.

Overall Master Plan

- Identifies proposed locations for wayfinding, directional, and monument signage
- Identifies a proposed new entry and exit configuration for the Launch
- Identifies potential private development sites at the Library and Educational Services Building on River Front Drive (referred to by some as the Former Smitty's Mariana) and along Redbud Trail
- Identifies connection to McCoy Creek multi-use trail through Northside neighborhood via sharrows and sidewalks
- Identifies connection to Downtown via Redbud Trail
- Identifies potential riverfront multi-use trail connection along public and private property
- Identifies potential trail routes on the existing AEP owned parcel (shown as green dashed line)
- Identifies possible easement for connection to Riverfront Park
- ☼ Bike paths/ multi use trail along the road and one way traffic on landing drive exit only- I
- ☼ Additional roadway improvements that might be needed for improved community use of the former Mariana site along access drive - M

The Landing

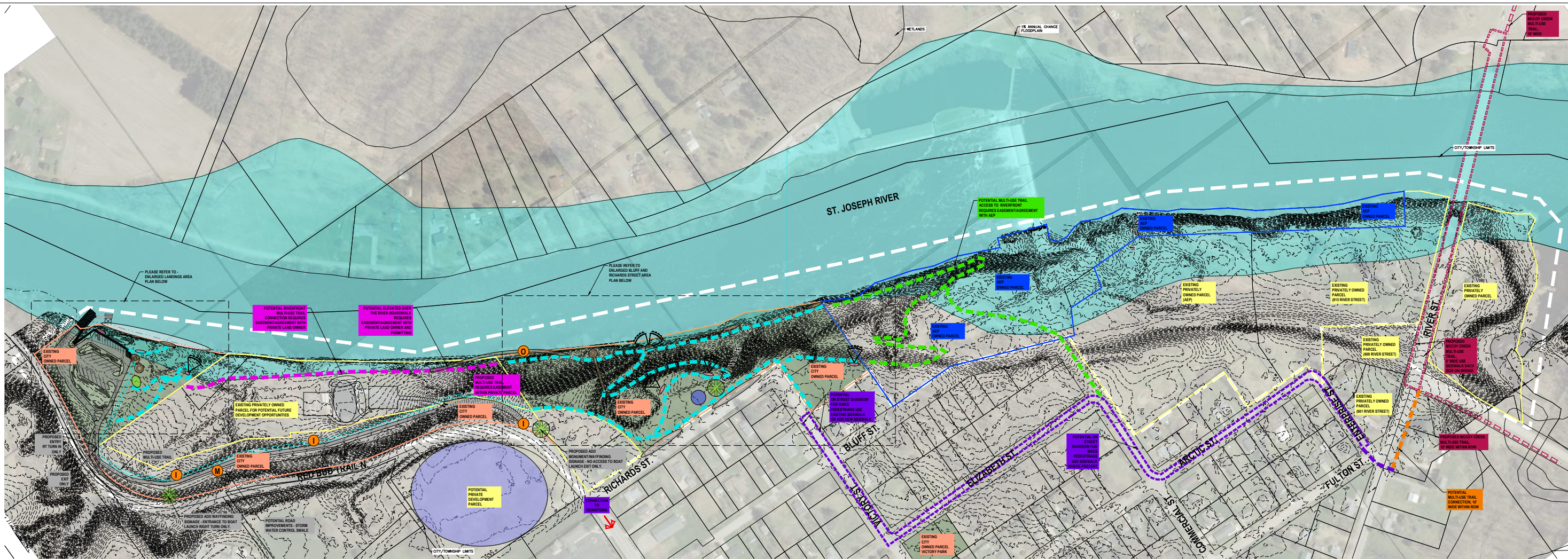
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The Bluffs and Richard Street

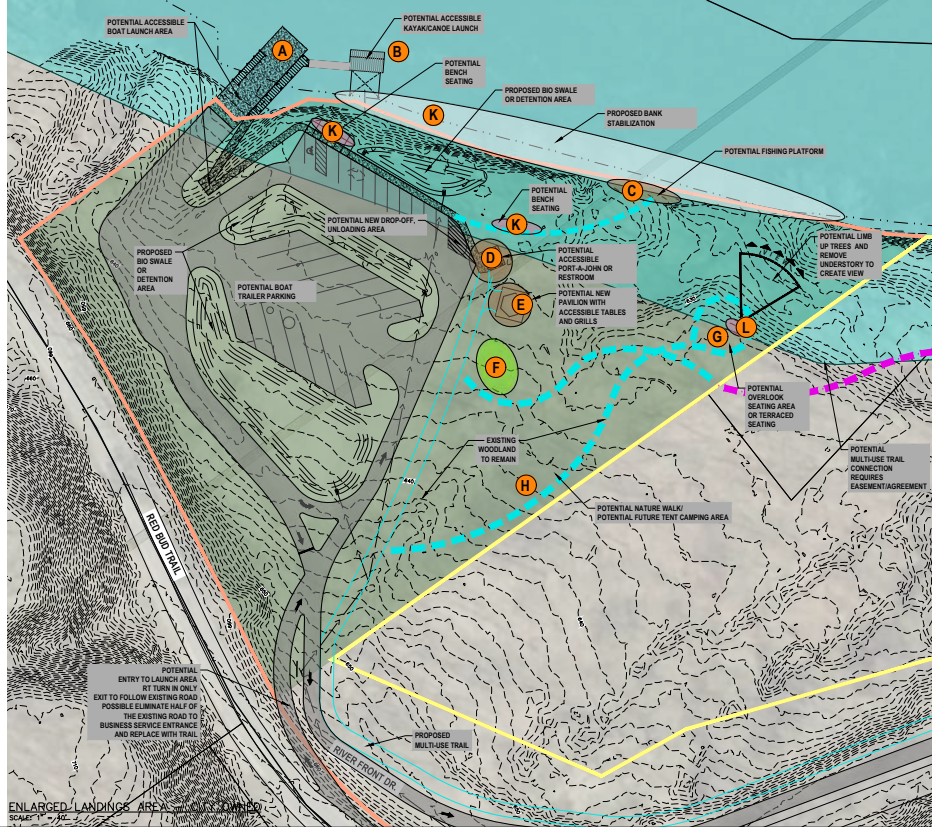
- Overlook seating, amphitheater, terraced seating area - G
- Boardwalk along the riverfront, slopes along the Bluffs with switchbacks - J
- ☼ Elevated boardwalk and viewing deck that was not included in option 1- J
- Preserve trees while removing understory shrubs and limbing up trees to create view shed and vista - L
- Council Ring - N
- ☼ Boardwalk along the riverfront that was not included in option 1- O

☼ = Unique to Option 2

Photo examples of the numbered amenities that could be incorporated into the final design for the area are provided on page 17.



