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Grand River Identity:
Advisory Team Perspectives on Interpretation and Programming

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PURPOSE OF ADVISORY TEAM

Creating an identity for the Grand River Greenway is important so people know the greenway exists, where its boundaries are, the opportunities that abound and the stories it can tell. When an identity is formed, greenways are exceptional at connecting people to the natural landscape with linkages to local culture and history. The greenway functions as an "open air classroom" where multiple ways of knowing occur to educate users of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

One challenge during identity forming (placemaking) is how to meaningfully engage a diverse public where their participation is valued, views are considered, and needs incorporated into planning – all while accounting for goals of habitat preservation, water quality enhancement, protection of historical sites, and providing immersive educational opportunities. The Ottawa County Parks and Recreation (OCPR) recognized the opportunity to explore ways of public engagement and formed an advisory team to aid in forming the Grand River Greenway's interpretive plan; a robust interpretive network along trail routes that forms locally distinctive and immersive experiences to foster a cohesive greenway identity. The advisory team identified resonating interpretive themes, special features, and programming elements. They explored connections to relate people to the greenway, discussed the untold stories, and identified how to help people feel safe, connected to others, and that they belonged.

What Will the Advisory Team Accomplish?

Goal 1: Characterize the Greenway

Identify features of the Grand River Greenway that are valued and provide identity.

- Important intrinsic resources, such as unique manmade and natural features, compelling waterways, and significant habitat, geology, and ecological communities.
- Existing cultural and social relationships that provide connection to people, place, and time.
- Objects, symbols, and other elements of the physical environment that reflect cultural values.
- Points of greenway history that are unique and resonate with the community.

Goal 2: Connect People to the Greenway

Develop strategies for human connection points to the Grand River Greenway.

- Themes for storytelling and shaping greenway interpretation.
- Programming opportunities around community engagement, education and outreach, and natural resource management.
- Pilot a Connection Framework for Stearns Creek that identifies unique features, storytelling themes, programming, infrastructure, and ways to connect one, relatively remote, park to the larger greenway.

Goal 3: Advance the Greenway

- Identify projects to implement the vision for the greenway.
- Identify needed infrastructure and wayfinding elements.
- Provide recommendations and priorities.

How was Advisory Team Formed?

To assemble an advisory team a participant list was developed. OCPR recognized the advisory team needed; 1) engaged Native American participants, 2) people sharing a common interest and deep connection to the river and, 3) open-minded individuals who possessed a wide range of professional and personal experiences. The organizers of the task group, OCPR staff and Encompass Socio-ecological Consulting (ESC), believed it was critical for each advisory team member to appreciate the knowledge and viewpoints of other participants. Native American participants were prioritized because of their rich history in the watershed, how their perspectives differed from the general population, and their views and needs had not been thoroughly identified during initial planning for the greenway. Additionally, there was a desire by OCPR to begin a collaborative and sustainable relationship with Native American people and communities and engage them in all aspects of park planning and outreach.

The participant list was developed purposively where key informants suggested participants and helped gauge how an individual met the criteria. Once the participant list of 11 candidates was finalized, an email was sent to each candidate that described the advisory team purpose, how they were selected, and the commitment of time and effort. Follow-up calls were made to each potential participant and all 11 agreed to be involved; although one was not able to participate because of personal issues.

All team members had at some point resided in the Lower Grand River Watershed, with seven participants being current residents. The participants were balanced in gender with a 1:1 ratio of female/male, and possessed a wide age range from people in their 30's to 70's. Three Native American individuals, who were members of three different tribes, participated. The team possessed a wide-range of professional and personal experiences related to the river and included a local historian, scientists, media curator, educators, entrepreneur, natural resource managers, indigenous knowledge holders, and a former mayor. Participant knowledge of the Ottawa County Parks parcels varied from little to extensive but all had at least visited the parks and spent time on the river.

Meeting Details

The advisory team meetings provided an opportunity to hear directly from key stakeholders, so their perspectives and ideas were understood. Four meetings were held at three locations; two in the Ottawa County Parks system, and one at the Grand Rapids Public Museum. The meeting locations provided an informal and comfortable setting while showcasing an area that would set the context for the meeting topic(s). Meetings lasted two hours and were held over lunchtime where food was provided, or participants brought a dish to pass. Site visits and tours were held with hands-on exercises and in-depth discussion sessions. Prior to each meeting the participants were provided a purpose statement for the meeting and information about the topics being explored.

