rediscovering the

rouge
acknowledgements

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Dearborn Recreation & Parks Commission
# Table of Contents

- What's happening: purpose
- Where it all started: background information
- Who is dearborn: community profile
- How to get around: connectivity & mobility
- How things are now: swot analysis
- The big picture: project principles
- What to do: strategies & recommendations
- How to move ahead: next steps
- Appendix A
what’s happening: purpose
Rediscovering the Rouge is a planning study conducted by The 2016 Wayne State University Masters of Urban Planning Capstone Team in partnership with the City of Dearborn. The study seeks to develop a strategic framework for the City of Dearborn which provides strategies and recommendations for how to leverage the recreational and economic potentials of the local Rouge River corridor. By incorporating input from various stakeholders and the general public, the study presents an opportunity to transform the Rouge River corridor as an attractive recreational resource in the heart of Dearborn and enhance the city’s image as a desirable place to live, work, and play.

Capstone is a practicum course for Wayne State University’s Graduate Urban Planning Program. This course facilitates a partnership between WSU and planning organizations in Southeast Michigan to provide planning students with an opportunity to create comprehensive reports focusing on solutions to existing community or regional issues. The Capstone course introduces students to real-world planning concepts in the form of conducting research, working for a client, and ultimately producing a final living document to be used as a resource for the partner organization.
project vision

To rediscover the Rouge River as a local and regional natural resource that enhances environmental, educational, recreational, and economic opportunities while increasing community pride, connectivity and quality of life.

The WSU Rouge River Capstone Team

Moe Ayoub, Alex Bilotta, Mahala Clayton, John Culcasi, Amy Farkas, Pablo Golob, Dustin Hagfors, Katrina Reinhart, and Jared Talaga
The particular focus area of this study was selected by the Capstone Team to encompass the greater Rouge River corridor of Dearborn and the adjacent resources and amenities. Focusing on this particular area allowed the team to gain a better understanding of the current conditions and future needs of this corridor as it relates to the project’s goals. The boundary of the focus area is comprised of Ford Rd. in the north, Southfield Fwy. (M-39) in the east, Rotunda Dr. in the south, and W. Outer Dr. / Golfview Dr. in the west.

The focus area covers 3,628 acres within the west side of the City of Dearborn, and a total length of 5.3 miles of both the Lower and Main branches of the Rouge River. This particular focus area was selected by the Capstone Team due to its proximity to major institutional, educational, and retail anchors, as well as existing trails and recreational activities. The focus area includes such anchors as the West Dearborn Downtown Development Authority, Greenfield Village, Henry Ford Estates, University of Michigan – Dearborn, and Henry Ford College. Several neighborhoods, such as Cherry Hill, Fairlane, and Edison Snow, comprise the residential make up of the focus area.
map 1: rediscovering the rouge focus area

city of dearborn - wayne county, michigan

map source: city of dearborn, 2013
Four different principles were utilized to outline the goals and strategies for transforming the Rouge River corridor. Each principle provides a foundation for the ideas and concepts which support the plan and the basis for the recommendations that follow. Taken together, the principles provide the overarching support for the vision of Rediscovering the Rouge.

- **Reconomic**
- **Public Access & Awareness**
- **Public Access & Awareness**
- **Connectivity & Mobility**
where it all started: background information
The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers implemented the creation of the cement sidewalks to stable the banks surrounding the Ford River Rouge Plant and around other manufacturing on the Rouge. Below are their justifications for the project. The project eliminated public legal access to these areas on the river.

Project Requirements
- Rouge River historically requires maintenance dredging of 50,000 to 60,000 cubic yards on a 2 to 5 year cycle; the river was last dredged in 2012 to address portions of the channel that experienced up to 3 feet of shoaling.
- The project currently requires maintenance dredging, and there are plans to dredge the harbor in 2016.

Consequences of Not Maintaining the Project
- Reduction of bulk commodities that pass through the harbor that generate $9.46B annually in business revenue while supporting 53,949 direct, indirect, and induced jobs that produce over $2.58B per year in personal income in transportation and commodity related industries.
- If the channel were closed to commercial traffic, commodities would have to be transported by rail and truck. This would increase annual emission rates by 548M lbs of harmful particulate matter (PM-10) and increase costs by $3.8M due to increased railroad related accidents, and $14.5M due to increased trucking related accidents.
- Light loading; loss of between 1 and 2 feet of channel depth results in increased transportation costs of $4M to $8.6M annually.

Transportation Importance
- Major receiving port on the Great Lakes.
- Commodities include iron ore, petroleum products, coal, slag, cement, limestone, lignite, fuel oil, coke, salt, sand, and gravel.
Brief History of the Rouge River

The Rouge River was once a vibrant ecosystem surrounded by thick hardwood forests and wetlands. But in the late 1700s much of the land surrounding the river was cleared for farming by Native American builders. Since then, the shores of the Rouge River have been home to various communities. The City of Dearborn's humble beginning dates back to the late 18th century when pioneering families claimed land along the banks of the Rouge River to begin their farmsteads. By the mid-19th century, Dearborn Township has turned into a farming community. In the early 1900s the construction of Ford Motor Company's Rouge Manufacturing Complex, attracted many people and substantial urban development to locate in Dearborn along the Rouge River (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 2011).

A Disconnected River

In the 1962 the Rouge River Flood Control Project began. This was a Federal project led by the Army Corps of Engineers that channelized 4.2 miles of the river between Michigan Avenue and Rotunda with a concrete liner. The project provided much needed flood control for Southwest Detroit, and the cities of Dearborn, Allen Park, and Melvindale. The channelization project was completed in 1978 and did indeed provide floodwater control but disconnected the 4.2 mile stretch from public access and eliminated many habitats (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 2011). Future plans by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers entail removal of this structure in order to return the Rouge to its natural state to create new fish habitats and natural riverbanks.

Today's Rouge River

Today, the Rouge River is a 466 square mile watershed made up of three counties, 48 Metro Detroit communities and numerous organizations (Wayne County, 2003). Over 50% of the entire watershed is urban and less than 25% remains undeveloped.
Over the years this urbanization has negatively impacted water quality and increased pollution (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 2011). More than 50 miles of the river flows through public lands, making it one of the most accessible rivers in the state (Wayne County, 2003).

In Dearborn the Rouge River passes through several major institutions including West Downtown Dearborn, the University of Michigan – Dearborn, Henry Ford College, the Henry Ford, and Ford Field Park. The City of Dearborn and several institutions want to see a healthy Rouge River that can serve to unify the community around unique recreational and economic development activities. Recreational activities such as canoeing and kayaking were once distinct expectations that the City of Dearborn had, today this vision is becoming a reality thanks to Heavner Canoe Rentals.

**Planning Efforts**

The following are Rouge River implementation projects identified in the Dearborn 2030 Master Plan and Recreation & Parks Master Plan:

**Dearborn Master Plan:** Conduct a Rouge River Corridor Study, Develop a plan for an active city center to connect the Rouge River & Main Street Michigan, Develop appropriate commercial uses along the Rouge River.

**Dearborn Recreation & Parks Master Plan:** Forestry and natural resources education programs that deal with the Rouge River, Improve non-motorized connectivity and recreation along the Michigan Avenue corridor, Develop and promote a Rouge River Water Trail.
visual 1: historic timeline for the rouge focus area

1780 French settle on the Rouge Banks.

1914 Henry Ford constructs permanent residence along the RR.

1920 US Army Corps of Engineers construct concrete channel.

1972 Judge orders 3 counties and 48 communities to cooperate in cleaning efforts.

1977 Federal Judge orders 3 counties and 48 communities to cooperate in cleaning efforts.

1986 Friends of The Rouge forms and hosts first Rouge Rescue.

1985 Rouge River identified as 1 of 13 areas of concern by the State of Michigan.

1998 U of M-D opens Environment Interpretive Center to provide education to children and the community.


2005 Rouge River Greenway Trail Opens

2012 23 fish, 16 species found.