OVERALL SITE - POTENTIAL USE
SCALE: 1" = 100'



ENLARGED BLUFF AND RICHARDS STREET AREA - CITY OWNED
SCALE: 1" = 40'



ENLARGED BLUFF AND RICHARDS STREET AREA - CITY OWNED
SCALE: 1" = 40'

LEGEND

CITY OWNED (Orange line)
PRIVATELY OWNED (Yellow line)
ASP OWNED (Blue line)
100 YEAR FLOODPLAIN (Blue hatched)
DESIGNATED PARK SPACE (Grey hatched)
PROPOSED WAYFINDING (Green star)
PROPOSED MONUMENT SIGN (Green circle)

TRAIL LEGEND

PROPOSED TRAIL ON CITY OWNED PROPERTY (Cyan dashed)
PROPOSED TRAIL IN CITY ROW (Orange dashed)
PROPOSED SHADOWN ON CITY ROAD (Purple dashed)
PROPOSED MOODY CREEK TRAIL (Pink dashed)
PROPOSED MOODY CREEK TRAIL (Pink dashed)
PROPOSED TRAIL REQUIRES ASP EASEMENT (Green dashed)
PROPOSED TRAIL REQUIRES EASEMENT - PRIVATE OWNER (Magenta dashed)

NOTE:

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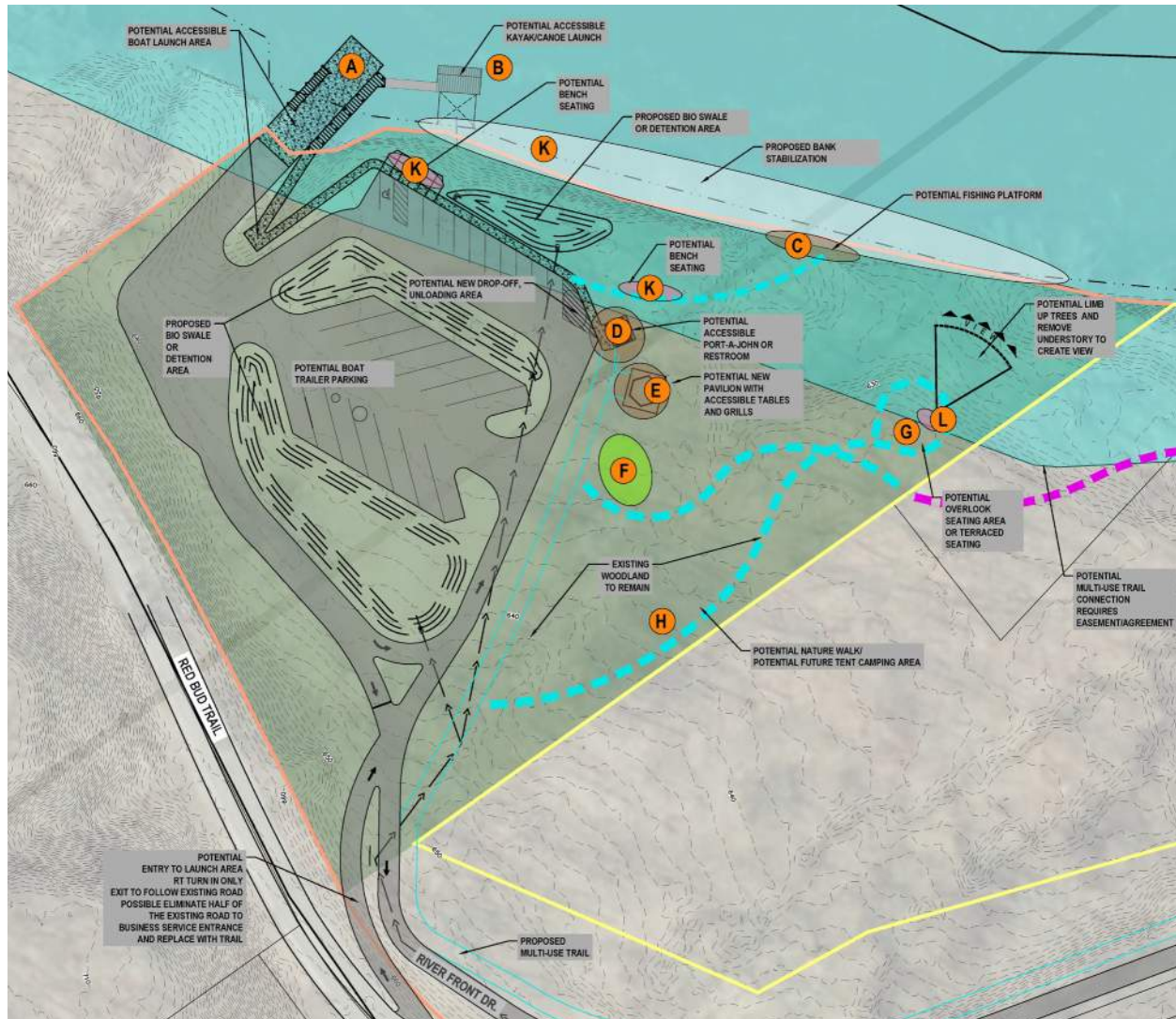
GRAPHIC SCALE

1" = 100'
1 inch = 100 ft

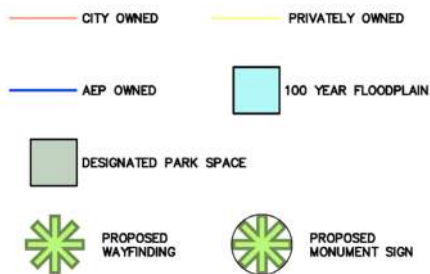
REVISION

NO.	REVISION DESCRIPTION	BY	DATE

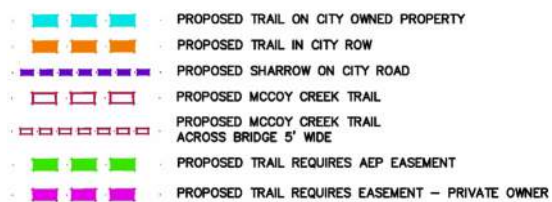
Enlarged Landing Area - Option 2



LEGEND



TRAIL LEGEND



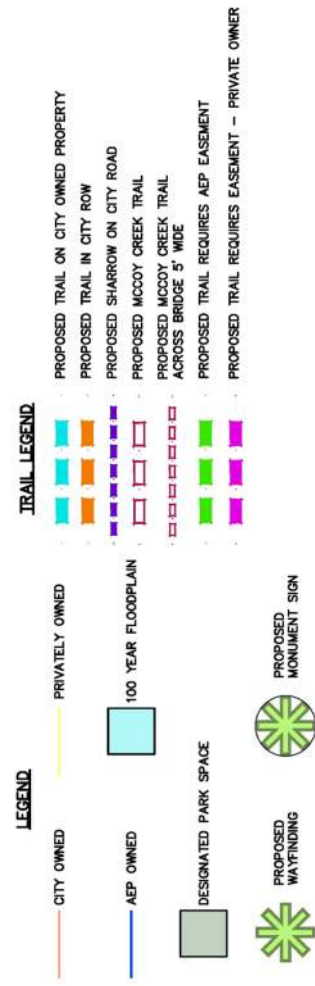
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- Overlook seating, amphitheater, terraced seating area - G
- Nature trail - H
- Riverfront seating, companion seating, and riverfront with bank stabilization - K
- Preserve trees while removing understory shrubs and limbing up trees to create view shed and vista - L

Enlarged Bluff and Richards Street Area - Option 2



☼ = Unique to Option 2

- Bike paths/shared use trails, sharrows on road and pedestrians on sidewalks - I
- Boardwalk along the riverfront, slopes along the Bluff with switchbacks - J
- ☼ Elevated boardwalk and viewing deck that was not included in option 1 - J
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- Roadway improvements on access drive - M
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Potential Amenities Examples - Option 2



A BOAT LAUNCH EXAMPLES



B ACCESSIBLE KAYAK/CANOE LAUNCH EXAMPLES



C FISHING PLATFORM/WATERFRONT DOCK/ STEPPERS BOARDWALK EXAMPLES



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M ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS FOR DRAINAGE EXAMPLE



N COUNCIL RING FIREPIT EXAMPLES



O ELEVATED OVER THE RIVER BOARDWALK EXAMPLES



Consistency with “A Vision For Buchanan”

When developing the St. Joseph Riverfront Master Plan, it was important for the planning team and Steering Committee to respect the work that was done during the planning process for “A Vision for Buchanan” in 2021. The Vision Plan was developed to be a guiding document for Buchanan's future. It included a chapter on the Northside, which included a discussion about the Northside Neighborhood, the Riverfront Park, housing, and bike and pedestrian connections. To review “A Vision for Buchanan identify several key recommendations that are relevant to this study.