Meeting 1	July 31, 2019 at the Woodland Cabin at Connor Bayou
Meeting 2	September 16, 2019 at the Grand Ravines Lodge
Meeting 3	October 21, 2019 at the Grand Ravines Lodge
Meeting 4	January 20, 2020 at the Grand Rapids Public Museum

Results of each team meeting were evaluated by OCPR and ESC to develop the next meeting agenda, recommendations, and key action steps.

How can the Advisory Team Help Connect People?

During the initial meeting, the advisory team described how they could assist OCPR in meeting the project vision and establish connection points to the Grand River Greenway. Four intrinsic themes emerged that participants believed could create place recognition and connections: History, Culture, Natural Resources, and Recreation and Wellness. The specific areas where the group identified they could help included:

- Telling a compelling story that connects to the past, resonates in the present, and provides a vision for the future.
- Weaving a common thread – between both riversides and the "north, south, east and west" of the greenway through a Connection Framework (a site-specific pilot project to develop programming themes, identify special features, and establish connection points).
- Shaping the greenway character.
- Providing vision and aspirations - where the community wants to be in the future and connect with short- and long-term OCPR initiatives.
- Messaging for OCPR restoration work.
- Identifying human connections that build relationships with the landscape including:
    - Names: people, places, and objects.
    - Native American history – do not reinforce negative but rather showcase resiliency.
    - Settler history – both the positive and challenging stories.
    - Restoration and conservation.
    - Non-human stories highlighting the survival of plants and animals.
    - Define experiences and show a place for activities across all seasons.
    - Engage a general audience, as well as those not often engaged.

CONNECTING THE RESOURCES

What is the Character of the Greenway?

The advisory team identified four intrinsic resources that characterize the local uniqueness of the greenway and offer compelling stories and exploration across the seasons. The four intrinsic resources included a history rich with stories of resiliency and adaptation, a culture deep with roots to this place, natural resources that are varied and unique, and recreation and wellness. These resources provide connection points to be experienced in a day, week, or lifetime and function as activation points for establishing a sense of belonging and community to each other and the landscape. Each resource has independent utility but in the interrelatedness the stories and exploration points become alive.

Four Intrinsic Resources

Resource	Exemplars
History	Geological processes, Native American and settler adaptation to the land, resiliency, land use practices and historic buildings.
Culture	Native American ceremonies and language, community land values and connections to place.
Natural Resources	Old growth trees, biological diversity, restoration practices, ravines, freshwater estuaries, and medicinal/edible plants.
Recreation and Wellness	Active living; hiking, birding, meditation, boating, fishing, and hunting.

HISTORY

The Grand River Valley predates the Lake Michigan Basin and is rich in geologic history. It has compelling stories of people adapting to the environment; the Native American's relationship with the land, Michigan's push for settlement, and an expanding commerce and transportation route. The Grand River's history provides unifying storylines to link park parcels, the Grand River, and greenway.

The deep ravines, some exceeding 100' in depth, were carved over millennia through the Grand River Greenway, and are a special feature. Other notable remnants from the geologic past are freshwater bayous, marshes, wetlands, and prairie savannas.

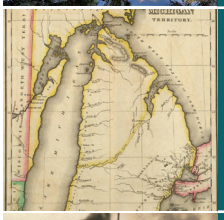
The human history of the greenway is set with the backdrop of the Grand River and its diverse ecosystems. A story is revealed through a deep history of human caring, and of connecting to and depending on the land. There is also a story of conflict between Native Americans and whites, and with new ethnic groups that moved in. Although traumatic stories can be told it is important that the historic narrative not reinforce the negative history but rather show the resiliency and adaptability of people.

The Native American narrative shares the organic relationship which the first inhabitants of the area had with the Grand River; this relationship continues with vitality into the present. The relationship with the Grand River territory provided a sacred place where ceremonial cycles and a sacred history were passed on orally through kin. Connection points into this relationship include historic trails, villages, and Aniishinabemowin names for people, places, and objects. Parts of the historic Native American trail network still survive as modern highways and trails including the Grand

Unifying Interpretive Themes for History

Geological Forces

Glaciation and erosion shaped the greenway river corridor, ravines, and freshwater bayous.