2016 Canoe rental on the river.
who is dearborn:
community profile
The demographic profile will provide a statistical assessment of the population living nearby the Rouge River (referred to as the Rouge River Study Area or RRSA). The profile will contain an overview of the Rouge River Study Area’s population trends, income, age, educational attainment, homeownership and employment. Comparisons between the study area and the City of Dearborn are meant to provide context on the size and scope of the strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities of the RRSA.

Population Projections

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the population in both Dearborn and the Rouge River Study Area was 98,153 and 9,242 respectively. From 2010 to 2015, ESRI’s population forecasts determined that the population had declined in both the Rouge River Study Area (by 3.7 percent) and city-wide by (0.5 percent). Forecasts project this trend to continue into the year 2020 (see graph below). The projected rate of population decline in the Rouge River Study Area is expected to slow in the next five years while Dearborn’s rate of decline is expected to increase.

graph 1: population trends
Age Demographics

The largest demographic in both the Rouge River Study Area and in Dearborn, per ESRI’s 2015 forecasts, is the Family Forming group (ages of 20-44) representing more than 30% of the total population for each geography. Approximately 50% the Study Area’s population falls under the categories of Mature Family (ages 45-64) or Retirement (ages 65+), significantly in contrast with the City’s 35% proportion of the same groups. The life stage graph below clearly demonstrates that the Study Area has an older population.

Both in Dearborn and in the Rouge River Study Area, the population is expected to continue to age into 2020. There is an apparent difference between the Study Area’s median age and Dearborn’s city-wide statistic, reinforcing the finding that the RRSA is one that is comprised of a more elderly population. ESRI estimates that the median age gap between the Study Area and Dearborn is projected to widen from 10 years in 2010 to 12.3 years by 2020. With a large elderly and aging population residing in the Study Area, it is important that planners and city officials consider this populations unique mobility, health, and servicing needs in the planning process, as well as focus attention towards attracting more School Aged and Family Forming individuals to the area to reinvigorate the community.

Labor Force Characteristics

According to ESRI’s 2015 estimates, both the Rouge River Study Area and Dearborn possess highly skilled populations. Nearly 95% of the greater than 25 year old population in the Rouge River Study Area, and 82% of Dearborn, graduated from at least high school. Over 45% of that same demographic in the Study Area, and 30% of Dearborn’s, obtained at minimum a bachelor degree (see table below).

The skilled populous within the RRSA has brought increased wealth to the neighborhoods, where over 70% of the working population are employed in prosperous white collar and skilled labor positions, compared to the 65% city-wide
This difference is reflected when analyzing the median household income in the City of Dearborn, approximately $45,000, to that of the River Rouge Study Area, $52,000. While there is a difference, trends are positive for both geographies as median household incomes are expected to rise approximately 20% by 2020.

**Homeownership**

According to ESRI, in 2015, the median home value within the Study Area was 19% more than Dearborn’s median home value, or $25,000. Similar to household income analysis, while there is a stark difference in home values between the two geographies, ESRI’s 2020 report projects that home values will rise 30% across the board. This increase in value, coupled with the current diverse housing mix (65% owner-occupied and 35% renter-occupied), bodes well for a healthy housing market and community.
Market Profile
Dearborn has a very unique and diverse market ecosystem comprised of ethnic establishments and corporate powerhouses, which completely differentiates itself from the rest of the Metropolitan Detroit region. These assets go beyond the downtown and engage the entire community, and specifically into the River Rouge Study Area. This analysis serves to better understand the intricacies of this market area, the discretionary spending habits of its patrons, and target market sectors that have the greatest potential for growth and development.

Retail Gap & Market Potential
The Retail Gap Analysis is a popular tool used by planners to gauge market gaps and opportunities that exist within a community. We are measuring whether or not the market area is attracting or losing spending dollars because of the supply, or lack of supply, of industry specific stores. As seen in the chart below, the study area is surprisingly strong with ample supply in most industry sectors, actually attracting spending dollars from outside the city footprint. There are only three sectors that are experiencing a spending leakage, and those are: Furniture & Home Furnishings, Building Materials & Supplies, and Gasoline stores. All but the gasoline stores represent meaningful market data since the gasoline sector always is distinguished as a leakage because of consumer mobility habits and the unpredictability of gas tank filling needs.
How do these findings then translate to entrepreneurship or potential business development opportunities? This can be better understood by analyzing the spending habits of those who live and patron the study area in question. The Market Potential Index (MPI) measures the likelihood of an adult or household to exhibit certain consumer behavior or purchasing patterns as compared to nationwide statistics for various industry sectors. An MPI of 100, as can be seen in the chart below, represents the average US consumer spending behavior. Anything above the average indicates a strong consumer trend that could be leveraged towards a new business or marketing campaign within the study area.

As in the retail gap analysis, the study area exhibits many strengths with 10 different industry sectors measuring at or above an MPI of 100. Most notably, the analysis reaffirms a market opportunity in the Home Goods sector, with an MPI of 101, and a significant market leakage factor as previously discussed with the Furniture & Home Furnishings, and Building Materia & Supplies stores.

Nevertheless, even if the MPI does not correspond to a specific market area leakage, there still may be an opportunity to strengthen an existing surplus and attract even more patrons to spend their money at existing or newly developed establishments by leveraging known consumer habits.

Tapestry
The Tapestry Segmentation, a powerful planning tool, is designed by ESRI with the intention of helping municipalities better understand their residents so that they can better serve and plan for their needs. These segments are organized into 67 different profiles based off of specific demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, which are then scientifically proven to predict resident lifestyle choices, including both consumer habits and how these residents prefer to spend their free time.

The River Rouge Study Area is an area with great strengths and opportunities, but continues to challenge planners with many questions as the community continues to age and transition from one life stage to another. While large anchors within the community unveil their individual redevelopment and growth plans, we cannot accurately predict how successful they will be nor how it will impact
or transform the community profile through the tides of market forces. As of now, these analyses and statistics are representative of the current conditions that exist within the study area.

The River Rouge Study Area contains seven different Tapestry Segments, with the three most prominent being Retirement Communities (38.9%), Rustbelt Traditions (22.6%), and the Salt of the Earth Segment (12.7%). These three segments, all above nationwide proportions of population, share many commonalities but also differ enough that they warrant their own distinction.

**Retirement Communities**

These communities typically consist of small households in single-family styled homes or independent living facilities. Often these residents do not have a vehicle, are limited in their knowledge and use of technology, but are still mobile and keep up with the news. They take pride in fiscal responsibility, but often have below average net worth. They enjoy going to the theater, golfing, taking vacations, cooking, but also and dining out. The Retirement Community Segment is one that is brand loyal and will spend more for their favorites, but outside of those brands they prefer to be frugal and are very conscious of coupons and sales. This group is health conscious, and this represents opportunity at many levels.

**Profile Characteristics:**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tr>
<td>Median Age:</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income:</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
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</table>
Rustbelt Traditions
The backbone of older industrial cities around the Great Lakes, this large and growing market of residents are a mix of married couples and singles who live in older single-family homes. They are predominately white collar and skilled-trades with low unemployment rates. This group is cut from the same cloth, with hard-working and family-oriented values who like to spend time at home or in the community, and prefer to buy American-made products. They have modest incomes, with some households already retired on fixed incomes, but most have above average net worth. Most lived, worked, and played in the same communities for many years.

Salt of the Earth
These residents are entrenched in their traditional lifestyles. The people are older, the homes are older, and their children have most likely moved away. They still cherish family time, gardening, preparing healthy homemade meals, and embrace the outdoors and active recreation. They aren’t technology savvy but know how to navigate modern conveniences — still preferring traditional face-to-face contact for more routine activities. These residents are cost conscious, are loyal to brands, but have a focus on buying American.
Land-Use Summary

As Dearborn continues to grow and evolve to meet the needs of its community members, the zoning and land use patterns must also adapt to complement progress. The purpose of the land use system adapted here should reflect the shared principles of the Dearborn community and encourage investment in its foundational pillars; home, business, and institution.