- Engaging the River
- Honoring Culture
- Celebrating Ecology
- A Northside Destination
- Including Redevelopment Opportunities
- Pedestrian and Bike Connectivity

The following pages provide details on how these recommendations have been incorporated into the Buchanan Waterfront Master Plan.

A copy of the “A Vision for Buchanan” plan can be found at www.nicestplacetowalk.com.

The Buchanan Brand is defined as “A dynamic quality-of-life center. Our goal is to build a strong and diverse economy that leverages our uniquely special sense of place in a world where business can be done from anywhere and virtually, where we thrive on innovation and seek to build economic engines which evoke high quality of life, health and wellness, historic significance, and our relationship with our special natural resources, while doing so we protect the authenticity, character, and soul of our American small town.”

(Page 4 of “A Vision for Buchanan”)



Engaging the River

This concept illustrates a raised boardwalk that traverses the bluff and enables visitors to reach the water. Tree limbs are kept trimmed to enable views. The boardwalk can be extended to connect with the public landing.

Honoring Culture

The improved park features a circular fire pit area near Richards St and is oriented with a direct view of Moccasin Bluff downriver. The *Indigenous History & Ecology Trail* informs visitors of the significance of this landscape.

Celebrating Ecology

The park is designed to be gentle on the land and to promote the restoration of a native species ecology. Educational markers on the trail engage visitors, and the inn is built to the highest standards of sustainable design.

A Northside Destination

Richards Street is improved with tree lines, on-street parking, and trails leading to the park and a destination inn and restaurant. This is where Buchanan interfaces with the agro-tourism landscape of nearby townships.

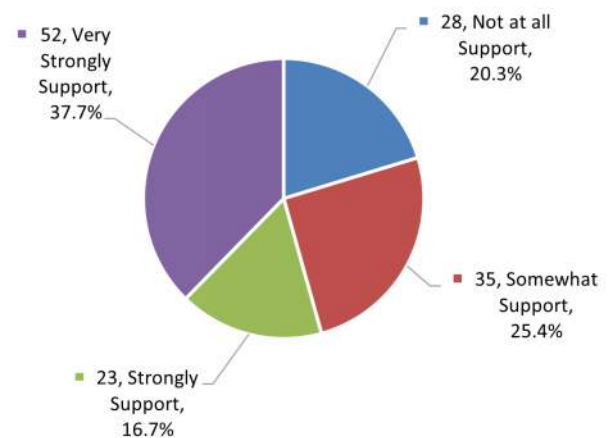
Excerpt from "A Vision for Buchanan", page 45

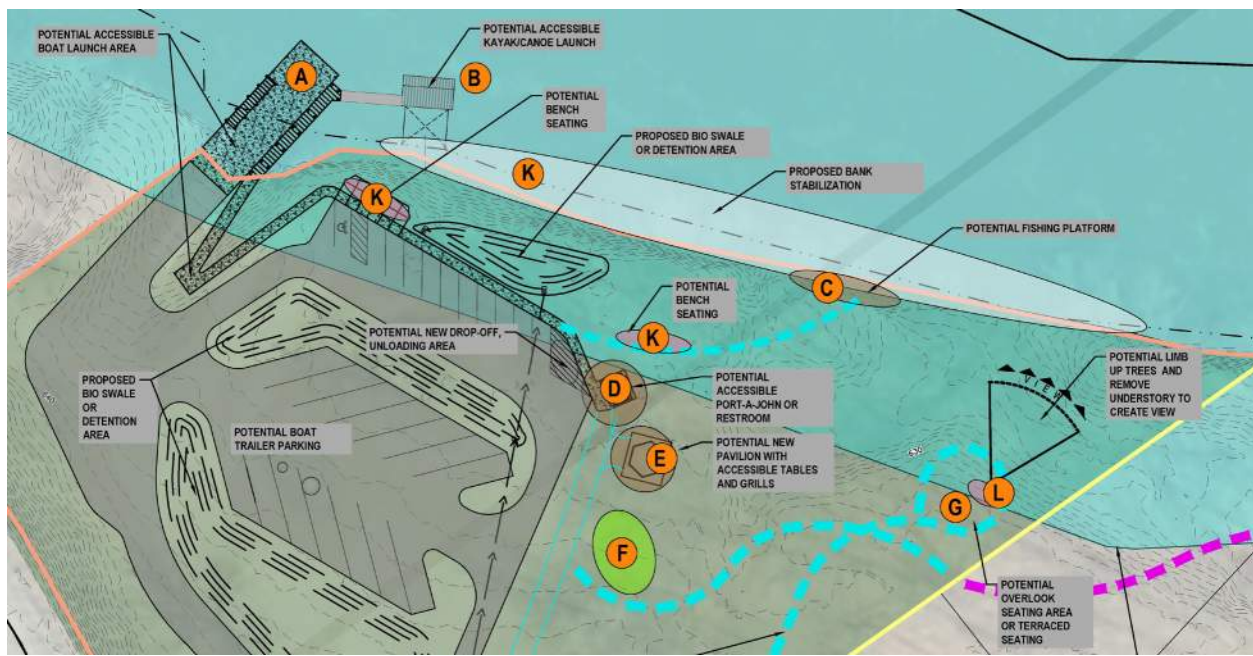
Three questions in the survey for this Master Plan asked about the Vision for Buchanan Plan to merge the two processes.

One question asked respondents to rate the park before and a second to rate it after the Plan's proposed improvements were completed. The current park was rated as a 2, while the park after improvement was rated as a 4, with 69% ranking it as a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale, indicating that many of the respondents favored the proposed improvements.

The survey also asked how strongly the respondent would support a potential road for Red Bud Trail as shown in "A Vision for Buchanan" that would take the road from four lanes down to two lanes. Survey results indicated 75% of the respondents supported the idea at least somewhat. This indicates that the concept has merit and should be investigated further. Redesigning the road could help to elevate some of the access issues with the Master Plan design and can be further evaluated during the engineering phase of the project.

How strongly would you support a potential "road diet" for Red Bud Trail as shown in the concept above? This would take the road from 4 lanes to 2 lanes and provide bike lanes and improved sidewalks. This concept would improve access for all modes of transport.



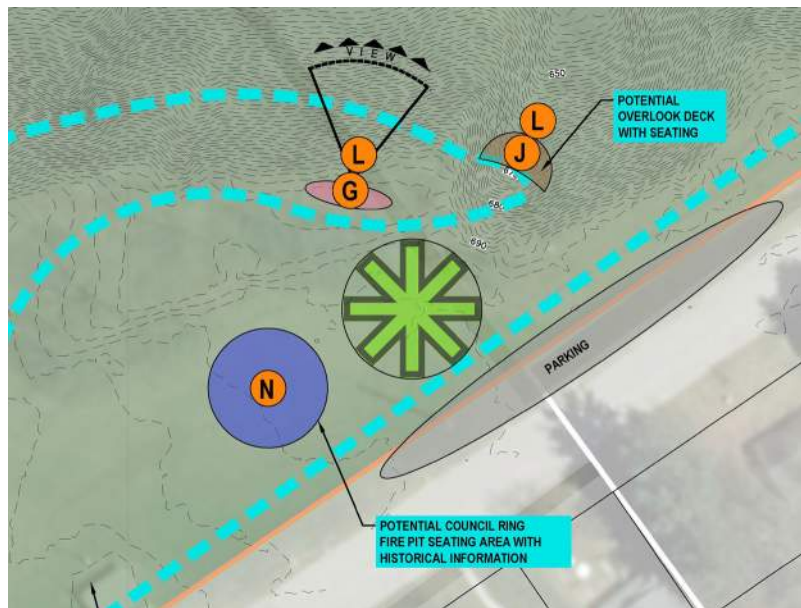


Engaging the River

The plan provides multiple opportunities for engaging with the St. Joseph River. The snip from the plan above illustrates the many ways visitors to the area will be able to interact with the river directly or simply sit and enjoy the natural beauty of the area. When discussing the project, several of the Northside Neighborhood residents expressed their desire to reestablish the connection to the river that they experienced in the past and to ensure that same opportunity is provided for future generations.

