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2015 PLACEPLAN: SAGINAW RIVERFRONT

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ACTION SUMMARY

Saginaw Riverfront

The Michigan Municipal League presents this PlacePlan to the City of Saginaw and Saginaw Future as a set of recommendations for prioritizing placemaking activities in the riverfront district. Our report, based on over a year of research, conversation with local changemakers and hands-on experimentation, includes a number of best practices from other communities that Saginaw can pursue and public engagement strategies to help customize those practices for its unique situation.

However, none of these recommendations, ideas or strategies will be meaningful without a coherent structure for action. Saginaw currently has an impressively dedicated core group of residents, nonprofit organizations and business leaders who volunteer significant time and resources to improving downtown and Old Town. But the whole is less than the sum of its parts, because these volunteers and donations are dispersed inefficiently across more than a dozen

different volunteer committees working on overlapping, or sometimes competing, initiatives that lack a unified vision and measures of success. Even those initiatives that do bear fruit are often not harvested for maximum impact, as we experienced many times in our background research and informational meetings.

While addressing these operational challenges is likely to take several years to achieve, the League recommends the following as a short-term strategy for Saginaw to pursue in 2016:

Develop a Structure for Action

As mentioned above, there are over a dozen distinct groups working, in an uncoordinated fashion, on activities that could be categorized as place-based improvements to the riverfront district. Two options would be to establish a new entity or designate an existing one as the central coordinating body. This hierarchical approach seems unlikely to be effective given the deep history and roots that many of the groups enjoy, and the loyalty they inspire.

Instead, we recommend the City Council, City Manager, Saginaw Future and the Saginaw Community Foundation jointly convene the various riverfront groups for series of action-oriented coordination meetings. These meetings should be professionally facilitated and operate on a consensus decision making model. The overarching goal would be to identify distinct roles that each entity will play and how those roles fit into the broader, shared agenda for improving the riverfront. For example, if a significant number of organizations confirm that improving walk/bike/transit connectivity in the district is a top priority, as discussed on page 13, each organization that chooses to work on that goal can step forward to take on one or more specific projects. Possible projects would include leading and facilitating the community engagement process, developing an improvement plan for each key parcel of land, and raising funds for a capital improvement campaign.





Once the organizations reach consensus on their individual roles, they can act independently. The intent should not be to micromanage their activities, but instead to set clear expectations and identify ways that the groups can mutually support one another.

Track and Celebrate Progress

The various entities working in the riverfront district have already accomplished significant change, when measured against the goals set in the 2011 master plan. Our research and interviews uncovered that this progress is not well-known by the vast majority of community stakeholders. Many were also unfamiliar with the riverfront placemaking goals laid out in the master plan and in other related reports. So the first and most basic step is to take measure of recent success and celebrate it publicly, at least annually.

Looking forward, once the riverfront groups reach consensus on shared goals and distinct roles, as described above, they should communicate at least twice per year to report success and share challenges and obstacles. This coordination should ideally happen in person, with a professional facilitator, but can also happen via written email reports or other means. Every check-in should include a refinement of the shared goals and priorities, reacting to changing circumstances, and planning for public communication of successes.

Tracking should also include a system of storing, sharing and referencing back to the various studies that have been done in recent years. Our experience was that many of these—such as the state-funded U3 Ventures anchor initiatives report, the downtown design charrette and the Dan Burden Old Town walkability audit—were hard to find and not being actively utilized. One organization should take the lead on cataloging these studies and putting them in an easily accessible online location.

Build Capacity

Like many other cities in the industrial Great Lakes region, Saginaw has severe shortages of staff and budget to execute all the projects needed to maximize the riverfront's potential. A coordinated process as described above will help, as it will enable more efficient use of limited existing resources, but additional capacity will still be required. In the medium term, the City and DDA should build support for additional revenue sources such as specialized tax levies and a dedicated riverfront redevelopment fund. In the short term, however, the riverfront organizations should pursue two strategies:

Improve Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers

Many Michigan cities lean heavily on volunteer boards and committees to plan and execute downtown revitalization

programs and public events. Saginaw has a strong core group of volunteers working on initiatives such as Friday Night Live, but more can be done to engage students, downtown employees, and neighborhood residents. Volunteers want structure and to know that their limited time will be used efficiently. The City and Saginaw Future should pursue membership in Michigan Main Street to help provide this structure. The League can also help facilitate training on how to recruit and make the most of volunteers, working with our partners such as the Community and Economic Development Association of Michigan.

Hire dedicated placemaking fellows or staff in partnership with philanthropic and corporate support

The cities of Jackson and Midland have recently established separate organizations (Jackson Anchor Initiative and Momentum Midland, respectively) with financial support from foundation and corporate sponsors that focus explicitly on quality of place improvements in their downtowns. This relieves the burden on existing city staff, who have many other hats to wear, and allows the new organizations to focus efforts and resources.

If a new organization is not appropriate for Saginaw, a nonprofit such as the Saginaw Community Foundation could also house the staff. The League has been working with the Community Foundation and several parallel organizations around the state to establish a placemaking fellowship program that may assist with this approach in the future.