The current Euclidian-based uses are defined broadly so that they do not promote innovation or specific developments within their borders. The uses that define Dearborn are oversimplified into these categories; Residential, Commercial, Industrial/Technology, Recreation/Floodplain, Civic, Institutional, and the River. These categories have lead to several cases of nonconforming uses among exiting use, and the future use plans defined in the Master Plan should be used to update/enforce the current zoning uses.
map 2: existing land use
map source: city of dearborn, 2013
Dearborn’s 2030 Master Plan outlines the planned visions for future uses among seven sharply defined and prioritized categories. These categories will uphold the characteristics that currently define Dearborn as a great community, but allow for growth among its most important qualities of unity, sustainability, and diversity.

The future land use visions are Great Neighborhoods, Main Street Michigan Ave, Destination Commercial District, Knowledge Economy, Advanced Manufacturing & Logistics, Natural Resources, and Regional Collaboration. The City of Dearborn’s decision to implement a form base code in the West Downtown is a welcomed asset, which has the potential to reinforce access to the Rouge River and enhance these use visions. With an emphasis on shaping public spaces, the use of form base code along Michigan Avenue and on key arterial streets (i.e. This system of land use would bring about several desirable outcomes, including creating more uniform streetscapes along arterial routes, encouraging the use of non-motorized transit for current residents, and developing higher density residential along Michigan Avenue. Additionally, if successful the extension of form based code to reach employment areas could promote further innovation and entrepreneurship. In general, the introduction of a form base code can help support the creation of a more pedestrian-friendly and mixed-use community nearby the Rouge River (CMAP, 2013).

Along the riverfront the existing land use is considered Recreational/Floodplain and the future land use is the similar, considered Natural Resource in use. Our recommendations will serve to meet the goals defined in the 2030 Master Plan to transform the Rouge River into a cultural and recreational asset. These recommendations will connect residents and visitors alike to the city and the river, through blueways and greenways that will have sites to highlight the historical significance of Dearborn and provide spaces for education and recreation while preserving natural resources.
how to get around:
connectivity & mobility
Dearborn has a variety of transportation options at its disposal that is unrivaled by many other communities in Metro Detroit. Aside from some large thoroughfares like Michigan Avenue and Ford Road that transverse the city, Dearborn is also connected to the metropolitan area by two freeways, Interstate-94 and Southfield Freeway (M-39). This road connectivity allows for visitors from all parts of the region to access Dearborn quickly via personal vehicle. More importantly, this connection is prevalent within the Rouge River study area and an important component to consider with regards to accessing all that the area has to offer.

While it is not surprising that Dearborn has a strong presence of road infrastructure, it may be a surprise to discover that Dearborn is quickly becoming more accessible via mass transit. The Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan (RTA) is proposing a mass transit overhaul that would directly impact Dearborn and the Rouge River study area. There has always been a presence of mass transit in Dearborn via bus, but the selection of mass transit has the potential to grow and diversify over the next decade. This diversification has the power to make Dearborn more of a destination due to improved accessibility via multiple modes of transportation.

Mass transit currently plays a minimal role within the study area with Michigan Avenue possessing most of the transit options. Michigan Avenue is serviced by three different bus routes operated by the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART). Route 200 which runs along Michigan Avenue and has a transit stop located at an entrance for the Rouge River Gateway Trail operates 365 days a year. This route runs to Downtown Detroit during rush hour (6:00AM to 9:30AM & 3:00PM to 6:30PM, Monday through Friday) and out to the neighboring cities of Wayne and Westland. During off-peak hours, the service begins in Dearborn opposed to Downtown Detroit.
The two other SMART routes that run within the Rouge River study area, Route 250 and Route 140, operate Monday through Friday and stop in front of the Dingell Transit Center. The total ridership of these two routes combined with Route 200 amounts to 681,333 riders over the last year. This means that there are an abundance of individuals who travel throughout the Rouge River study area daily. These riders could potentially utilize the vast network of trails and other destinations within Dearborn, increasing the amount of visitors to the area.

SMART is not the only provider of bus service to the Rouge River study area. Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) also provides bus service to the area with service that runs throughout the City of Detroit. There are four bus lines that all end at Fairlane Town Center. While these bus lines only run to the edge of our study area, it is important to consider them as they have the potential to allow riders to access the trail network via the expansive Fairlane Town Center parking lot and they connect to the City of Detroit on weekends, contrary to the service that SMART provides.

The existing mass transit options within the study area are expansive in respect to the rest of Metro Detroit, but these options could potentially expand further with improvements from the RTA. In November 2016, the RTA is seeking a $2.9 billion millage to improve mass transit options in Metro Detroit. The Rouge River study area will see a few of these improvements that will further make it accessible to visitors from all parts of the region. The millage would fund a commuter rail network that would have a stop at the Dingell Transit Center. This stop is located across Michigan Avenue from an entrance to the Rouge River Gateway Trail. Commuter rail access would allow for visitors from as far away as Ann Arbor to access the study area via mass transit and this could potentially increase the amount of visitors substantially.

SMART ridership over the past year of 681,333 represents the potential to attract visitors to the Rouge River area who access it via mass transit.

<table>
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<th>Route 250</th>
<th>Route 140</th>
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<td>500,145</td>
<td>113,089</td>
<td>68,099</td>
<td>681,333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An additional component of the RTA’s plan is the addition of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) along Michigan Avenue. BRT is an express bus service that looks like a train and operates like a subway system. This service would have limited stops along Michigan Avenue contrary to the traditional bus service currently provided by DDOT and SMART in order to move riders quicker throughout the region. The RTA expects to begin BRT service along Michigan Avenue by 2026 pending millage approval and this could have a monumental impact to the Rouge River study area. One of the proposed Michigan Avenue BRT stops is located in front of the Dingell Transit Center and at an entrance to the Rouge River Gateway Trail. The addition of a BRT station within close proximity to the trail network allows for visitors from multiple parts of Metro Detroit to access the trails quickly and easily.
via mass transit. Ease of access via multiple modes of transportation is important to ensure that all types of visitors from around Metro Detroit have the ability to access the trail network and enjoy all that the Rouge River study area has to offer.

The RTA Master Plan will provide BRT service and commuter rail access to the Rouge River study area.
Rouge River Gateway Trail

The Rouge River Gateway Trail offers a 1.5 mile shared use path for cyclists and pedestrians. The overall journey provides a very scenic experience, offering users the opportunity to interact with nature. The Trail heads south from the Hines Park Trail, through the Henry Ford Community College campus. This asphalt trail then passes alongside the University of Michigan-Dearborn campus and converges at Fair Lane Drive. The trail has access points from Michigan Avenue in Dearborn, from Fair Lane, and from the University of Michigan-Dearborn campus.

The City of Dearborn has been anticipating the extension of the Rouge River Gateway Trail. In Spring 2016 construction began and the Rouge Gateway Trail Extension Project behind Andiamo Restaurant on Michigan Avenue. The shared use path will link the regional trail head on Michigan and the bike lanes on S Brady Dr.

There are also a number of foot trails that connect to the Gateway Trail that are accessible from the Environmental Interpretive Center at the University of Michigan-Dearborn Campus. This Environmental Study Area features the Rouge River to the western border, an 8-acre lake, and a floodplain forest. Overall, the journey provides a very scenic experience, offering users the opportunity to interact with nature.

Legacy Trails

There are a number of Legacy Trails in the Rouge River Study Area, including the Parkway Trail, which is a foot trail that runs alongside the Lower Rouge River, and the Waterfall Loop Trail. This mountain-biking trail was developed by the Michigan Association of Mountain Bikers and is on a parcel of land under Wayne County Parks jurisdiction. The Waterfall Loop Trail runs on the North side of the Lower Rouge River and continues along the bank of the Main Branch of the
Rouge. It provides a scenic view of the Henry Ford Estate. In preparation for an upcoming Fish Passage Project, Wayne County Parks has proposed improvements to this Trail, including a bridge connecting both side near the Henry Ford Estates and the Jensen Damn.