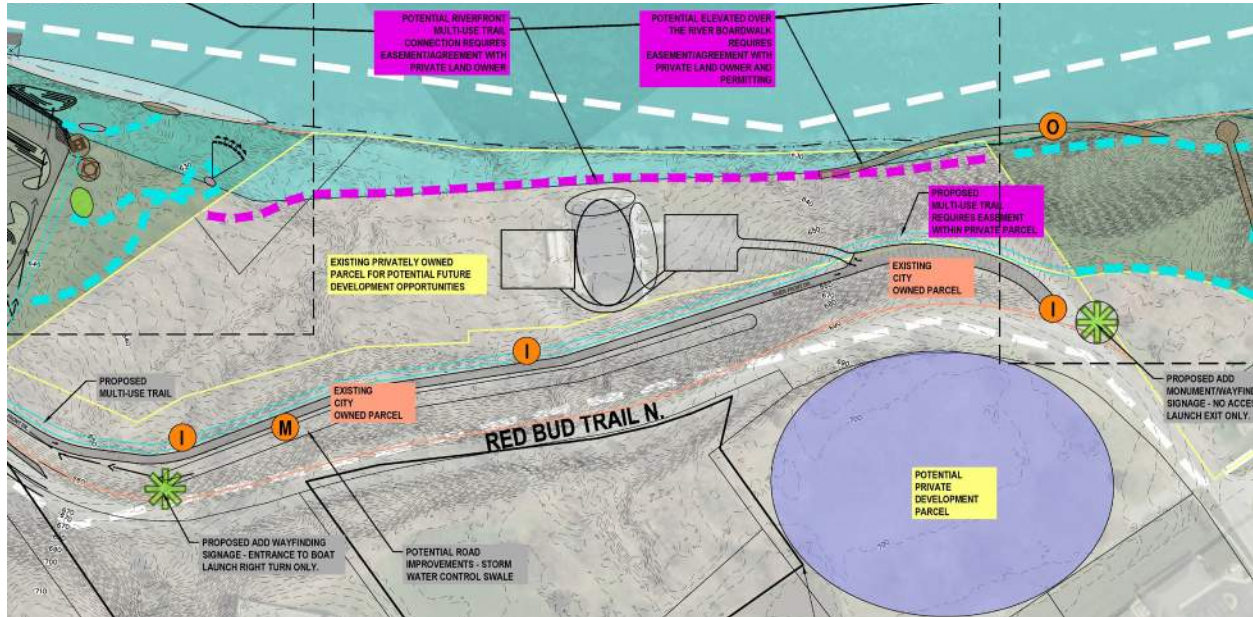
Honoring Culture

Particular attention has been paid to design the area in a way that is minimally intrusive while reinvesting in this community asset. It has been noted several times in the plan that construction techniques and amenity styles need to be respectful of the natural environment and the historical significance of the area for the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi. In addition, the area has a more recent historical significance for the current and former residents of the Northside Neighborhood. It was suggested that the proposed Council Ring could incorporate interpretive signage to tell the story of the area and inform visitors of its cultural and historical significance.



A Northside Destination

The Master Plan is designed to serve both as a neighborhood amenity and a local and regional destination. Care was taken during this process to balance the needs of the Northside Neighborhood along with those of the general Buchanan population and a wider regional audience. The proposed improvements will serve the broader community but are scaled so that they do not overwhelm or detract from the residential character of the area. The addition of safe pedestrian and bike connections to the Landing and the Bluffs through the neighborhood should improve the residents' experience and result in the increased use of these improved community assets.



Including Redevelopment Opportunities

Two privately owned properties within the study area are identified for their redevelopment potential.

The **Library and Educational Services Building on River Front Drive**, also referred to by some as the Former Smitty's Mariana, was discussed at multiple phases of this process. The need to connect the two city-owned properties through this parcel is key to the overall Master Plan. This connection could be made through the trail illustrated on the plan but many participants would like to see the area redeveloped for a water-related purpose that would not only be consistent with the Master Plan but also complement the Landing and Bluffs design and uses. The way this property is to be redeveloped will be an important next step if this process. Some early ideas and concepts are outlined on page 36.

The **vacant property on Red Bud Trail** has been identified as a redevelopment site for a mixed-use project that could include a variety of housing types including single-family detached, duplexes, and row houses. This property offers the opportunity to create a new pedestrian- and bike-friendly community close to downtown. This site would be attractive to developers due to its location near the recently improved Victory Park, and the proposed improvements outlined in this Master Plan.

"A Vision for Buchanan" provides a potential missing-middle housing development layout strategy for this property. As illustrated, the site can accommodate a development with a variety of housing types and amenities.



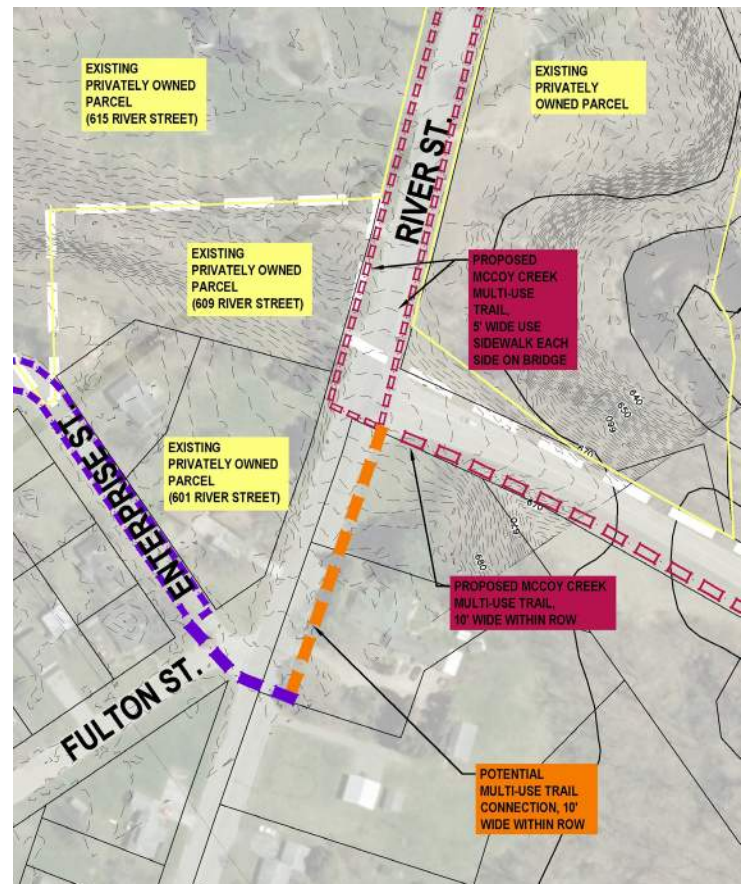
Excerpt from "A Vision for Buchanan", page 47

Pedestrian and Bike Connectivity

Connecting the Master Plan area to the Northside neighborhood, the rest of Buchanan, and the regional trail network is an important feature of the design. In both plan options, bike and pedestrian connectivity is identified by incorporating trails where possible such as along a portion of the access drive. Sharrows* are identified where there is not sufficient space to accommodate a separate trail. This is shown in areas of Option 1 where the access drive is not wide-enough for a trail as well as on the existing streets in the Northside Neighborhood. These streets are narrow and have beautiful mature trees along them. It was decided by the steering committee that by using sharrow markings, the desire for connectivity and preservation of the trees could be accomplished.

Wayfinding signage will also be an important feature of the final design to ensure the connections with the city's transportation system and the McCoy Creek trail are easy to navigate.