River of Treaties

The Grand River's treaty boundaries shape the story of Native People's struggles and resiliency.

Transportation

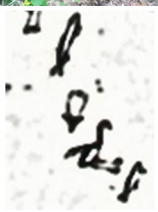
Land and water transported Native Americans and settlers and have left an extensive trail network.

Living with the Land

People of the Grand River have shown the adaptability to the landscape as their survival depended on it.

Human History Artifacts

Find remnants from the past; homesteads, villages, farming equipment, and wood fencing.



Names Tell a Story

Aniishinabemowin and settler names for people, places, and objects.

River Trail between Detroit and Grand Haven. Many of the place and animal names are still spoken, such as, the Nmé (Lake Sturgeon) the King of Fishes, and Manoomin (Wild Rice) the 'Food that Floats on the Water." The Grand River is a "River of Treaties" where boundaries of major treaties merge at the riverbanks.

The settler history is full of intrigue, ingenuity and interesting characters and events, from fur traders, to the lumber era, and the founding residents. Over a 200-year period the landscape was shaped to accommodate the life and needs of settler America with large-scale fur harvest, land being cleared, homes built, and the natural resources exploited. Modes of transportation using the river as a backbone exploded with the formation of a major mail route, the May Graham ferry used for commerce and recreational travel, and the River Road trail which is one of the oldest Michigan roads.

OCPR parcels have remnants of Native American villages and early settler homesteads. Each of these parcels highlight the adaptability and resiliency of the Grand River people (See Stearns Creek Connection Framework). Many resources already exist that describe the compelling history of the greenway, especially the Self-Guided Auto Tour.

CULTURE

Some signs of a rich greenway culture are obvious, while some are more hidden and only revealed after being sought. A cultural characteristic of people experiencing the greenway is a love for the Grand River and a desire to protect it. With the differing viewpoints and beliefs present within the greenway community, **this shared value of watershed protection is a *foundation for people to learn from those different from them, respect other views, and act collectively.*** The greenway provides opportunities to express culture and environmental stewardship while building a sense of place and belonging.

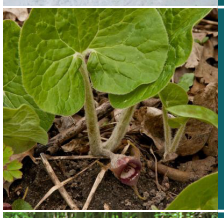
A vibrant example of culture comes from the Native American people of the greenway where knowledge has been shared across generations and expressed in language, ceremonies, sacred history, and connections to this place. Connections are in the form of relationships between human and non-humans. An example includes the many plants of the greenway that are considered "medicines" and provide a spiritual sustenance and fulfillment. There is a profound spiritual story to be told by the Native People, in their voices, of this relationship and how the "Creator acts in this place."

Many examples exitst throughout the greenway of the stewardship culture, where people work daily to protect it and share their personal connection to the river. An example is the Grand Lady, a paddlewheel boat on the Grand River, that has been operated by the same family for generations. In the summer, the Grand Lady takes visitors onto the river where they experience it in a unique way because of a family's multi-generational commitment. The greenway also has a group of historians, "The Dusty Dozen" that work collectively to make history come alive. The OCPR has a committed group of volunteers including Citizen Scientists studying the waters, and birders surveying the parks. Showing this cultural richness will add to the greenway experience and help others build a sense of place.

Unifying Interpretive Themes for Culture

The Circle of Stewardship

Human and non-human relationships interdependency with the environment.



Medicine and Sustainable Living

We are connected to the land and what lives around us through ethnobotany; medicinal and edible plants.

Restoration and Reciprocity

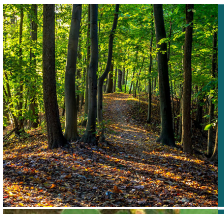
Care taking is a shared value where a community works together in giving back.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Grand River Greenway is an "oasis" to a diverse group of plant and animal species where people can experience "surprise and beauty". Although the greenway is largely surrounded by an agriculture landscape it is a "Pocket of green" where moss covered footpaths and old trees cast an air of remoteness into the dark woods while providing an safe and inviting atmosphere. The Ottawa County parks give access to, and protect, some of the most unique land and natural resources in the county. This access connects people by linking urban and rural communities, upstream resources near Grand Rapids to those downstream in Grand Haven, and the river to the floodplain and upland areas.