**Urban Bikeways**

Although the urban bicycling facilities in the Study Area are limited to a 0.3 mile designated bike lane on S Brady Road, in 2012 the City of Dearborn the passed a city wide Complete Street Resolution, with the directive to develop a Non-Motorized Transportation Plan (NMTP). In this plan, there is a commitment from the City to incorporate bike paths and greenways to connect the existing urban and natural systems and to improve multimodal transportation choices.

**River Rouge Water Trail**

Local partners, including Friends of the Rouge, are working on developing a water trail on the 25 miles of the Lower Rouge from Canton to the Detroit River. The majority of the river corridor is protected within Wayne County Parks, and although it would be ideal to develop launches and amenities, logjams have become a major focus to keeping the route open. However, logjams downstream are less prevalent. Canoe recreation and access has been limited, however as of June 2016, Heavner Canoe Rentals are providing services from Ford Field on Saturdays throughout the summer months.
map 4: existing non-motorized transportation
map source: city of dearborn, wayne county parks 2016
how are things now:
swot analysis
SWOT analysis is a structured planning method that is used to define the goals and objectives of a project and their potential viability or lack thereof. The SWOT acronym stands for: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. SWOT is used in the preliminary brainstorming portion of a project after research has been conducted. At this early stage, SWOT helps to identify the various possibilities, issues, outcomes and consequences of a project. This forward thinking helps researchers to tackle potential issues early on and ensure the innovation and success of a project.

A SWOT analysis was conducted early on in during the planning and brainstorming phase of this report. The analysis findings were used to inform recommendations portion herein.

**strengths**

- Historic narrative and regional significance
- Highly trafficked area
- Dominant institutional and industrial anchors
- Significant water resource: the Rouge River Watershed
- Continually improving water quality and flow in Rouge River
- Regional connectivity to existing trails by water and non-motorized use
- Distinct cultural identity, major cultural assets, and tourist attractions
- Expected income growth
- Stable tax base
- Walkable distance to amenities, essential services, transit centers, and downtown districts
- Extensive public spaces and greenspaces
- Political, public, and private interest in expanding existing active transportation facilities
- Abundance of parking around trail networks
weaknesses

- Too much surface parking
- Lack of awareness of trail network
- Fragmented trail systems
- Trail systems lack wayfinding, trash receptacles, emergency call stations, lighting, restrooms, benches and other amenities
- Lack of municipal/local control on state and corporate properties
- Lack of autonomy to act
- Lack of communication/collaboration with stakeholders (corporate, regional, state, local)
- Condition of river (e.g. depth, flow, quality, logjam issues)
- State ownership of major thoroughfares (e.g. Michigan Ave.)
- NIMBYs
- Poor public perception of Rouge River
- Lack of recreational activities and event programming for specific populations (e.g. senior citizens)
- Disconnection between existing transit services (i.e. regional fare system)

opportunities

- Create non-motorized right-of-way to connect transit facilities and trails
- Regional connectivity (e.g. Iron Belle & Detroit Riverfront Trails)
- Leverage strategic investment to spur development and rebranding
- Better coordination with stakeholders. Creation of network alliances
- Recreational opportunities – “Trail Towns”; “River Towns”
- Framework for interactive diversity in programming and events
- Neighborhood connectivity (Campus, employment centers)
- Adapt historic narrative for tourist recreational developments (e.g. boat tours)
- Creation of festivals and events
- Reconomics – increase in recreation results in increased economic development
- Riverfront developments
- Promote and expand river trails
- Add amenities and wayfinding to river trails
- Create better directories and PR to promote and direct mass transit users to River Rouge trail
- Recruit and retain younger demographic (Ford)

threats

- Natural ecological function of river produces unpredictable conditions (e.g. flood events)
- Fragmented land ownership
- Potential maintenance issues
- Obstructions to development
- Poor coordination and funding
- Auto dependent culture
- Henry Ford and FMC – influence, balance of power, conflicts of interest
- Neighborhoods and Michigan Mountain Biking Association – potential development obstruction
- Lack of enforcement on Legacy Trails
- Potential for community polarization during political cycle
- Difference in cultural uses of amenities and facilities
- Concrete channel
- Potential future (negative) changes in water quality
the big picture:
project principles
community vision and engagement

Purpose
Garnering community input and support is an essential part of community planning, as residents generally know what is best for their own communities. In order to compile a set of recommendations that would be relevant to Dearborn residents, we found community engagement to be an essential component of the brainstorming process.

Methods
Surveying was the primary method by which community input was obtained. A two-tier approach for collecting surveys was utilized: 1). Community surveys were distributed in public spaces, and 2.) Community organizations and entities were contacted, requesting that their leaders, administrators and/or members fill out the survey provided. The recommendations included in this report were partly informed by the survey results.

Due to the expedited nature of the project, the limited time available for surveying and the lack of resources available, the survey results are not representative of the Dearborn community as a whole. Although at least thirty community organizations were contacted to make the survey more inclusive, the majority of these organizations were not able to be included in the process due to the short survey collection period.

Surveys were completed by fifty-four current and former city residents, primarily from the West Dearborn Area. Half of the surveys were administered to individuals at the Dearborn Farmer's and Artisan market, while the other half was administered to members of the Dearborn Garden Club. As such, the survey sample is biased. The survey results have not been corrected for sampling bias, so the results of the survey should be regarded with this in mind.
Community Engagement Findings

The top six qualities that residents like about Dearborn and their neighborhoods are as follows:

1. Quality of living
2. Walkability
3. Parks and Recreation
4. Housing Conditions
5. Safety
6. Diversity

The top three qualities that community residents find most problematic in Dearborn and their neighborhoods are as follows:

1. Business Variety
2. Transportation
3. City Image

The top six solutions for these problems, according to community residents, are as follows:

1. Increase Business Variety
2. Increase Transportation Options
3. Provide More Outdoor Activities
4. Improve Streetscape
5. Increase Walkability
6. Improve Existing Parks

The top six improvements that would encourage residents to visit and interact with the Rouge River are as follows:

1. More Activities Near River
2. Festivals and Events Near River
3. Better Water Quality
4. More Information About River
5. More Trails
6. Better Connected Trails

Community Comments

“As a Muslim, I enjoy the availability of many places of worship and the ease of access to them. However, I wish there were more places to enjoy aside from restaurants all over the place.”

“Parks are not dog friendly; Walking and riding a bike are dangerous due to traffic running stop signs”

“Dearborn needs to capture the tourism industry and promote city as such along with new “shoppable” Michigan shops inviting money to be spent locally!!”

“Add student housing, connect U of M to downtown, make crossing Michigan Ave. Easier [and] safer”

“Improve walking paths behind Andiamo”
“Add more low cost activities. Improve streetscape on roads. Improve maintenance of city parks. Trash pick up. Work with businesses and county to improve roadway easements. Terrible appearance on Ford Road and Telegraph Rd. easements”

“My son was hit by a car twice while crossing at the Outer Drive and Cherry Hill intersection.”


“I honestly do not know much about [the river] to form an opinion. Which is probably part of a problem where getting to the river and knowing about it should be easier.”
what to do: strategies & recommendations
economics

If we asked citizens and business owners in the City of Dearborn about the benefits of having a park or recreational amenity in their community, their responses would most likely identify the health, social, and environmental benefits of these features. While these traditional notions are not disputed, there is another far greater opportunity that has not yet been fully realized, recreation as economic development or, Reconomics. Across the nation, outdoor recreation and its associated industries have contributed $646 billion and 6.1 million jobs to the American economy. This figure includes both blue and green recreational tourism, associated increases in property values and tax revenues in proximity to these blue and green features, as well as related business development which service and create products for this market sector. This trend has also proliferated into our state and local economies, where MDOT discovered that just the industries and activities associated with bicycling and kayaking have contributed over $800 million in annual State economic impact, and $21 million in the City of Detroit.

The City of Dearborn can capitalize on the Reconomics movement just as other surrounding communities have, but with the potential of creating a unique dynamic that distinguishes them from the rest. The following goals and objectives illustrate and establish a path towards developing this untapped recreational growth sector, and highlight the priority that Reconomics should play in local municipal policy.
Goals & Objectives
1) Make the Rouge River a Local and Regional Recreational Destination
a. Create an image or brand to market the Rouge River.
b. Build on historic and cultural assets (Dearborn History Museum, Henry Ford Estates, Greenfield Village etc.).
c. Tie into the events and activities established by the representative governing board.
d. Ensure that the natural ecological condition is supportive of the recreational activities.