**Sharrows are graphics painted on the pavement to indicate that the lanes are to be shared by both vehicles and bikers.*



Road diet graphic from "A Vision for Buchanan"



Community Engagement Overview

The community engagement process consisted of three major activities:

1. Community Survey
2. Buchanan Riverfront Master Plan Steering Committee Meetings
3. Public Meetings

The development of this master plan has followed an iterative process. Detailed materials for each of the steps in the community engagement process are included in the appendix.



Community Survey

A community survey was created to gather input from stakeholders regarding the existing Riverfront Park, concepts outlined in "A Vision for Buchanan" related to the study area, and to determine the types of amenities to be included in the new St. Joseph Riverfront Master Plan. The survey was open from April 24 to May 22, 2023 and there were 162 respondents.

These survey responses were a valuable source of data for the planning team and the Steering Committee and provided guidance and direction to the group in designing and refining the plan documents. The results of the survey were shared with the Steering Committee and printed copies of the responses were made available for review at the community workshop.

In addition to the questions highlighted here, there were several questions regarding the Vision for Buchanan plan. Those responses are addressed in that section of this report but were also shared with the Steering Committee and did impact the final St. Joseph Riverfront Master Plan.

A summary of the results follow and the entire survey is included in the appendix.

A screenshot of the Buchanan City website. The header features the Buchanan logo with the tagline "Life is better here." and a navigation menu with links for Contact Us, Government, Departments, Community, Business, and How Do I?. A search bar is also present. The main content area is titled "COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT" and features a large image of a park. Below the image, there is a section for the "Riverfront Park Survey" which includes a description of the project, the survey dates (4/24/23 - 5/22/23), and a link to "Take Survey Here". To the right of the survey information is a "Contact Information" section with the address 302 N. Redbud Trail, Buchanan, MI 49107, the telephone number 269-695-3844, and a link to "View Full Contact Details". A sidebar on the left lists "City Owned Properties Available for Redevelopment" and "Buchanan-St. Joseph River Master Planning Project".

Some key findings from the survey include:

- Retain the natural feeling of the area;
- Restore connectivity to the St. Joseph River;
- Be kid/family/age/ability friendly;
- Provide access and facilities for all water sports (motor and people-powered);
- Respect and protect natural areas and cultural and historical assets;
- Improve general maintenance;
- Include a restroom;
- Address safety issues; and
- Provide a variety of assets to improve the experience in the park and surrounding area.

Who took the survey? -

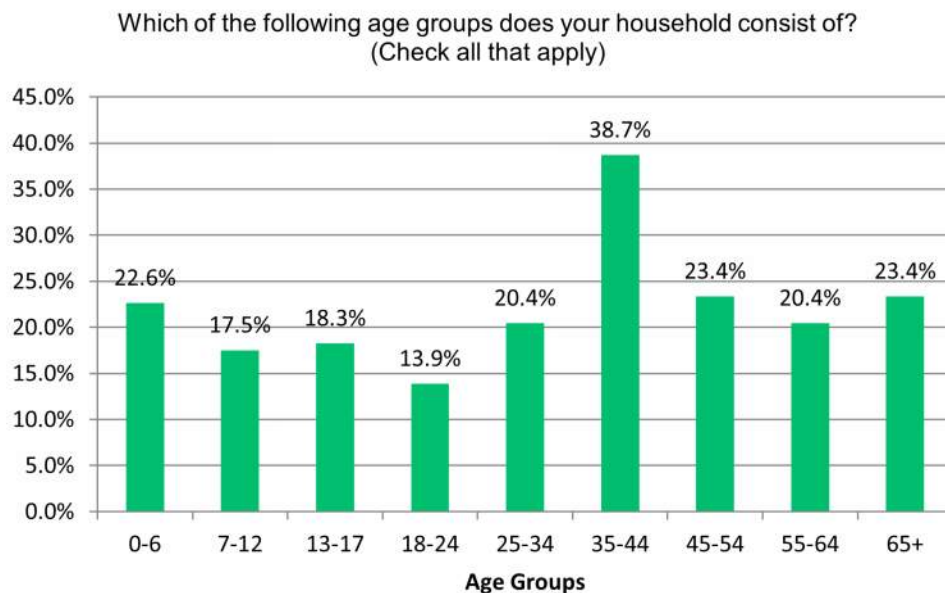
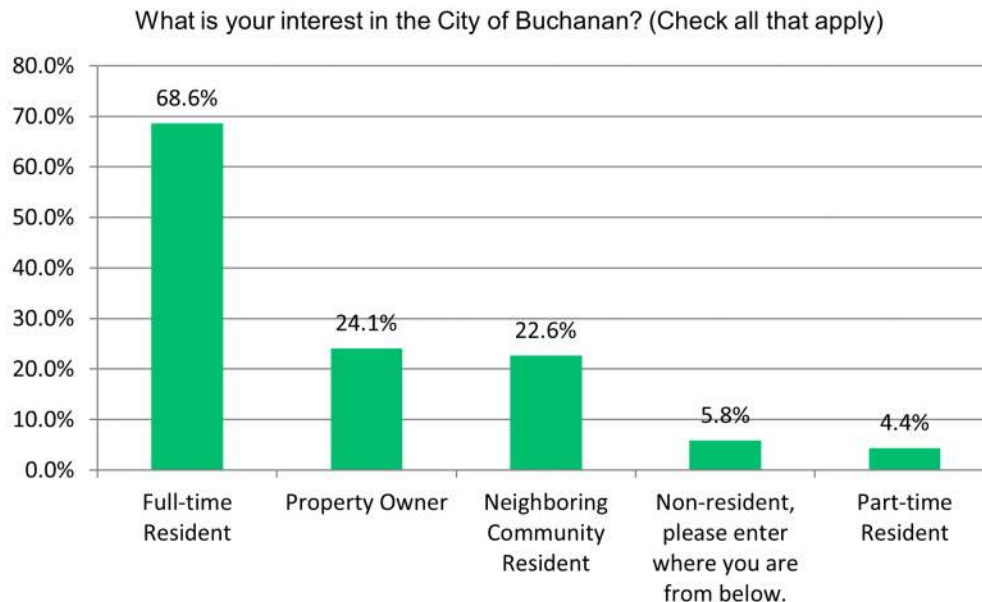
Age of respondent:

- Ranges from 24 to 85 years
- 48 years (average)
- 45 years (median)

Length of time resident respondents have lived in Buchanan:

- Ranges from less than a year to 76 years
- 25 years (average)
- 18 years (median)

Households with a householder who has handicap accessibility needs: 10.2%

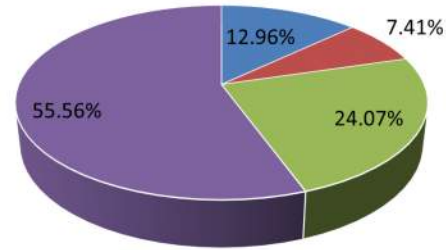


What did they say?