Remain Focused

Once the City and organizations working in the riverfront agree on shared priorities and identify roles, it will be crucial to remain focused. One complaint we heard frequently from staff was the overwhelming number of different grant opportunities and technical assistance programs that are offered to Saginaw. Each new opportunity should be thoughtfully evaluated by the relevant organizations in tandem. Grants and other programs often take significant time to administer. If the partners do not see a clear connection to a shared priority and an obvious use for the outside assistance, they should pass.

The League recommends three major initiatives as the focus of efforts in the riverfront in 2016 and beyond: improving connectivity between riverfront destinations (see page 13 for more detail), promote existing redevelopment opportunities (see page 15) and develop a form-based zoning code for the riverfront mixed-use district (see page 18). The latter two should be coordinated with the City's involvement in the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Redevelopment Ready Communities program and the technical assistance offerings of that initiative.

ABOUT PLACEPLANS

Saginaw is one of nineteen cities participating in the PlacePlans pilot program, which began in 2012 as a collaboration between the Michigan Municipal League (League) and Michigan State University (MSU), with funding support from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). PlacePlans assists communities with their efforts to carefully invest in key locations that will drive additional economic development and help them attract and retain residents and businesses.

Successful placemaking is a dynamic, strategic approach to community and economic development based on an individual community's strengths. It is based on the concept that people choose to live in places that offer the amenities, resources, social and professional networks, and opportunities to support thriving lifestyles. PlacePlans is a collaborative effort to demonstrate some elements of this process, working through and supporting the leadership of local governments, nonprofit organizations, and businesses.

The PlacePlan process is customized to each project and community, but each involves selection of a priority site in the community, an intensive community engagement strategy and direct work with key community stakeholders. Products of the PlacePlan projects can include conceptual designs, market studies, analysis of community assets and opportunities and better connections to state agency support tools. The goals are to positively impact each partici-

pating community's ability to leverage their place-based assets as economic drivers and to provide lessons large and small for other communities across Michigan. For more information about placemaking in Michigan and the PlacePlans program, visit placemaking.mml.org.

Connection to Statewide Initiatives

PlacePlans is supported by MSU and MSHDA as a component of the Mlplace Partnership. The Mlplace Partnership is a statewide initiative with the purpose of keeping Michigan at the forefront of a national placemaking movement. Mlplace helps communities create and bolster placemaking efforts through education, technical assistance, and implementation tools. It is led at the state agency level by MSHDA, and coordinated through a public/private leadership collaborative known as the Sense of Place Council. Both MSU and the League are part of the Sense of Place Council.





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In parallel to PlacePlans demonstration projects, the League has developed a policy agenda, called Partnership for Place, which proposes to change the way local and state governments invest in and support quality places. It is built on the idea of a partnership between the state of Michigan and its municipalities that will support sustainable economic growth and invest in key places. The agenda focuses on four fundamental areas of action:

- **Funding for the Future**

Making sure that appropriate funds and tools are available to operate efficiently and work regionally in order to succeed globally.

- **Michigan in Motion**

Shifting from near-exclusive vehicular-based investment to alternative modes of transportation that will accommodate all users.

- **Place for Talent**

Partnering with the State to attract and retain talented workers in our communities through placemaking policies.

- **Strength in Structure**

Seeking solutions to invest in infrastructure and development where it will produce the best results and target resources with maximum outcomes.

Project History

In 2014–2015, the League accepted applications to PlacePlans by invitation only. Saginaw was invited to apply due to its participation in the Redevelopment Ready Communities program and the MPlace training series led by MSU and the League. In November 2014, the City submitted a proposal requesting assistance in three broad areas, with an overall goal to create a riverfront that is “walkable, offers diverse cultural attractions, a place thriving with business and entrepreneurial opportunities, a place that has a mix of both natural beauty and urban sophistication and a place where the community wants to live, work, play and learn.” The three identified topics were:

1. Expanding the riverfront park system;
2. Creating an enhanced marketing strategy; and
3. Leveraging the investment by educational and medical institutions to support business activity.

The League convened a review team consisting of MSU faculty and state agency staff to consider all project applications. The team was enthused about the positive develop-

ments in the Saginaw riverfront area and eager to support them with a technical assistance project, but was concerned about the large physical and topical scope of the City’s proposal as a mismatch with the capacity of the PlacePlans team. The reviewers instructed League staff to develop a revised scope of work in concert with City and Saginaw Future staff.

In January 2015, League staff formally engaged the City and Saginaw Future in a series of discussions to create a more refined scope of work and memorandum of understanding. In March, both entities finalized an agreement to focus on development of a “shared strategy” to identify and prioritize possible placemaking activities and where the community should commit its limited resources.

This project scope was atypical for PlacePlans, which is normally structured around a physical design process for a relatively small geographic area. Saginaw’s PlacePlan is instead aimed at identifying high-impact placemaking initiatives, prioritizing action steps, and recommending a structure to follow those priorities. In addition, the City requested that the League provide recommendations for improving the zoning ordinance and design guidelines that apply to the riverfront district.