The character of the greenway is largely shaped from the old and large trees, the high biological diversity, and the scenic viewscapes. The towering eastern hemlock, northern white cedar and white pine that stand along the river and bayous are connections to the past, present and what could be. Although much of the greenway has been logged, significant forested areas exist that give a glimpse to times where the landscape was wild and to what can occur if they are protected. The greenway is a place for rare species because of the varied topography and habitat. For people willing to explore they can find a native cactus, carnivorous plants, Wild Rice, and a 7-foot-long prehistoric fish. There needs to be focus on telling encouraging stories about survival of the rare and diverse natural resources of the greenway and to tell restoration stories that are, and will be, occurring.

Unifying Interpretive Themes for Natural Resources



Old Growth Trees

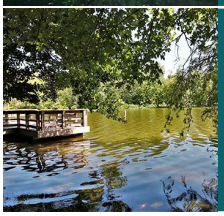
Towering trees provide remoteness and solitude, a greenway feel, and a hope for the future.

Biodiversity

Where the rare is not rare; species and habitats (cactus, Pitchers thistle, wild rice, and oak savannas).

Water and Ravines Viewscapes

Scenic views give "beauty and surprise."



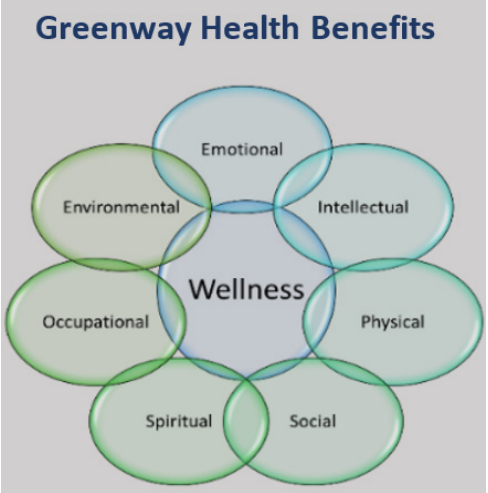
Wetlands and Bayous

Purifies water and is home to diverse animals and habitats. A connection between land and water.

"We need to get outside of the dominant story of dominion and touch on how species were important and how we can still connect to them."

RECREATION & WELLNESS

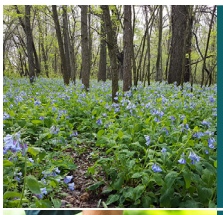
The Grand River Greenway is a place where diverse landscapes, animals, plants, and people connect. In this common space there is placemaking where people immerse in nature and realize many health benefits. These benefits are not individual but for the human communities; where interactions occur, shared values realized, and transformation occurs.



With its "Pockets of Green" the greenway is a free health club and provides many benefits including low-cost options for families to spend time together and for community groups to share values and serve each other.

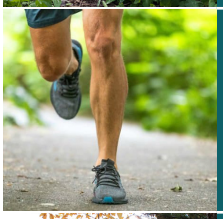
With the Grand River as the main artery, the fishing, hiking, hunting, birding, snowshoeing and canoeing opportunities can be enjoyed for a lifetime and across all seasons. The river viewscapes, such as those at Stearns Creek, offer areas for solitude and reflection. The numerous bayous provide areas for water exploration, and the suspension bridge at Grand Ravines is an area where people can contemplate how nature is not separate from human intervention but how we can enhance how nature is experienced and appreciated.

Unifying Interpretive Themes for Health & Wellness



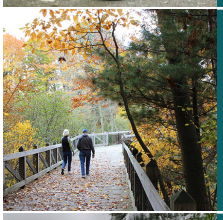
Pockets of Solitude

Provide secluded areas and trails to meditate in nature, nurture, and ground yourself.



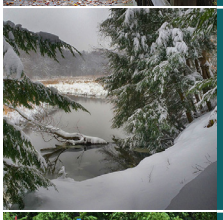
Free Health Club

Low-cost alternative to recreation with an abundance of options.