2) Leverage Rouge River Recreational Assets to Increase Public and Private Economic Opportunities
a. Create a targeting effort for locations where Rouge River assets have shaped infrastructure that is conducive to both business and residential uses.
b. Inventory publicly held land within the River Rouge study area and cultivate a strategy for its preservation and controlled development, sensitive to market forces and the vision of the community.

3) Connect Local Partners, Invested Community Groups and Residents to the Rouge River / Trail Development
a. Create a representative governing entity overseeing operations, organizing, managing, and programming the activities along the Rouge River.
b. Create an image or brand to market the Rouge River Study Area with plans to expand scope of the campaign.
   i. Define the entity’s geographic jurisdiction (i.e. trail route, sites abiding the Rouge River, etc.).

Recommendations (The following recommendations are an applied approach to a few of the Reconomics goals and objectives listed above:)

1. Brand Identity
To enhance and promote the identity of Dearborn’s historic Rouge River corridor and its many recreational amenities, we are recommending the creation of a brand identity. In particular, we anticipate that the establishment of a well-designed and connected trail system will become an integral part of Dearborn’s recreational infrastructure and will require an iconic visual identity to truly exploit its full Reconomics potential. In addition, given the number of community based anchors and institutions surrounding the Rouge River corridor, we believe that opportunity exists to work in collaboration with these local anchors in establishing a brand identity for the trail system and river corridor.

2. Newman Street and Dearborn Station Target Area
Newman Street, in connection with Dearborn Station, has unique architectural character and a wealth of converging recreational assets, which in combination create a crucible of potential economic development opportunities. This area should be marketed, targeted, and enforced in such a manner that it would become a destination for those who seek the green urban lifestyle.
3. A New and Sustainable Green and Blue Design Guideline

The Green and Blue Design Guidelines would aim to achieve an ecologically sensitive physical development outcome for all redevelopment and new developments in the Rouge River study area. This transformation would catapult the community from its 19th century fabric, into a 21st century city that respects its rich heritage while moving towards a new sustainable vision. These guidelines will increase the natural landscape, restore the natural hydrologic cycle, increase vegetative cover, improve air quality, and create an all-around more livable environment for all.

4. Rouge River Cooperative Council

The Rouge River traverses many different neighborhoods, attracting the interests of a variety of stakeholders in the City of Dearborn. As seen in the Trail Town programs across the State of Michigan, forming a single governing coalition would provide numerous and diverse benefits which include improving the level of collaboration amongst stakeholders, aggregating what was once a fractured set of resources, improving the level of programming and cooperation amongst events and festivals, protecting the ecological sanctity of the river resource, and leading to a more unified and visible Rouge River.

The following are suggested stakeholders to be considered for a committee:

- Ford Motor Company
- Henry Ford College
- Fairlane Mall
- City of Dearborn
- Greenfield Village
- Community Groups
- WDDA
- University of Michigan Dearborn
- Henry Ford Estates
- Wayne County
- Dearborn Historical Museum
- Businesses along Michigan Avenue
- Nearby Residents
Providing public access to the Rouge River can play an integral role in connecting the region and Dearborn's residents, especially families, to the natural world. This is becoming more and more important as research shows that Americans are spending most of their time indoors, disconnected and negatively impacting both public health and the social constructs of our society. The public access vision for the Rouge River intends to comprehensively reverse this troubling reality, improving a variety of community features and engaging key stakeholders for the creation of a more walkable, bikeable, and accessible Rouge River community.

Public access is synonymous with the success of the Rouge River - it embodies the essence of its rediscovery.

Goals & Objectives

1. Enhance the Experience of Visitors and Locals by Guiding Them to Sites, Attractions, and Destinations Around the Rouge River
   a. Create a physical way-finding system.
   b. Create electronic maps and documents to be posted on the cities website and social media outlets.

2. Increase Recreational Opportunities and Access Points Along the Rouge River
   a. Provide public lockers for canoes and kayaks.
   b. Strategically create scenic overlooks that could be used for fishing in the future.
   c. Improve existing launch spots and identify locations for new launch areas.
   d. Identify locations for installing bicycle parking and maintenance stations.
3. Promote and Enhance Public Usability of the Discovery Trail, Existing Trails, and Park System

   a. Provide pick-up and drop-off shuttle service around the City.
   b. Increase public safety by providing emergency and public lighting.
   c. Encourage local developers and entrepreneurs to build private recreational facilities.

Recommendations  (The following recommendations are applied approaches for Public Access Goals & Objectives.)

1. West Dearborn Loop Wayfinding System

   The City of Dearborn should seek to let visitors and locals know that there is a major natural resource that runs through the City's West Downtown. A wayfinding system will help identify the Rouge River public access sites and destinations around West Downtown Dearborn for visitors and locals alike. The wayfinding system can create awareness of attractions while increasing a visitor's comfort level by guiding them clearly along the Rouge River Study Area. A wayfinding system can also serve to enhance the overall image and civic identity of the Rouge River.

West Dearborn Loop Wayfinding System – Implementation Strategy

   The Rouge River Study Area Wayfinding System should focus on including the following elements:
   a. Identification signs (QR Codes/Interpretive Signs)
   b. Directional signs
   c. Orientation signs
   d. Regulation signs
   e. Support materials
All of these sign types will work together as a system to create a sense of place and provide a positive experience for visitors. Think of the entire wayfinding system as a “trail of crumbs” that clearly directs visitors to destinations while also promoting the local brand and turning it into energy and excitement.

Identification Signs Provide the First Impression of the Rouge River Study Area
a. Creates a civic identity, sense of place and enhances the image of the Rouge River.
b. Establishes arrival at a destination.

Directional Signs are the Finding Component for a Wayfinding System
a. Directs pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicular traffic.
b. Should direct vehicular traffic to parking lots/structures.
c. Build awareness of destinations.

Orientation Signs Offer an Overview of the Rouge River Study Area and Attractions
a. “You are here.”, “5 minutes to the Rouge River Greenway Trail.”
b. Identifies boundaries, entry/exits, attractions, etc.

Regulation Signs Communicate Instructions, Warnings and Other Information Related to Safety
a. No swimming, fishing sign.
b. Speed limit sign.
The Wayfinding System Can be Supported by the Following Support Materials but the Design for These Materials Should be Consistent with the Wayfinding System Itself in Terms of Logos, Color Palette, and Symbols

a. Printed materials.
b. Maps.
c. Website.
d. Smart phone apps.
Regional Wayfinding Strategy – Site Specific

a. Edge of the City – Direct regional users traveling by vehicles to West Downtown Dearborn.
   i. Telegraph, Michigan Avenue, Southfield Freeway, Ford Road, Interstate 94.

b. District Edge – Direct users traveling by vehicles and non-motorized modes to smaller sub districts such as the Rouge River Study Area, Ford Historic Homes District, major streets and trails, major landmarks, and Ford Field.
   i. Outer Drive, Cherry Hill, Oakwood Boulevard, Evergreen, Military.

c. Inside the District – Direct users traveling by vehicles or non-motorized modes to key destinations and parking.

d. At the Pedestrian Level – Direct non-motorized travelers to all trails and destinations.
   i. Signage located throughout the district directing travelers to trails and the key destinations similar to above.

2. Evaluate Existing Recreational Programs & Facilities

The Recreation and Parks department should examine and evaluate all recreational facilities and programs. The evaluation will need to consider the age, physical condition, safety, accessibility, and purpose of the facilities and programs. After this evaluation the department can make decisions on how to allocate financial and staff support to enhancing recreational opportunities along the Rouge River and Ford Field Park.

a. Increase public recreation facilities, such as; kayak and canoe launches, bike paths, fishing spots, swimming spots, etc.
b. Increase year round opportunities for outdoor recreation, such as cross country skiing, snow shoeing, etc.