METHODOLOGY

Steering Committee and Community Stakeholders

To assist in developing concepts that reflect the public's vision and have effective champions to lead to implementation, PlacePlans cities typically identify a project steering committee that represents a cross-section of community interests. In Saginaw's case, several groups focused on the riverfront area already existed. League and City staff agreed that it was not necessary to convene a new group, since many stakeholders were already overcommitted with those existing entities. Instead, the City's Riverfront Development Commission would serve as the de facto steering committee, with its roster supplemented by invitations to representatives of other stakeholder groups, as identified by City staff, Saginaw Future and members of the Commission. For a full list of stakeholder contacts, see Appendix A. In addition, the City Manager convened a small group of City and Saginaw Future staff to directly advise League staff and handle meeting logistics and other details.

Developing Placemaking Priorities

The League's initial efforts focused on identifying possible placemaking initiatives that would garner significant community support and have a major positive impact on the riverfront area as well as the City as whole. We quickly discovered that the Saginaw riverfront, similar to business districts in many other core urban communities, has been studied, designed, researched, and recommended many times over. There was little need to brainstorm new ideas, as the problems identified by local leaders were not a lack of good ideas but a lack of prioritization and execution. Therefore, our efforts were centered on inventorying the ideas espoused in a number of previous reports and plans. We used the City's excellent master plan as our foundation, since it reflected significant community input and established a focus on placemaking along the river-front. We also drew from a number of other documents, including those associated with U3 Ventures and the state Office of Urban and Metropolitan Initiatives, New E.R.A., Saginaw Future, MSHDA's Main Street program and the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute.

After our initial review, League staff grouped topics from these various documents into common themes and shared those with the project steering committee and other



stakeholders who were identified by the City. We solicited feedback through email and in three meetings: the first, in April with the Riverfront Development Commission; the second, in May with City and Saginaw Future staff; and the third in June with a larger group of riverfront stakeholders. A strong consensus emerged around a single priority for action: improving connectivity between destinations and activity centers in the riverfront area. Two secondary areas of focus were improving the environment for entrepreneurs and implementing an urban homestead program. See Appendix B and C for further detail on the topics that were discussed during this process. All three of these topics are also discussed in more detail in the following section.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Once we identified connectivity as a primary area of focus, League staff partnered with several organizations to plan events to gather broader community input and generate ideas.

In partnership with PRIDE and other local organizations, we planned a series of “pop-up placemaking” demonstrations during a Friday Night Live event in August. The intent was to explore alternative ways of using the road right-of-way, pedestrian spaces, and parks and to gather ideas from event attendees. Unfortunately, the event was cut short due to severe weather, but we still were able to gather valuable ideas. See Appendix D for a summary of that feedback.

In October, we partnered with Counter Culture Arts Collective to host a Halloween-themed “Counter Cruise” biking event. Participants explored several routes around the riverfront, with a particular focus on Old Town, and were

asked to assess the quality and safety of bicycle facilities and connections to destinations. See Appendix E for a summary of that feedback.

In November, we presented to the City Planning Commission and staff, with a focus on improving the walkability of the riverfront area and the zoning ordinance and design guidelines that apply to that district.

In December, we partnered with the Saginaw Valley State University (SVSU) Wolohan Fellows program, the Temple Theatre, the Bancroft, Saginaw Future, and Spence Brothers to host a networking event and walkability audit. Attendees learned about the economic benefits of improving walkability and connections to natural assets from the perspective of other cities and participated in a walking tour to assess possible improvements to part of the proposed river loop trails. They were asked to fill out a written survey to identify the greatest areas for improvement. See Appendix F for a summary of that feedback.



RIVERFRONT STAKEHOLDER PRIORITIES

League staff, with assistance from City staff, facilitated a series of stakeholder conversations about placemaking priorities in the riverfront district, as described in more detail in the previous section. While this effort was certainly not comprehensive, it was a good start in engaging the target audience of appointed officials on the Riverfront Development Commission and leaders of other major institutions. The City should take the next steps in vetting these priorities with elected officials and residents to take a deeper measure of the consensus around these topics before proceeding.



The following subsections contain a brief summary of each of the identified priorities, recommendations for actions the City and its partner organizations should take to pursue that goal and, where appropriate, examples to study from other cities.

Improve Connectivity between Riverfront Destinations

This topic was the runaway most popular during our series of stakeholder meetings and “votes.” That support was verified by the enthusiasm of the residents and SVSU faculty and students who participated in the community engagement events in August, October, and December. They shared a passion for the Saginaw riverfront and wanted more reasons to get out of their automobiles and explore the community.

While some may view improvements to public transportation and non-motorized transportation infrastructure as “quality of life” luxury items, they in fact present an economic imperative for cities that want to compete for residents and businesses in the 21st century. Research shows that people across the nation are choosing communities that offer various modes of transportation, with easy access to the places they live, work, and play. These improvements are particularly important for the Saginaw riverfront’s ability to make the most of the opportunities presented by the planned increase in students, faculty, and healthcare employees associated with the Central Michigan University School of Medicine, Delta College, and the two hospitals.