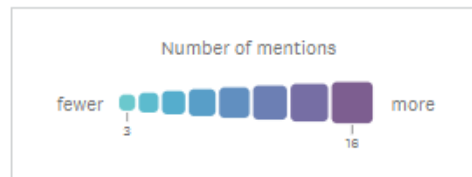
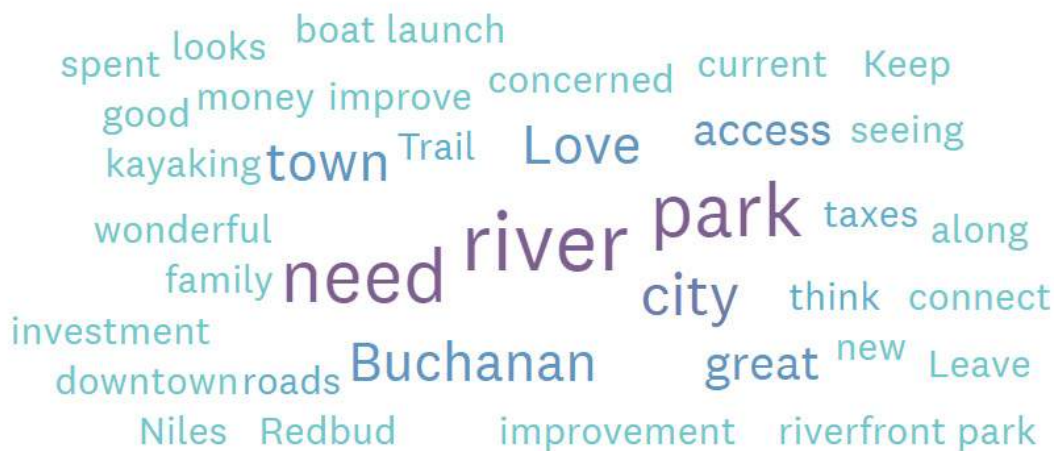
When asked if Buchanan should improve connectivity and access to the St. Joseph River, 80% agreed or strongly agreed that “The City of Buchanan should make efforts to improve connectivity and access to the St. Joseph River and leverage it as an asset of the City and our natural environment.” This indicates there is support for the type of improvements proposed in the Master Plan.

Thoughts and comments shared in the open-ended questions range from very supportive to concerns regarding management and maintenance to prioritizing funding for other projects and costs.

Please indicate how strongly you agree with this statement: The City of Buchanan should make efforts to improve connectivity and access to the St. Joseph River and leverage it as an asset of the City and our natural environment.



■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree



When asked if they felt as if their nature and outdoor recreation needs are met in Buchanan, 64% of respondents answered “No.” This indicates that more opportunities to engage with nature and outdoor recreation are needed in the city.

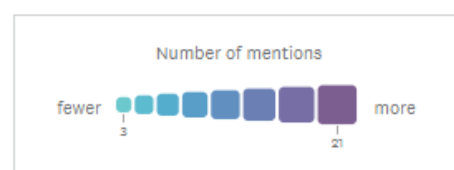
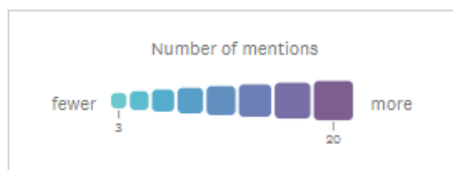
In addition, when asked directly if they would like to see a new Riverfront Park and reinvigorated, accessible St. Joseph River waterfront, over 83% indicated that they did. This support for the Master Plan and investment in the area reinforces the city’s decision to move forward with this project to develop a plan for the area.

The survey also asked respondents to indicate which amenities they would like to see included in a new Riverfront Park. They could choose up to 5.

Respondents were then asked of those amenities listed, how likely they would be to use them on a scale of 1-4 with 4 being “Very likely.” The table below shows the percent of the amenities that were most desired and their scope of how much they would be used. This chart provided important feedback on the design and selection of the amenities to be included in the Master Plan.

Percent of Respondents that want the following amenities to be included in the Master Plan and weighted ranking		
	Percent	Ranking
Nature trails	68.5%	3.36
Restrooms	60.0%	3.23
Boardwalk/riverwalk overlook	58.5%	3.36
Non-motorized watercraft launch (kayaking, rowing, paddle boarding, etc.)	51.5%	2.73
Benches and other viewing infrastructure	40.8%	3.34
Playground equipment	36.2%	2.66
Fishing access	36.2%	2.65
Restaurant	33.1%	2.81
Improved access road	26.9%	3.13
Enhanced vehicular and pedestrian access points to the river	26.9%	3.07
Motorized boat launch/dock	24.6%	2.21
Boat/equipment rentals	22.3%	2.24
Handicap accessibility	21.5%	2.12
Historic/educational components	20.8%	2.69
Inn with a small number of rooms	12.3%	1.73
Visitor center	8.5%	2.32
Transient boat dock system	7.7%	1.85
Non-motorized watercraft storage	1.5%	1.59

When asked their favorite and least favorite things about the north side of Buchanan, Riverfront Park, and/or the St. Joseph River, the following were the most popular words used.



Buchanan Waterfront Master Plan Steering Committee Meeting #1

A Steering Committee of engaged citizens was convened to review and provide input on the community engagement process to ensure outreach to the public in a manner that is convenient and meaningful. The group met three times during the process. Members of the Committee included representatives from the Northside Neighborhood, riverfront residents, anglers, Friends of McCoy Creek Trail, competitive rowing, DNR (former), Community Foundation, and city staff. Responsibilities of Committee members included the following:

- Review concepts and community feedback to help identify key components and aesthetics;
- Participate (not just attend) the steering committee meetings;
- Promote the community survey, workshops, meetings, and events;
- Participate in the public meetings and outreach activities;
- Consider compromises that may assist in managing conflict and build consensus; and
- Distribute accurate information regarding the project to other community members and clarify misunderstandings or misconceptions.



The Steering Committee Kick-off Meeting was held on May 19, 2023. The focus of the meeting was to

- Review the project scope
- Discuss the role of the steering committee
- Discuss and finalize the project timeline
- Determine Community Engagement Process including the Community workshop details
- Review the web-based survey results
- Review the existing conditions map
- Review and discuss the amenities that should be incorporated in this project using the preliminary schematic plan.

Key design principles and features that were identified from a review of preliminary survey results and discussed with the Committee included the desire for the Riverfront Master Plan design to:

- Retain natural feeling of the area
- Restore connectivity to the St. Joseph River
- Be kid/family/age/ability friendly
- Provide access and facilities for all water sports (motor and people-powered)
- Respect and protect natural areas and cultural and historical assets
- Improve general maintenance
- Include a restroom
- Address safety issues
- Provide a variety of assets to improve the experience in the park and surrounding area

The Committee agreed with these and added:

- A trail along the woods
- Provide an opportunity to introduce or reintroduce residents to the river
- A need to provide access to explore the river
- Explore the opportunity for a community boat house
- Promote use of low-impact construction techniques
- Connection to rest of the community, specifically Downtown Buchanan and the Trail Network

It was also decided that at this time, camping was not an appropriate use of the area and that the existing restroom on the bluff should be removed and a new facility provided at the Landing.

Some identified site constraints included:

- The access road is in very poor condition and is too narrow to accommodate vehicle traffic and pedestrians safely and comfortably
- The Landing area and access road were not designed to manage stormwater and this contributes to condition issues.
- There is limited parking at the Landing
- A second drive would be beneficial, but limited space and grade changes will make this challenging
- Construction and maintenance costs will need to be considered when designing the Master Plan

Buchanan Waterfront Master Plan Steering Committee Meeting #2

The second Steering Committee Meeting was held on September 22, 2023. The main purpose of this meeting was to review changes made to the preliminary plan based on committee feedback and to discuss other changes that would be needed before the public engagement process and community workshop.