3. Coordinate & Cooperate with Local Partners
The City should coordinate and cooperate with local institutions and anchor corporations in order to enhance public usability of the river.

a. U of M-Dearborn, Henry Ford College, Wayne County Parks – Provide public lighting and Emergency Blue Light Phones along the Discovery Trail and existing trails.

b. City of Dearborn, Ford Motor Company, SMART – Provide shuttles to and from strategic locations around the Rouge River.

c. During site plan review, encourage local developers and entrepreneurs who are develop property in West Downtown Dearborn to create private and/or public recreational facilities such as fire pits.
Running through 48 municipalities, the Rouge River Watershed's ecological significance is paramount, as the watershed influences the hydrology of the southeast portion of the state and beyond. Despite its broad influence over the physical and ecological condition of the region, the Rouge River remains largely undervalued and misunderstood. Dearborn residents hold mixed perceptions regarding the Rouge River's value and condition. While many residents treasure the resource and would like to see it developed for more recreational opportunities, some residents are unaware of that the Rouge runs through their community, and many residents' perceptions of the river are based on memories of the Rouge's toxic past. This disparity of perception indicates a gap in the understanding of the Rouge River’s current condition and what measures residents can take to improve its use and function. The recommendations presented in this section provide the city with a path towards realizing the Rouge River’s full potential. By enabling and managing ecological restoration, and encouraging public participation in conservation efforts, the City of Dearborn will allow residents to ‘Rediscover the Rouge’.

Goals & Objectives

1. Promote Public Awareness About the Rouge River Watershed
   a. Increase accessibility to information about natural public spaces around the watershed through the creation and distribution of Arabic language and print resources.
   b. Develop and promote an annual Rouge River Festival at Ford Field Park.
   c. Create a mobile river exhibit and distribute educational river kits.

2. Improve and Establish Green Corridors
   a. Implement a riverfront riparian buffer zone, such as the USDA Forest Service’s three zone system, in targeted areas.
   b. Improve the use and function of existing green spaces by through landscape naturalization.
   c. Construct storm water capture mechanisms, such as rain gardens and bio...
swales, in public spaces.

d. Create flora and fauna guide to inform residents about how to alter their personal uses of water and encourage sustainable practices (e.g. the creation of personal rain gardens, planting of native flora and fauna species).

3. Develop Public Engagement and Educational Opportunities in Public Spaces
a. Add new interpretive signage to well-used existing public recreational areas and public spaces.
b. Introduce a mobile trail app.

Recommendations (The following recommendations are an applied approach of the Preservation and Education goals and objectives.)

1. Annual Rouge River Festival at Ford Field Park
“Rediscovering the Rouge,” an annual River Festival would present a unique opportunity to simultaneously promote stewardship of the Rouge River Watershed, bolster interest in Dearborn as a burgeoning Trail Town and stimulate economic activity. By offering a combination of educational and recreational activities as well as entertainment, the River Festival would bring visitors from neighboring communities throughout Southeast Michigan into the West Downtown area. Profits collected from the event could be contributed to a fund for future preservation and development.

2. Mobile Rouge River Exhibit and Educational River Kits
Bring the Rouge River to Dearborn Schools, with a mobile river museum and educational river kits. Rolling river exhibits enable classrooms and student groups to engage in critical thinking about water systems and water conservation. Exhibits encourage students to improve their water conservation practices and knowledge and increases student interest in STEM professions at an early age. In addition, Educational River Kits can be used as an educational tool for teachers and informal educators. Complete with lesson plans and hands on activities, this kit can be distributed through the public library system.

3. Promoting Personal and Public Ecological Restoration at Ford Field Park
Constructing bioswales and a rain garden in Ford Field Park at three potential locations would provide a space for ecosystem restoration that can be witnessed by the community. Green infrastructure such as rain gardens and bioswales help to manage overflow and pollutant runoff. Rain gardens are a versatile option for nearly any space. Both features collect runoff from impermeable surfaces or point sources such as gutters, sidewalks, or paths. Bioswales are linear bioretention basins that can treat larger amounts of stormwater and are suited to larger spaces near parking lots or along roadways. To encourage citizens to implement their own natural landscape treatments at home, educational signage is suggested with a laminated returnable How-To Guide.
3. Site Specific Implementation of Riverfront Riparian Buffer Zones

Existing parks and trail systems in Dearborn create a network of green corridors that can be improved by implementing restoration projects and by encourage citizen involvement in public efforts. As part of restoration efforts, Dearborn should consider implementing the US Forest Service’s three-zone riparian buffer system along the riverfront. Riparian buffers are critical elements of watersheds, primarily due to their protection of surface and groundwater quality from impacts related to human land use. Buffers also assist in erosion control, improve tree canopy cover, attract pollinators and wildlife, and add to the landscape value of an area.
In order to increase sustainable practices that enhance Dearborn’s natural environment, a Native Flora and Fauna guide should be introduced and made publically available at these sites. This guide would potentially inform residents about how to alter their personal uses in order to benefit hydrology and wildlife and encourage sustainable practices such as the creation of personal rain gardens. In addition, the brochure would provide identification information on endemic flora and fauna.

Maintenance of riparian buffers to match native ecological conditions is one of the most effective means of protecting multiple Outstanding Resource Values (ORVs), including water quality, hydrology, stormwater management, unique species and natural communities, and watershed ecosystem function (Lowerance et al., 2005). Within the study area, the Rouge varies in width, so the general recommendation for a buffer zone are as follows:


4. Develop Interpretive Signage in Well-Traversed Public Spaces and Along Public Trails

Carefully curated interpretive signage is an essential component of successful urban trail systems. Signage located in well-used public spaces and along trails acts as both a place making and an engaging educational tool. New signage placed at Trail Heads makes trails more visible to passerby and creates visual cues for starting and end points. Information should be conveyed in an eye-catching, sequenced form, providing information about native flora and fauna, wildlife, and watershed ecology. Additional signage with historical information about Dearborn, the Rouge River, and their evolution through time would create a contiguous narrative along the riverfront. Information should be placed in spatially relevant areas. Visual displays and auditory programs could be cheaply integrated into signage through the use of embedded QR codes.

5. Create Trail Application

The creation of a trail app would allow for the integration of technology and natural spaces, rebranding the trails for a new generation. A new app would invite social chatter about the trail, promoting the discovery of the Rouge River and its trail system. The app would integrate educational, cultural and historical information, providing spatial context for its users. Users would be able to curate their own experiences, create individualized maps and locate nearby food and retail. Additionally, the app would encourage healthy lifestyles with calorie counting and measuring distance travelled.
Many cities are starting from the beginning when it comes to multi-modal connectivity planning, but Dearborn already possesses the foundational infrastructure needed to take the community to the next level of connectivity. Mass transit and biking amenities are prevalent within the study area because of previous municipal efforts that recognized the opportunity. Even though, there is still a disconnect between past projects and what Dearborn could be once there is a fully connected multi-modal system that allows both residents and visitors to transverse the community without the need of an automobile.

The City of Dearborn has the ability to take this multi-modal foundation and expand upon it further to create stronger connectivity within the study area. The Dearborn has been anticipating the extension of the Rouge River Gateway Trail to further promote the Rouge River as a desirable civic resource. By providing multi-modal connections to increase Citywide and neighborhood connectivity, the River could be linked with parks, schools, transit nodes, natural areas, tourist attractions, as well as centers of resources including Henry Ford College, University of Michigan-Dearborn, and the Henry Ford Campus.

The following goals and objectives are opportunities that Dearborn can utilize in order to create a stronger inter-modal network between existing infrastructure, a system that will enhance the Rouge River trail network and improve multi-modal travel around the community.
Goals & Objectives

1. Create a Connected Greenway Along the Rouge River with Continuous Multi-use Paths
   a. Reinforce linkages by building upon the City of Dearborn and the Region's existing system of trails and bicycle facilities.
   b. Strengthen regional partnerships and build collaboratively on planned routes within the City of Dearborn and connections from neighbouring municipalities.