Connectivity should consider four scales, for different length and types of trips:

1. walking trips for distances of half a mile or less, particularly between major destinations, such as event venues, and supportive businesses, such as restaurants;
2. biking trips for distances of five miles or less to connect people between major areas of the riverfront, such as Old Town and the downtown Washington Street corridor;
3. longer biking trips for recreational users, with a focus on connections to county/regional/statewide trails; and
4. motorized public transportation connections at times of high activity between major destinations for those unwilling or unable to bike or walk, such as an evening shuttle between Old Town entertainment venues and the event venues on the east side of the river.

In an area as large, and with so many properties in need of attention, as the riverfront district, it can seem like an intimi-

dating task to know where to start. This makes it essential to identify and prioritize specific small-scale improvements with an eye on their connection to the big picture. We recommend the City designate one or more groups, ideally representing both property owners and potential users of the transportation network, to lead a community conversation with this objective in mind. This process should include the following steps:

- map existing infrastructure and major activity centers;
- identify gaps and needed connections;
- identify specific improvements to fill each gap;
- prioritize those improvements for short-, medium-, and long-term capital improvements;
- identify champions and responsible parties for each prioritized improvement;
- develop high-quality maps and marketing documents to assist champions in garnering community support and pitching the projects to potential funders; and
- set up a system with clear timelines for reporting on progress.

This effort could be structured as a design charrette, or multi-day workshop, with support from a professional design and planning firm. MSHDA has grant support for design charrettes available in the current fiscal year if that approach is of interest to the City and the Riverfront stakeholder groups. This effort should be coordinated with Get Outside for a Healthy Inside (GOHI), which is convening neighborhood conversations on this topic around the City.

There are also a number of free or low-cost communication and mapping tools that the City could utilize to gather input, such as Community Remarks or MySidewalk. See www.communityremarks.com/Ferndale/index.php and www.ferndale-exchange.org/ for an example of uses for each of those tools from the City of Ferndale. These tools should not be used to replace in-person, facilitated community conversations, but rather to supplement them.

In the short term, as well as after capital improvement priorities are identified, riverfront property owners and the Riverfront Development Commission should partner with community organizations, such as GOHI and the Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy (via its Taking Root in Saginaw project), to use “pop-up” or tactical placemaking approaches to test the viability of, and build support for, ideas for specific connectivity improvements.

Pop-up placemaking is a temporary transformation of a place to experiment with creative ideas and promote further engagement. For more detail on this approach, see

placemaking.mml.org/how-to/berkeley-placemaking-2/ and tacticalurbanismguide.com/. The League has a program that can assist with specific pop-up projects, called PlacePOP. Read more at placemaking.mml.org/placepop/.

Attract and Support Entrepreneurs

Growing jobs by ones and twos is key to creating strong local economies in the 21st century. Local communities are fueled by small start-ups and growth on main street and economic gardening strategies aimed at developing the talent and potential that already exists right at home. Also central to success are social entrepreneurs, who act as change agents within a community, seizing opportunities others miss to create social value rather than profits. This type of entrepreneurial activity resonates especially with students and Millennials looking to apply their optimism, energy, passion, and skills for a positive, tangible impact, as well as Baby Boomers looking for new business opportunities.

Although the City and Saginaw Future have launched a number of programs aimed at supporting entrepreneurs, including Saginaw SOUP, there was a sense among riverfront stakeholders that more could be done to target this support in specific geographic areas and focus it on filling empty properties and redevelopment sites. They also specifically mentioned arts and food production as business types they would like to attract.

For an example of a successful effort to develop incubator space around food entrepreneurs and artists and to redevelop a struggling commercial district near a farmer’s market, we recommend looking to Kalamazoo, particularly the work of the Kalamazoo County Land Bank.

The League supported Kalamazoo as part of a PlacePlan project in both 2014 and 2015. One of the project focal points was the Bank Street Farmers’ Market, a popular destination that has outgrown its current facility. Through consultation with specialists at Market Ventures, Inc., initial steps were identified to plan for the growth of the Farmers’ Market facility as well as for its expansion into a center of food-based business entrepreneurship. To the latter point, the city, in partnership with the Kalamazoo County Land Bank, was awarded a follow-up PlacePlans Implementation Grant in 2015 to assist with funding the build-out of a prep kitchen in a previously vacant commercial building at the corner of Portage Street and Washington Avenue, a five-minute walk from the market site. When complete in early 2016, the kitchen will allow for code-compliant on-site food preparation for small-scale vendors to sell prepared dishes at the nearby market, in food trucks, or at the neighboring Artisan Market—an extension of the Farmers’ Market focused on arts, crafts, and other handmade goods.

In November 2015, Kalamazoo hosted a design charrette focused on expansion of the Farmers' Market facility to better serve its growing base of customers, and expand its role from a strictly-retail operation to one which includes kitchen and retail incubator facilities. As of this writing, initial design concepts are being refined, and a final design plan will be delivered during 2016. The aggressive implementation efforts of the city and its partners will ensure that in years to come, the Farmers' Market will indeed be the hub of a district focused on healthy living and food-based entrepreneurship.