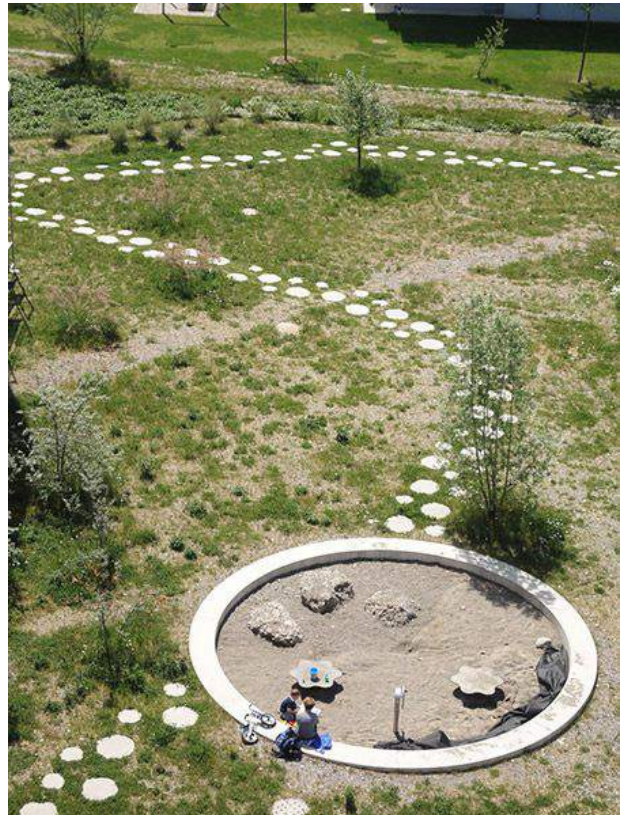
At this meeting, we shared and discussed some inspiration photos provided by Buchanan staff that demonstrated the Buchanan Brand and felt authentic to the community. Some of these photos were incorporated as examples of potential amenities for the Master Plan and for the materials produced for the community workshops.

During the meeting, we discussed details for the community workshop including:

- Promotional materials
- Venues for distribution
- Partners
- Identify Additional Stakeholders
- Place and Time
- Neighborhood Workshop
- General Public Workshop

At this meeting it was decided that we would hold two workshops. Both workshops would use the same graphics and share the same information. The difference would be that one was promoted to residents of the Northside Neighborhood and allowed for them to provide their perspective, history, and special concerns based on their knowledge of the area. A second workshop was held for the general public and any residents that were not able to make the neighborhood-focused meeting.

Inspiration Images



Community Workshops

Two Community Workshops were held at Buchanan City Hall on October 24, 2023. A total of 32 community stakeholders participated in the two events.

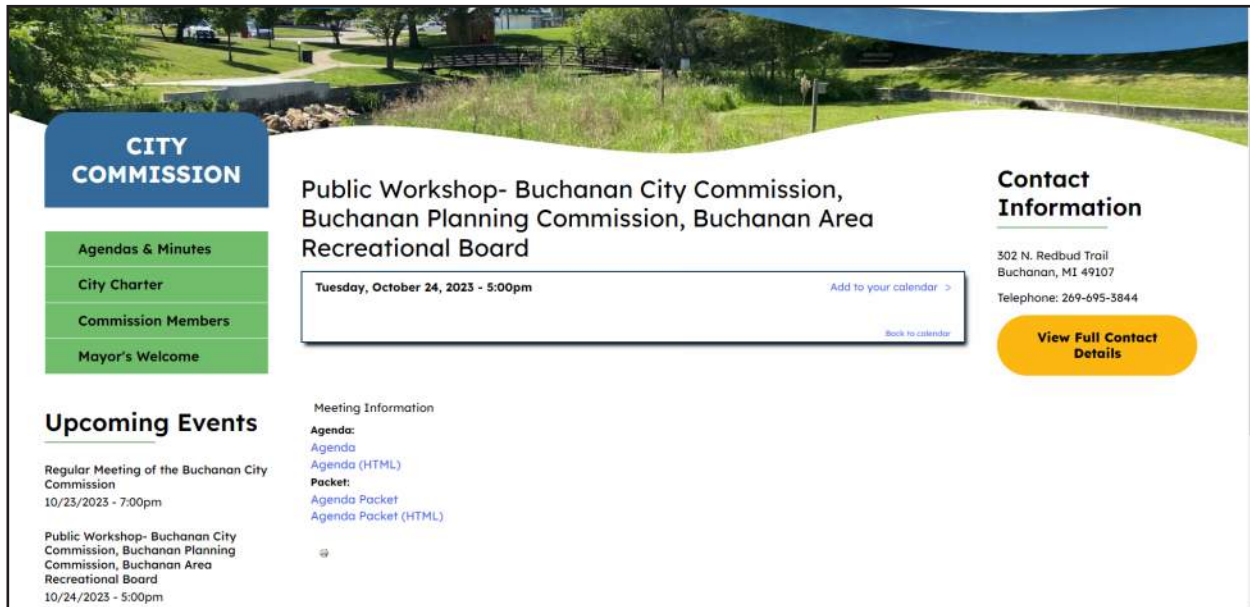
The Northside Neighborhood-focused workshop was held at 3pm at the Buchanan City Hall. Nine neighborhood members attended this session. During this meeting, the importance of re-establishing the connection to the St. Joseph River that was a part of many of the participants' childhood was stressed. In addition, the idea of utilizing the Council Ring to tell the history of the area was suggested by a community member.

The general public workshop was held at 5pm at the Buchanan City Hall. Twenty-three community stakeholders attended the event. Several attendees were interested in discussion particular to aspects and amenities for the Master Plan, including advocates for boating, equestrian use, trails, and bicycling facilities. The connectivity from this area and the neighborhood to Downtown Buchanan and the Regional Trail system via McCoy Creek Trail was a noted topic of discussion along with the general plan layout and the redesign of the Landing.

A summary of the comments received at both meetings are provided on page 33.



Promotional Materials



CITY COMMISSION

- Agendas & Minutes
- City Charter
- Commission Members
- Mayor's Welcome

Upcoming Events

Regular Meeting of the Buchanan City Commission
10/23/2023 - 7:00pm

Public Workshop- Buchanan City Commission, Buchanan Planning Commission, Buchanan Area Recreational Board
10/24/2023 - 5:00pm

Public Workshop- Buchanan City Commission, Buchanan Planning Commission, Buchanan Area Recreational Board

Tuesday, October 24, 2023 - 5:00pm [Add to your calendar](#) [Back to calendar](#)

Contact Information

502 N. Redbud Trail
Buchanan, MI 49107
Telephone: 269-695-3844

[View Full Contact Details](#)

Meeting Information

Agenda:
[Agenda](#)
[Agenda \(HTML\)](#)

Packet:
[Agenda Packet](#)
[Agenda Packet \(HTML\)](#)

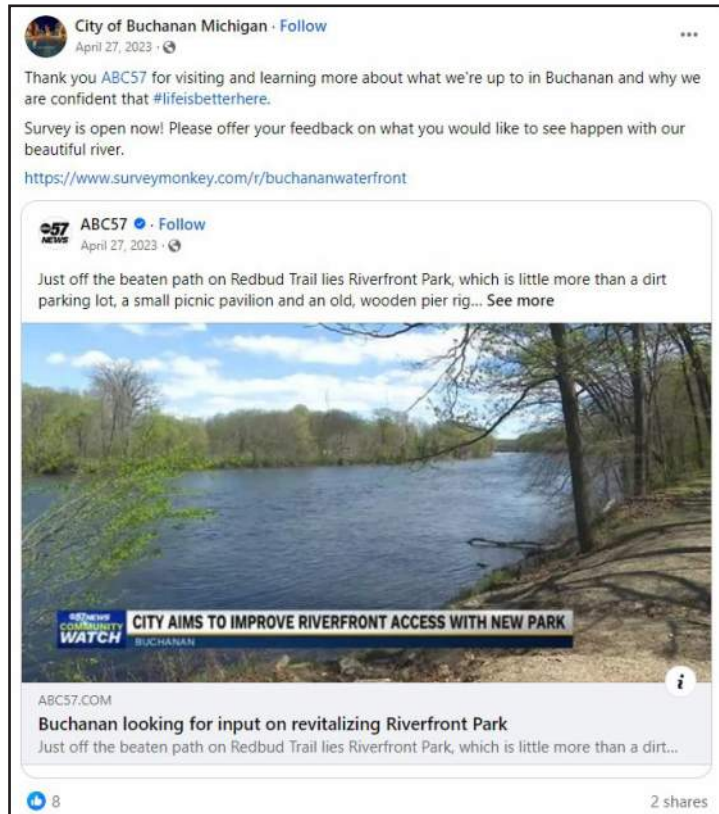


10 NEWS NOW

News Watch Live First Alert Weather Video Closings & Cancellations Sports Notre Dame En Español Northwest

Buchanan seeking feedback on St. Joseph River Waterfront revitalization project

HAPPENING NOW
CITY SEEKS INPUT ON REVITALIZATION PLANS FOR RIVER WATERFRONT



City of Buchanan Michigan · Follow
April 27, 2023 · 🌐

Thank you ABC57 for visiting and learning more about what we're up to in Buchanan and why we are confident that [#lifeisbetterhere](#).