Abundant Recreation

Bayous and waterways give diverse fishing, hunting, and nature watching opportunities.



Viewscapes

Give "beauty and surprise" and help people feel connected to a special place.

Community Connections

Space for community nourishment; a place to play and enjoy family and friends.

GREENWAY EXPERIENCES AND PROGRAMMING

What Could the Greenway Provide?

The following developmental concepts describe immersive and interpretive experiences that can transform a trail through woods, river, and ravines into a trail through history, culture, and an adapting ecosystem. The broad-based intrinsic resources of History and Culture, Natural Resources, and Recreation and Wellness provide the foundation where opportunities exist to experience, imagine, and explore the greenway. The following concepts are shown in relation to the four intrinsic resources with history and culture combined for continuity.

HISTORY AND CULTURE-BASED CONCEPTS

Many interpretive and programming opportunities exist for bringing the cultural and historic resources of the greenway alive. The concepts focus on providing space for storytelling, exploring the past, cultural revitalization, and community sharing.

Opportunities for Ceremony

- Support the vibrant Native American community by exploring how OCPR could provide areas and infrastructure for native traditional, religious, and ceremonial practices.
- Coordinate with the local Native American communities to understand the need for dedicated areas including number, requisite site features and characteristics, policies, and infrastructure (See Recommendation 2; Native American Interpretation and Engagement).

Gathering of Plants (Medicines/Food)

- Emphasize how plants provide more than habitat and food for animals.
- Show how the people of the Grand River have long depended on plants for survival and sustenance; the Grand River is a place where berries, fish and wild rice are harvested, and Maple Syrup is produced.
- Provide areas, and establish a process, where plants can be harvested including medicines for Native Americans and edible plants for the larger community.
- Provide programming to share ethnobotanical knowledge by highlighting the edible plants and the medicinal usefulness of many familiar species that grow in the area. Certain plants may require regulation to ensure sustainable harvest while protecting against overexploitation.

Art

- Shape the unique qualities and identity of the greenway through artistic interpretation and imaginaries.
- Engage artists with a wide-range of visions, cultural orientations, and aesthetic sensibilities to ensure the greenway is where multiple cultural norms are embraced in a ‘place for all’.
- Provide trail signage and interpretation with artistic expressions of the place and its history, culture, and ecosystem; an initial focus of trail signage could begin at interpretive node loops.
- Support local artists in developing and installing site-specific artwork to encourage human interaction and connection. Possible venues for art include trail heads and at prominent areas.
- Dedicate areas for creation of art in the parks and explore opportunities for artists in residence where a theme would be selected, and a unique piece of art would be annually produced for use by OCPR and available to the community. Numerous artists and groups exist that could help lead this effort including those from local Tribes and Grand Valley State University. The OCPR has engaged in art installations with GVSU’s Department of Visual & Media Arts at Grand Ravines and this effort should continue.

Sharing of Knowledge

- Emphasize how the rich history and culture of the area is a building block for learning, relationship building and community wellness.
- Establish multiple areas along the greenway for small group gatherings where stories can be shared, and cross-generational knowledge transferred.
- Engage local knowledge holders, such as historians, river users, scientists, indigenous, and members from the African American and Latino communities to assist in selecting the setting for community gathering areas.
- Locate the knowledge sharing areas in urban, rural, and undeveloped locations. Schedule events annually and provide for informal gatherings.

Experiencing Historic Areas

- Provide areas where special historic artifacts can be experienced, where compelling stories are told, and digging deeper is pursued. A possible example area is Stearns Creek where the remnants of a homestead exist and fox pens, Christmas tree binders, and pine fences give a glimpse into the lives and struggles of early settlers.
- Engage a group of historians and cultural leaders to assist in identifying most compelling features and areas that are appropriate to showcase, as well as sensitive areas that may not be appropriate for highlighting (i.e. burial mounds, Native American cache's).

Trails

- Continue connecting existing trails with the Idema Explorers Trail, the Grand River Heritage Water Trail and major park parcels.
- Use existing land and water trails, and target locations for new corridors, to connect the relatedness of History, Culture, and Natural Resources in themed trails throughout the greenway (See Recommendation 6; Ecological Loops).