A second focal point in the PlacePlan examined new strategies to find and incentivize new opportunities for mixed-use and residential development. To that end, Kalamazoo and a wide range of partners—including Southwest Michigan First, Downtown Kalamazoo Incorporated, MSHDA, and MEDC — hosted two innovative events. The first, titled, "Living in Kalamazoo: What's the Demand?" was a daylong conference presenting the findings of two key studies detailing the demand for "walkable urban" and "missing middle" housing formats in Kalamazoo: "The WalkUP Wake-Up Call: Michigan Metros", by Chris Leinberger and Patrick Lynch of George Washington University, and the Target Market Analysis (TMA) performed for Kalamazoo by Zimmerman/Volk Associates. The findings were supplemented by further presentations on financing, tax revenue generation, and case studies of successful development in the city.

Second, an innovative "bootcamp" for small-scale developers was held in early December, 2015. The weekend workshop provided attendees a comprehensive course on all aspects of succeeding in small-scale real estate development. Twelve hour-long classes were taught by staff from the Incremental Development Alliance, a nonprofit composed of real estate, construction, planning, and community engagement experts who are hosting similar events in proactively-minded communities throughout the US. The bootcamp was a result of partnerships between the city, Southwest Michigan First, and MSHDA.

Saginaw, as a subject of the WalkUP study and a target market analysis (being led by the East Michigan Council of Governments), will soon have the same data available that Kalamazoo used for its marketing efforts. The City and Saginaw Future should consider following their template.

This effort should also connect with the City's participation in the MEDC Redevelopment Ready Communities program. One of MEDC's core recommendations for Saginaw is the identification and marketing of priority redevelopment sites. MEDC staff can provide best practice examples of how this has been done in other cities and will also assist Saginaw in marketing those sites.

The League supported this effort in Kalamazoo through PlacePlans and would be happy to broker a meeting and/or site visit with the relevant actors there. We can also assist in planning developer attraction and training efforts, following in the Kalamazoo model.

Create an Urban Homestead Program

Some stakeholders expressed support for a specific resident attraction program: urban homesteading. This is the practice of selling publicly-owned homes to potential new residents for a very low cost, in exchange for a commitment from the buyer to renovate and maintain the property. The Saginaw County Land Bank should be a core partner with the City in this effort. A number of other stakeholder groups should also be consulted, including the Saginaw Landlord Association.

Buffalo, Detroit and Chicago provide three examples of successful programs in existence with different structures and approaches. Buffalo's (www.ci.buffalo.ny.us/Home/City_Departments/RealEstate/UrbanHomesteadProgram) is run through the City's Office of Strategic Planning and is limited to specific geographic areas. It is targeted at people who want to build or renovate a home. Chicago's (largelots.org/about/) was developed by philanthropic and community organizations initially, but was later adopted by the City government. It is more targeted at existing residents of certain neighborhoods who want to buy an adjacent vacant property. Detroit's (writeahouse.com/mission/) is managed by a dedicated nonprofit organization and is much more hands-on. It is targeted at writers who take up residence in a specific neighborhood and, through their work, attract attention to the revitalization efforts.

In addition to urban homesteading, there are a number of other strategies that cities around the nation, from Baltimore to Niagara Falls, struggling with population loss have pursued to encourage employees and students of anchor institutions to live in the city. The Knight Foundation is funding an initiative to document and learn from these pilot attraction programs, centered on Detroit. League staff has been involved in this effort and can provide more information by request.

RIVERFRONT ZONING AND DESIGN GUIDELINES

As a supplement to the priority-setting exercises described previously, City staff requested that the League assess current zoning and design guidelines for the riverfront mixed-use district. We reviewed the City ordinance and associated documents through two lenses:

1. How accessible and clear are the key documents?
2. How well does the content of the ordinance and design guidelines reflect the stated community goals of supporting increased walkability, urban mixed-use development, and downtown living in the riverfront area? In short, is the community likely to get what it wants?

League staff crafted these recommendations in collaboration with staff from the MEDC's Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) program. The City is in the early stages of the RRC evaluation process and it will be important to continue to synchronize these two efforts. If the City moves into the next stage of the RRC process it will be eligible to receive technical assistance from RRC that may assist in addressing some of the following recommendations directly.

In general, League and RRC staff observed the following:

1. The zoning ordinance is easily accessible via the City website. However, important supporting documents such as the zoning map and the riverfront design guidelines are not.
2. The riverfront mixed-use district zoning regulations address the stated community goals of supporting walkable urban development well, but there is room for minor improvements to improve clarity and consistency.
3. The mixed-use district section of the ordinance is not well integrated with the rest of the zoning ordinance.
4. The geographic area covered by the riverfront district is unusually large for an area with the desired density and walkable, mixed-use character. The private market is unlikely to be able to support that level of development across such a broad district.



5. The design guidelines describe well the type of development the community desires for the riverfront. However, as currently written they likely provide too much flexibility and insufficient detail to be actionable and enforceable.