Survey is open now! Please offer your feedback on what you would like to see happen with our beautiful river.
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/buchananwaterfront>

ABC57 · Follow
April 27, 2023 · 🌐

Just off the beaten path on Redbud Trail lies Riverfront Park, which is little more than a dirt parking lot, a small picnic pavilion and an old, wooden pier rig... See more

CITY AIMS TO IMPROVE RIVERFRONT ACCESS WITH NEW PARK

ABC57.COM
Buchanan looking for input on revitalizing Riverfront Park
Just off the beaten path on Redbud Trail lies Riverfront Park, which is little more than a dirt...

8 2 shares

SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP COMMENTS

Notes from comment sheets or discussion:

- Open up/restore access to the river
- Work with AEP to use their property
- New pavilion should be managed (scheduled) and available for rent
- Add new restrooms at launch and remove the existing one
- Remove AEP gate at Elizabeth
- Check to see what is happening at the shack in the woods
- Add history to the council ring – first nation, industrial, railroad, neighborhood
- Keep privacy for homes in the neighborhood
- Preserve wildlife habitat--there are fox, deer, turkey, beaver, etc.
- Look at launch to rework boat drop off – current location is better to keep people and vehicles apart but not great for dropping boat

Comments on amenity sheets:

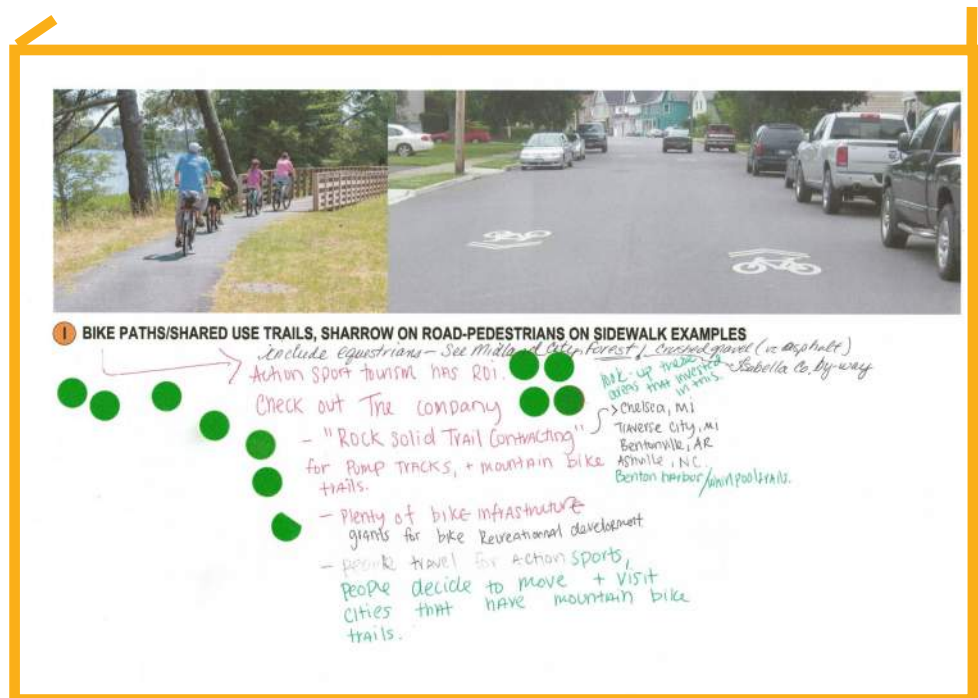
- Include equestrian – see Midland City Forest/crushed gravel vs asphalt and Isabella Co. By-way
- Action sports tourism has ROI (return on investment), Check out The Company – “rock Solid Trail Contracting” for pump track and mountain bike trails, plenty of bike infrastructure, grants for bike recreational development, people travel for action sports, people decide to move and visit cities that have mountain bike trails. Areas that have invested Chelsea, MI - Traverse City, MI - Bentonville, AR – Asheville, NC – Benton Harbor, MI – Whirlpool Trails
- (is there an) ability to connect road to the north
- Consider area/width to back up boat trailer – suggested to add drive, suggested to have a hand rail on way down to river, attempt to buy Book property

Plan “dot” exercise - green was positive/red negative:

- Potential elevated boardwalk with overlook - 2 green
- Potential private development parcel - 4 green
- Launch - 2 green – 1 red
- Fishing platform - 1 green
- Council ring – 1 red - commented location was too close to homes

Consensus from neighborhood participants included:

- Eco playground
- Council ring
- Trails, gathering space, and over looks only on the AEP property, no additional buildings
- Interpretive signage



Buchanan Waterfront Master Plan Steering Committee Meeting #3

The third Steering Committee Meeting was held on November 30, 2023. The main purpose of this meeting was to review the Community Workshop and finalize the two Master Plan Design Options.

Some notable changes on this version of the plan from the prior version used at the Community Workshop are generally related to the Landing.

- Improved boat trailer circulation in / off of Redbud using existing drive
- Stormwater management might be managed in 5-foot separation between road and trail on road to help with drainage improvements
- Identified the existing lift station
- Shifts and small calibrations needed with survey for final design
- Materials for road, parking, and launch still need to be determined but ADA parking will need to be concrete/asphalt
- Pull-up space added near pavilion
- Kayak launch, area, boat launch
- Need to incorporate bank stabilization included in boat launch and kayak launch design – stabilized “hot spots” improve access to water
- Gathering and view area multi-use events, natural view area, musical/theater shows
- Accessible walks need to be higher to avoid water fluctuation and algae growth which can cause maintenance issues and slippery conditions
- Restrooms type and materials still need to be determined
- Add launch trail eco-play items along with accessible play area nearer to parking lot
- Lighting plan will need to be identified. Currently there is one pole. The group would like to be sure Dark Sky fixtures will be used in the final design plan
- Boat trailer parking – rowing trailers would need to be longer add a parallel for very long trailers
- Signage for parking spaces
- Detention areas to be native species and natural looking

Buchanan Waterfront Master Plan Next Steps

During the 3rd Steering Committee Meeting, some future partners were identified to collaborate in the next phase of the project where the Master Plan will be refined to create a site development plan. During this process, final finishes and engineering design will be done. To assist in this next phase of design, some potential partners could include:

- Pokagon Band of Potawatomi
- Rowing community including local Colleges, US Rowing, High Schools,
- MDNR
- Trail groups - Jerry
- Bike groups
- Fishing enthusiasts
- Boating/Kayak groups
- AEP representative

A short-term goals identified during this process would be to reach out to AEP to see if they would open up a portion of the property for public access.

Option 2 of the Master Plan highlights the potential reuse of the former marina site as a public/private partnership to bring additional assets and amenities to the area. The vision for this project is that it would be capable and amplify the public uses outlined in the Master Plan for the Landing and the Bluffs. Some of the components of this project identified were:

- Boat House/ Boat Storage Area
- Marina
- Kayak/Canoe Rentals
- Community Center
- Restaurant
- Coffee Shop
- Rental/Event Center
- Youth Activities
- Shared parking to accommodate events at both the Landing and the marina site
- Event management to ensure the properties are programed and well managed
- Acquisition of land or easement for river-front trail access

Inspiration Images





City of Buchanan

302 N Redbud Trail | Buchanan, MI 49107
www.cityofbuchanan.com