2. Enhance the Relationship Between West Downtown Dearborn and the Rouge River Gateway Trail
   a. Identify key connecting elements between the Rouge River Gateway Trail and the central business district.
   b. Create a loop network system to provide users with excursions from the Rouge River Gateway Trail to West Downtown Dearborn.

3. Promote Using Mass Transit and Other Forms of Transportation to Access the Trails and West Downtown Dearborn
   a. Improve transit amenities and signage to attract more riders.
   b. Enhance the pedestrian experience through improved infrastructure and access.

Recommendations (The following recommendations are an applied approach of the Connectivity goals and objectives.)

1. Dearborn Discovery Trail
   The implementation of a continuous trail system along the Rouge River would utilize completed sections of the Rouge Gateway Trail, improvements to the Parkway Trail along the Lower Rouge, and new cycling facilities in West Downtown Dearborn. The result would be a loop network system, integrating bicycle and pedestrian paths surrounding the Rouge River, with businesses and communities.
map 6: proposed non-motorized connectors
map source: city of dearborn, 2016, wayne county parks, 2016
more of a network offering a number of choices of paths that can connect neighborhoods, centers of resources, and transit nodes.

Shared Used Paths
These bikeways are physically separated from motorized vehicular traffic by an open space or barrier. Shared use paths can provide a commuting route as well as an enjoyable recreational opportunity. They typically have a width of 10 feet and are either within the highway right-of-way or within an independent right-of-way. Both scenarios can be utilized within the Dearborn Discovery Trail. As indicated in Map (x), sections of the Loop where these paths would be suitable include along the Lower Rouge River (currently the Parkway Trail), portions of W Outer Drive, Oakwood Boulevard, and Village Drive.

Buffered Bike Lanes
These are conventional bike lanes augmented by a buffer space to create distance between the cyclist and the adjacent motor vehicle or parking space. This buffer space is marked with 2 solid white lines and can contain diagonal cross hatching or chevron markings. Due to the commuter and recreational nature of the Dearborn Discovery Trail, a buffer could increase bicyclist comfort and confidence, contribute to the perception of safety and appeal to a wider cross-section of users. Buffered bike lanes are a recommended intervention for Newman Street.

Bicycle Boulevards
Bicycle boulevards are streets that have low motorized traffic speeds and volumes and are designed to give cyclists travel priority. Design elements include way-finding to guide bicyclists to key destinations, shared lane markings, crossing improvements where the boulevard crosses major streets, and traffic calming measures. Although bike boulevards should be long enough to provide continuity over two to five miles, they can also be used for shorter distances to connect path
segments. Nona Street between, W Outer Drive and Military Street, would be a favourable location as it would not only create an east-west connector, but would attract tourists to the Ford Homes Historic District.

2. Key Connecting Elements
As indicated in Trail Towns – Capturing Trail Based Tourism, it is important to understand the function and inter-relationship of connecting elements between trails and a central business district. One of these elements is the Trailhead. It is here that a number of amenities are available, including parking, bathrooms, water, benches, picnic tables, trail maps, and directional signage. The existing trailhead at the Andiamo restaurant on Michigan Avenue, while central, may not have the capacity to accommodate an increase in the numbers users of the trail network. A Trail Head at Ford Field Park could provide an opportunity for additional amenities, including bike and kayak racks, and as well as an abundance of parking. ‘Nodes’ were also considered in the development of the Dearborn Discovery Trail. According to the Trail Towns Manual, these are points of interest that can be visited or utilized by trail users, including bicycle repair shops, public showers, and tourist destinations.

3. Transit Amenities and Signage
The Rouge River study area currently possesses a wide variety of alternative transportation options, but there tends to be a disconnect between the transit options provided and local destination areas. Promoting the use of mass transit to access destinations in the study area will help make visitors aware of the transit options available to them and allow for traversing the study area. One of the ways to promote mass transit is through improved transit amenities and signage.

There is currently a bus stop for the SMART Route 200 located at a gateway for the Rouge River Gateway Trail. Dearborn should request a bus shelter for this stop to not only draw attention to the trail entrance, but also show area residents that they can access the trail network easily via transit. The Dingell Transit Center provides a linkage for visitors via commuter rail service and users would be more likely to utilize this amenity to access the Trails with improved crosswalks across Michigan Avenue, additional signage to direct riders to the Trails, and improved biking facilities.

Utilizing existing transit options better could better prepare this area for the large changes that could occur if the RTA receives their funding millage in November. With this millage, BRT service could be coming to Michigan Avenue by 2026 and a station would be located in front of the Dingell Transit Center and Rouge River Gateway Trail entrance. This would offer the opportunity for Metro Detroit to utilize the trail via mass transit given that proper signage is present informing riders of the Trails existence.
4. Crossing Michigan Avenue

Improving mass transit amenities is only one step to attract more users and visitors to the study area. The pedestrian experience also needs to be improved to make it easier and safer to walk between the mass transit offerings and the Trails. There is currently a gap consisting of a parking lot (behind Andiamo’s) between the Rouge River Gateway Trail and the edge of West Downtown Dearborn. This gap can be corrected through either constructing a new sidewalk along Michigan Avenue or directing trail users across Michigan Avenue to access the sidewalk system on the south side of the street. Crossing Michigan Avenue is another hurdle for the pedestrians within the study area.

Crosswalks are currently present across Michigan Avenue to the Dingell Transit Center, but are not very visible to oncoming drivers. Utilizing improved paint schemes would help attract more attention from drivers as well as improve pedestrian safety across the thoroughfare. Ideally a pedestrian bridge across Michigan Avenue that is ADA accessible would be the best recommendation to improve pedestrian access to the Trails. This is a large undertaking and is suggested only when necessary funding becomes available for a project of this caliber. A pedestrian bridge would have the ability to welcome visitors to Downtown West Dearborn, show the presence of mass transit, and act as a formal entrance to the Rouge River Gateway Trail and the entire trail network in the area.
how to move ahead:
next steps
The Rediscover the Rouge Plan represents a vision and strategy that will assist the City of Dearborn in maximizing its river asset potential. This plan outlines specific goals, objectives, and recommendations to achieve this vision, and should be integrated into the day-to-day operations and decision making criteria for this area of the community. The How to Move Ahead section will describe various action items as derived from the plan, their priority, available tools, recommended actions, and responsible entities. In addition, this section identifies both short-term (5 to 10 year) and long-term (10 to 15 year) strategies. As the funding sources for these action items will vary from both public and private investments, each source will be described in this section then elaborated upon in the appendix.

### Planning and Zoning Changes

Evaluation of the Zoning Ordinance, and any necessary amendments, should be considered in order to fully realize the tenets of this plan. The recommendations should be regularly evaluated at predefined intervals to ensure that the vision continues to progress in a strategic manner as the City of Dearborn and the River Rouge evolve. This specifically includes the adoption of a green and blue design guideline, the establishment of a green zoning corridor, and other recommended improvements that would assist in the full implementation of the plan. By implementing these recommendations, it is anticipated that the City of Dearborn will progress into the 21st century as a leader in sustainable development and the green urban lifestyle.

| priority: most important |
| time frame: short term |
| responsible parties: planning staff, parks & recreation, planning commission, city council |
| funding: public |
Civic Improvements

Improvements in parks, public spaces, and the utility of these systems represent the brick and mortar of the plan. Without these elements, all of this work and progress would fail to reach its full potential. Ecological and historical education efforts, including the integration of interactive way-finding signage into the recreational assets of the River Rouge as highlighted in the other pillars of this plan, would uniquely differentiate this effort from its competitors.

Circulation Improvements

This plan includes a comprehensive trail and non-motorized map, along with prescriptions for the improvement of the comprehensive non-motorized circulatory network. This network gap analysis includes both recreational and connective trails, and considers multiple variables that inspire its complete nature. In conjunction with the requisite green and blue development standards, multiple partners must be engaged in this portion of the plan as it will require layers of funding grants and programs, easements, and collective cooperation for the marketing and branding of these routes.