To address these general observations, we recommend the following changes:

1. Make the zoning map, design guidelines, and any other relevant supporting documents easily accessible via the City website.
2. Explore options for replacing the design guidelines with a form-based code overlay district for the riverfront area. Form-based codes are clearer to interpret and enforce and provide the opportunity to have various “context zones” within a single zoning district. As mentioned above, this change may qualify for technical assistance from the RRC program.
3. Consider changes to the geographic size of the riverfront zone to focus density and development more closely on the existing areas of pedestrian activity and mixed-use development. The remainder of the district could continue to have a mixed-use character, but with more of a neighborhood feel and more flexible regulations to allow for uses such as light production of goods,

middle-density office buildings, single-family housing, etc. This could be accomplished through defining “context zones” as part of the development of a form-based code.

4. If a form-based code is not practical in the short term, the City should improve clarity and enforceability of the design guidelines by including more tangible examples of desired building types and more specific language defining requirements and by clarifying the use of the guidelines during the review process.
5. Review the entire zoning ordinance and insert references to the riverfront mixed-use district where appropriate.
6. Clarify parking requirements for mixed-use developments in the riverfront district—including bicycle parking—and increase allowances for flexible and shared parking.
7. Reduce the restrictions on outdoor seating and efficiency/small dwelling units, as these are amenities that support walkable urban lifestyles.
8. Clarify the setback and build-to line requirements for mixed-use developments.



APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: Stakeholder Contact List

Name	Affiliation	Email
Aaron Bedford	Spicer Group, Riverfront Commission	AARONB@SPICERGROUP.COM
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Carol Cottrell	Covenant HealthCare Foundation, Director	CCOTTRELL@CHS-MI.COM
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Fred Czerewko	ATT	WCZEREWKO@YAHOO.COM
Herb Spence	Spence Brothers Construction, Riverfront Commission	HERB@SPENCEBROTHERS.COM
Jean Goodnow	Delta College, President	jeangoodnow@delta.edu
Jeff Martin	Dow, Community Relations Leader	jeff.martin@dow.com
John Humphreys	HCDH Attorney & Conselors, Riverfront Commission, Pit & Balcony Theatre	JHUMPHREYS@HCDH-LAW.COM
Joshua Ode	Saginaw Valley State, Ast. Dean	jjode@svsu.edu
Karen Stiffler	St. Mary's Hospital, Foundation President	kstiffler@stmarysofmichigan.org
Les Tincknell	WTA Architects, Riverfront Commission	LTINCKNELL@WTMARCHITECTS.COM
Linda McGee	PRIDE in Saginaw, Wildfire Credit Union	lmcgee@wildfirecu.org
Luis Canales	Nexteer, Director of Global External Affairs	luis.canales@nexteer.com
Mike Hanley	Saginaw County, Chair Board of Commissioners	michael-hanley@sbcglobal.net
Nathan Collison	Lawyer, Riverfront Commission	NJCOLLIS@LIVE.COM
Pamela Clark	Delta College, Foundation Executive Director	pamelaclark@delta.edu
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APPENDIX B: Summary of Potential Action Items from Master Plan and Other Reports

Saginaw Riverfront Action Items from Existing Plans/Reports

Complete

Action	Source	Responsible Party
Develop a façade-improvement grant program for Old Town	Master Plan	DDA
Address the existing residential land use challenges associated with the Bancroft and Eddy buildings	Master Plan	Multiple
Designate a central core for the City of Saginaw, which is defined by the Old Town and Downtown areas connected by the Saginaw River and the riverfront	Master Plan	City (zoning)

In-Progress

Action	Source	Status	Responsible Party
Evaluate and change riverfront zoning	Master Plan	New mixed-use zone adopted in 2013, but more work needed; will be incorporated in MML final report and Redevelopment Ready Communities	MML, City, Saginaw Future, MEDC
Begin process to determine how future improvements to the City are prioritized and directed to the central core first, then, as additional resources become available, they can be applied to areas outside the central core	Master Plan	Policy still needs to be formalized	City
Develop a marketing strategy that effectively re-brands the City as a safe and attractive community	Master Plan	Under development	Image group
Develop a marketing strategy that addresses attracting young people to move and reside in the City of Saginaw	Master Plan	Under development	Image group
Area improvements and enhancements to St. Mary's Medical Center/Cathedral District	Master Plan	Part of ongoing blight strategy, but needs update	City
Area improvements and enhancements to Covenant Medical Center District.	Master Plan	Part of ongoing blight strategy, but needs update	City

In-Progress, Continued

Area improvements and enhancements to Downtown Saginaw (Genesee Street, Johnson Street, and Washington Avenue area, Dow Event Center, Temple Theatre area).	Master Plan	Part of ongoing blight strategy, but needs update	City
Area improvements and enhancements to Celebration Square (Zoo, Hoyt Park, Tennis Courts, Ojibway Island area)	Master Plan	Part of ongoing blight strategy, but needs update	City
Identify quality sites along the Saginaw River that need to become “shovel ready.”	Master Plan	Will be addressed during City's Redevelopment Ready Communities assessment	Saginaw Future, MEDC
Continue to seek grants to improve the riverfront	Master Plan	Some success here already, but an ongoing action item. MML will include in final report	Saginaw Future, City, MML
Create a year-round Farmer's Market.	Master Plan, Downtown Design Charrette	Outdoor market planned for Saginaw News site summer 2016 and funding in place to address building	DDA
Riverfront Gateway and Wayfinding system	Riverfront Branding Plan	Planning and design stage through first quarter of 2016; fabrication and installation stage throughout 2016	CVB & AMPM
Explore a shared safety strategy	U3		Working on a camera system but more comprehensive approach needed.
Bring additional college/university presence to the area	Stakeholder Input	Delta College relocation under development	

To-Do

Events

Action	Source
Collaborate with other agencies to organize and host festivals in the City	Master Plan
Showcase the City's natural resources through festivals along the Saginaw River	Master Plan
Create a festival place celebrating the heritage of the Saginaw River.	Master Plan

Redevelopment

Action	Source
Encourage related arts/culture/music uses to cluster to create a critical mass and establish a "scene."	Master Plan
Explore a homestead program with anchors, land bank and city agencies for vacant structures, with a focus on historic preservation of community assets	U3
Leverage the impact of the new CMU Medical School into mixed-use development in Old Town and Downtown	U3
Increase downtown living possibilities	Downtown Design Charrette
Entrepreneurship assistance, including development of incubator space and a link to the farmer's market	Saginaw Future
Develop a city center square/plaza	Stakeholder Input
Strategic plan for uses of vacant property and green spaces	Stakeholder Input

Connectivity

Action	Source
Develop a River Loop pathway around the Saginaw River, bounded by Court Street, Michigan Avenue, Genesee Avenue, and Washington/M-13.	Master Plan, Downtown Design Charrette
Open access to the river where possible (i.e. remove parking structure at Court and Hamilton)	Master Plan, Downtown Design Charrette
Connect all types of transportation in a unified mobility hub	Downtown Design Charrette
System of connected greenways/parks/trails	Downtown Design Charrette
Streetscape/walkability improvements	Downtown Design Charrette
Trolley loop	Downtown Design Charrette
Bike/car sharing programs	Downtown Design Charrette
River sport/recreational opportunities	Downtown Design Charrette

APPENDIX C: Priority Action Items Recommended by Stakeholder Groups

Saginaw Riverfront Stakeholder Priorities

Goals	Possible Actions	Responsible Party
Improve connectivity between Riverfront destinations, including existing arts and culture assets	Trails/Riverfront Loop Transit (trolley) Signage Public art Streetscape & walkability improvements Promotion	STARS Riverfront Commission Arts & Enrichment Anchor institutions Land Bank
Enhance entrepreneurship opportunities in the Riverfront Loop area, including food production and the creative sector	Incubator space Mentorship SOUP Promotion	Anchor institutions/universities Saginaw Future Farmer's Market
Create a homestead program to increase living possibilities in the Riverfront area	Incentives Property improvements Promotion	Land Bank Anchor institutions Housing Commission

Additional Stakeholder Suggestions

- ✓ Signs to celebration square
- ✓ Could try something during DT discovery day – July 18 they have the trolley up and running
 - Jazz in the Garden – Wednesdays in July
- ✓ Coordinated signs for all transportation, down to the river loop
- ✓ Incorporate public art
- ✓ Do quick hit surveys at existing events
- ✓ Use temple wall/structure for Friday Night Live
- ✓ Arts and culture passport
- ✓ Create walking tours and signage regarding Saginaw history
- ✓ FNL starting July 10th every Friday for 6 weeks – there is a kids area and a great spot to do engagement
- ✓ Focus on resident health, revitalize parks, trails and playgrounds within the city
- ✓ Develop a master plan for parks
- ✓ Parking day and pop up parks
- ✓ Incorporate walkable/usable space into zoning: look at Lincoln, Nebraska to see an example of large “sidewalk scapes” with room for large awnings, seating, and division between streets
- ✓ Old Town Motor Fest – good spot to do “I wish this was” on empty buildings
- ✓ “Walkabilly Concert” with signage and Brian Setzer Orchestra and other acts around locations, a la Jazz on Jefferson. Possible locations: First Merit Event Center, Morley Plaza, Farmers Market space, Anderson Enrichment Center, vacant land around St Mary's Hospital
- ✓ Strolling dinner – different restaurants serve courses at different locations around town
- ✓ Need for non-motorized transportation plan incorporating wayfinding
- ✓ Coordinate with “Taking Root in Saginaw” in 2016, part of Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy's Outdoor Urban Recreation program

APPENDIX D: Feedback from August Friday Night Live Event

From where are you visiting? (Dots on maps)

City of Saginaw

- Riverfront Area (4)
- South East (14) – Bounded by the river and E. Holland Ave.
- North East (4)
- South West (3) – Bounded by the river and Gratiot Ave.
- North West (16)

Saginaw County

- Saginaw Charter Township (12)
- Carrollton Township (4)
- Kochville Township (1)
- Buena Vista Charter Township (6)
- Bridgeport Charter Township (7)
- Birch Run Township (1)
- Village of St. Charles (1)

Michigan

- Lansing
- Grand Haven
- Bay City (2)
- Midland
- Deckerville
- Sandusky
- New Baltimore
- Clio (2)
- Reece

Out of state

- Chicago (2)
- Denver
- Toronto
- Tampa (2)

What would bring you here more often?