Hot Spots and Future Spots

Certain locations have a greater chance of early success because of their existing locational and historical assets, or by-way of converging intermodal connections. These locations were highlighted in the plan and include the Newman Street corridor and the Dearborn Station, among others. When faced with business and resident attraction opportunities, community leaders should guide investment to the identified areas as they initially pose the greatest opportunity for success. It is anticipated that once these investments and developments have occurred, the subsequent stages of this plan would spillover and begin to promote infill and investment in the surrounding areas of the community.
There are many great ideas identified in the action items above. However, completion of all of the projects will require financial resources. Grants and private donations are always sources to be pursued to generate investment, however, in a tough, competitive economy, they cannot always be relied upon as resources to complete necessary projects. This is why it is imperative that the city is both proactive in seeking publicly available funds and productive in strengthening its partnerships with community stakeholders. The potential dynamic nature of the Rouge River as a cultural relic, economic generator and as a recreational destination for the City of Dearborn opens the opportunity to apply for funds with a variety of State Departments with a number of different financing tools that may be available to implement various portions of the Rediscover the Rouge Plan (see appendix A). These sources range from tax increment financing districts, to creative alternatives available through both public and private special interest groups. Whichever is the preferred and available route, this plan will play a major role in defining a coherent and complete vision for the Rouge River, and in making a case for the necessary resources.
appendix: a
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund</td>
<td>MDNR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Recreation Improvement Fund Grants</td>
<td>MDNR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>State Transportation Funds (MTF)</td>
<td>MDOT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## STATE FUNDING OPTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF FUND</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>Provides funding assistance to Michigan non-profit arts &amp; cultural organizations and municipalities to use towards cultural facilities, equipment and furnishing upgrades, or necessary equipment and instrument acquisitions. The improvements resulting from these grants enable citizens to enjoy more cultural events &amp; increase their participation within their communities. <a href="http://www.michiganbusiness.org/community/council-arts-cultural-affairs/#MCACA">http://www.michiganbusiness.org/community/council-arts-cultural-affairs/#MCACA</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>Minigrants are meant to address local arts &amp; cultural needs as well as increasing public access to arts and culture. Arts Projects Minigrants provide up to $4,000 for locally developed, high quality arts and cultural projects. Professional Development Minigrants provide up to $1,500 to assist non-profit organizations and arts professional acquire services or skills to strengthen the administrative infrastructure of the organization. <a href="http://www.michiganbusiness.org/community/council-arts-cultural-affairs/#MCACA">http://www.michiganbusiness.org/community/council-arts-cultural-affairs/#MCACA</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grant, Loan, Resource, Service, Incentive, Technical Assistance, Technique, Other</td>
<td>The focus is to provide arts &amp; cultural, as well as educational, projects to citizen. This category funds arts projects conducted by non-profit organizations, municipalities, educational institutions and other organizations that utilize the talents of professional artists or educators in all arts. Funding may only be used for artist fees, salaries, wages, space rental, or marketing &amp; promotional expenses directly related to the project, or project supplies and materials including performance or other production costs, project-related curriculum materials. <a href="http://www.michiganbusiness.org/community/council-arts-cultural-affairs/#MCACA">http://www.michiganbusiness.org/community/council-arts-cultural-affairs/#MCACA</a></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Grant | Grants are offered through the New Leaders Arts Council of Michigan to support projects focusing on the retention and community engagement of young people in Michigan through arts and culture. Funding is available for projects that involve the creativity of young people: their mentorship, project already in progress, ideas they have to make the community a better place, and projects that use arts and culture to: empower young people in Michigan, support an atmosphere of entrepreneurship and creativity, and encourage the retention of young people in their communities.  
http://www.michiganbusiness.org/community/council-arts-cultural-affairs/#MCACA |
| Grant | The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is a competitive grant program that funds projects such as bike paths, streetscapes, and historic preservation of transportation facilities that enhance Michigan’s intermodal transportation system and provide safe alternative transportation options. These investments support place-based economic development by offering transportation choices, promoting walkability, and improving the quality of life. Eligible applicants include county road commissions, cities, villages, regional transportation authorities, transit agencies, state and federal natural resource or public land agencies, and tribal governments. MDOT may partner with a local agency to apply for funding and implement the project. http://www.michigan.gov/tap |
| Grant, Service | The Urban & Community Forestry Program supports local units of government (city/village/township/county), community-based organizations, volunteers and individuals in developing and implementing community forestry activities, including: proper tree selection, planting and maintenance; community involvement; tree ordinance development; public awareness and education; insect and disease management; tree inventories and management planning.  
www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant</th>
<th>The fund stems from the Land and Water Conservation Program, a federal initiative that provides matching grants to states and local governments for the development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The program is intended to create and maintain a nationwide legacy of high-quality recreation areas and facilities and to stimulate non-federal investments in the protection and maintenance of recreation resources across the United States. In the State of Michigan, the Department of Natural Resources allocates funds annually to this cause. <a href="http://www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants">http://www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants</a></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>Recreation Passports have been a prominent revenue generator for recreational activities across the state. The sale of Recreation Passports, out-of-state day use passes, camping and the sale of other revenues under this act can be used for the acquisition of land and the development, maintenance and operation of recreational facilities within state parks or facilities where a Recreation Passport is required. Additionally, the Local Public Recreation Facility Fund generated from the sale of the Recreation Passport can be used for the development of local recreation facilities, including trails. <a href="http://www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants">http://www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund is available for the acquisition of land and development of recreation facilities. By law, no more than 25 percent of the Trust Fund revenues available for appropriation each year can be used for development. Amounts available for development projects vary from $10,000 to $300,000, while there are no limits set for acquisition. <a href="http://www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants">http://www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>To fund the operation, maintenance and development of recreation trails and restoration of lands damaged by off-road vehicles and inland lake cleanup. <a href="http://www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants">http://www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource, Incentive</td>
<td>As the State mandates all agencies receiving funds from Act 51 shall spend a minimum of one percent of their MTF (averaged over 10 years) on non-motorized transportation facilities and services. This money can only be used for construction and not for operation or maintenance and includes funding for sidewalks, shared-use paths, bike lanes and associated pavement marking.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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How can I naturalize my Dearborn Landscape and improve the ecosystem at home?

**BIOSWALE**
- Impervious surface
- Detention filtration zone
- Retention zone
- Aggregate filter blanket
- Under drain discharge pipe
- Planting soil mix
- Selected native plants or hardy cultivars

**RAIN GARDEN**
- Gutter downspout
- Level unlined bottom
- Rain garden soil mix
- Mulch layer
- Overflow lower than inflow
- Ponding depth 6” to 12”

**Native Trees**
- Northern White Cedar
- Red Pine
- Eastern White Pine
- White Spruce
- Red Oak
- Red Maple
- Silver Maple
- Sugar Maple (pictured adjacent)
- Yellow Birch
- American Hornbeam
- Bitternut
- Hickory
- Shagbark Hickory
- Alternate Leaf Dogwood
- Flowering Dogwood

**Native Wildflowers**
- Nodding Onion
- Lead Plant
- Rue Anemone
- Columbine
- Smooth Aster
- Milkweed
- New England Aster
- Tall Bellflower (pictured adjacent)
- Harebell
- Spring Beauty
- Tall Coreopsis
- Purple Coneflower
- Rattlesnake Master
- White Snakeroot
- Wild Strawberry
- False Sunflower
- Rough Blazing Star
- Lupine
- Partridgeberry
- Beebalm
- Horsemint
- Foxglove Beard Tongue
- Hairy Beard Tongue
- Common Cinquefoil
- Yellow Coneflower
- Black Eyed Susan
- Autumn Joy Sedum
- Purple Leaf Sedum
- Compass Plant
- White Trillium
- Hoary Vervain

**Native Grasses, Sedges, Rushes and Ferns**
- Big Blue Stem
- Canada Wild Rye
- Bottle Brush Grass
- Little Blue Stem
- Indian Grass
- Goldie Fern
- Lady Fern
- Christmas Fern

**Native Shrubs**
- Serviceberry
- Hackberry
- Redbud
- Hazelnut
- Buttonbush
- Carolina Rose
- American Bladdernut
- Black Haw