- Classic cars
- Sports events
- Events every weekend
- Family friendly activities
- Games
- Basketball

What would bring you here more often? Continued...

- Entertainment
- More events
- More restaurants
- Saginaw is doing a great job
- Music festivals
- Movies in the park
- Outdoor plays
- Young people
- Drumlines
- Zoo or petting farm
- Football
- Events
- Music
- Basketball games
- Movies
- Car shows
- Places to shop
- Toy cars
- Drumline parade
- Football

What would you like to see downtown?

- Beautiful hotels
- Riverwalk path
- Great places to eat
- Good food
- Bike paths
- Clubs with all kinds of music
- Ice skating rink
- Kayak launch

What do you love about Saginaw?

- My teachers and my school
- That all of the drug dealers are going to jail
- It's my home
- Everything - The people of Saginaw are great!

APPENDIX E: Feedback from October Biking Audit

Bike Infrastructure

- There should be a pedestrian bridge over the river
- More bike locks next to parks and businesses
- Bike trail signs/maps so you know where you are, what's around
- Need better lighting along trails and on streets
- Should be dedicated bike lanes on key transportation areas. Also need more public education about how to drive with bike lanes and how bikers should act in the street
- Need bike lanes between downtown and Old Town
- Need more dedicated bike paths so it's safe for kids and families to ride bikes
- Better wayfinding for bike paths and nearby destinations
- More bike racks, especially in downtown and old town
- Should have a bike share program in the city to give people the opportunity to ride
- Bike share program a good idea – especially for visitors coming to Saginaw
- Some sides of the streets (where bikers ride) are full of potholes

Rider Efficiency

- Need better connection to the surrounding townships
- Would ride bike from home (township) downtown Saginaw if there was a good path
- Should connect city parks by bike
- Connect existing paths with bike lanes to help improve connectivity
- Need bike lane/path on Bay Street. There are a lot of businesses there this could help ease traffic congestion if people have another way to get to work

Rider Experience

- Need better lighting
- Coordinated rides like this (Counter Cruise) help show people great places in Saginaw
- We like the grit of Saginaw. Bike paths through the hood would be nice, but they would gentrify things. And then we would lose the grit
- Could make a history path of Saginaw for bikers and walkers
- Build a boardwalk right on the river in DT with lighting, nature information, art, history

Rider Safety

- Cars can be a problem – they don't always know what to do with bikers
- Need better lighting so bikers feel safe
- Better signage to alert drivers that bikers might be around
- Cars aren't used to seeing bikers
- Making more bike lanes and making them more obvious, for example; coloring them green instead of just the white line, would help make bikers safer

APPENDIX F: Summary of Walking Audit Feedback

Areas That Are Working Well

- Areas around Dow Event Center and Temple Theatre and Bancroft
- Morley Park
- Historic buildings can be an asset
- First Merit Park
- Morley Park
- Anywhere there is green space that's maintained
- South Washington (wide sidewalks, well-lit)

Areas in Need of Improvement

- Water Street and East Genesee
- Add trash cans
- More and better lighting
- Recreation spaces
- Public art
- Preserve and reuse historic buildings
- Raised walkways
- Better access to river
- Clean broken glass, etc.
- Replace stumps with trees
- Repair broken sidewalks
- Sidewalks on bridges over the river
- Activate or redevelop surface parking lots
- Parking lot in front of SASA
- Trim trees that hang over sidewalk
- More public seating
- Recycling bins
- Signage
- Remove or improve fences along river
- Improve safety of mid-block crossings on South Washington

Where Should the Community Focus Resources?

- Fixing up abandoned lots and/or converting them to green space
- Connect riverfront to areas of activity on South Washington and other destinations
- Improve aesthetics (facades, cleanliness)
- Pedestrian experience on and under bridges
- Focus on area around Temple and Dow Event Center and work outward from there
- Reuse warehouse-style buildings
- Connection to regional trails, including signage and lighting
- Redevelop the building across from First Merit Park, as well as the adjacent alley
- Area around new farmers market site
- Dog park along riverfront trail

- Plant more trees
- Three-story building across from Bancroft
- Boardwalk
- Colorful landscaping
- Multicolor brick walkways
- Murals
- Attract more stores and restaurants
- Winter outdoor activities/holiday festival
- Boat launch
- Shuttle between SVSU and downtown for events & nights out

Walking Experience/Safety

- Inconsistent lighting and broken glass caused discomfort
- “Drivers looked surprised that people were walking on the streets”
- Cars drive too fast, “kind of angry,” “getting through town fast is all they want”
- “I would feel awkward walking here alone”
- In general, most participants felt safe but noted potential improvements