NATURAL RESOURCES-BASED CONCEPTS

Potential development opportunities that emphasize the protection of natural resources include activities geared towards having people being part of, and learning from, the natural environment. The development concepts listed below could potentially improve the community's experience of nature while protecting and enhancing the ecosystem. The concepts are intended to encourage public use and education, provide protections to sensitive natural areas, and improve existing wildlife and plant habitat. This is especially important in the context of the Grand River Greenway where many of the properties provide significant habitat for rare species and ecosystems.

Animal Sanctuaries and Wild Areas

- Establish protected areas for vulnerable plants, animals, and other natural resources to preserve natural ecosystem processes. Areas could maintain limited trail access and provide offset viewscapes without disruption. An example would be at Stearns Bayou where the State Threatened species of Wild Rice could be adversely affected by watercraft traffic during the spring floating leaf stage. Another example would be sand banks at bayous where foot traffic could destabilize the bank leading to erosion. If the community is educated on the purpose of a protected area, they could advocate for protecting the special and sensitive resources. Possible educational opportunities include guided tours with small groups and signage describing the need and purpose for the sanctuary or strategically placed trails to route foot traffic away from the vulnerable area.

Nature Study and Restoration Areas

- Create ongoing Citizen Science opportunities for research and restoration needed to protect and rehabilitate the OCPR natural resources.
- Promote local 'champions' through the already vibrant OCPR volunteer base, to help sustain restoration programs.
- Continue to establish partnerships to support specific types of restoration, such as with Michigan Sea Grant, who provide technical expertise on water resources. Example research projects would be the evaluation of Lake Sturgeon in the Grand River and the biological response of newly installed prairie ecosystems. Possible projects could include barrens restoration where removal of trees may be required, reintroducing or enhancing cultural (medicinal) plants, and restoration of early pre-settlement natural areas. The Citizen Scientists, and community partners, could work with OCPR in developing the appropriate medium to educate and engage the community on the importance and purpose of the activities.
- Use both research and restoration projects to connect people to the land, show how life has changed, and how the ecosystem continues to support the culture of the area.
- Explore partnerships with hunters and anglers to promote hunting and fishing as management tools used to sustain the parks natural resources. This collaboration could help educate the public on sustainable harvest practices which enhance peoples connection to nature while providing stewardship opportunities. For example, by using deer exclosures and hunting OCPR has been able to sustain plant communities and ecosystem function.

RECREATION & WELLNESS-BASED CONCEPTS

Potential development opportunities that emphasize recreation and wellness in a place that is safe and way that is affordable include activities geared toward having people of all ages, ethnicities, and abilities be physically active and derive wellness in nature. The development concepts listed below could improve the community's physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual wellness while protecting and enhancing the ecosystem. The concepts are intended to encourage public use and education.

Remote Experiences

- Support and establish trails that are more rigorous and target the adventurous to get "off the beaten path" and experience the greenway's wild side. The trails could meander through natural features that are not easy to access while minimizing the potential impacts through signage, boardwalks, and natural fencing. A possible storyline for the trail would be protection and enhancement of natural processes, habitat types and wildlife, with the augmenting story of human adaptation and resilience to a changing environment. A remote experience could be incorporated into the ecological loops concept (See Recommendation 6; Ecological Loops).

Multi-day (Extended Trip) Adventures

- Provide a 'staycation' destination where visitors can explore for 24-hours or a week. This could include overnight camping at designated OCPR parcels or with lodging accommodations in urban centers.
- Develop a range of multi-day experiences for varying levels of physical fitness and modes of transportation. Provide this adventure with connected bike, hiking and watercraft trails where each option is mapped, provides time estimates, describes natural and cultural features, and level of physical activity. Partner with local recreation businesses to offer experiences along the trail and to communicate with their customers (See Recommendation 7).

Limited Time Adventures

- Provide short excursions of physical activity (i.e. biking) of "What to do with a few hours" where scenic vistas, ravines, and old growth trees can be experiences over a limited time. A possible opportunity is to develop a 'Cheater Guide' or 'Ecological Loops' (See Recommendation 6; Ecological Loops). Explore fundraising and financial backing from local businesses to support the guide and include messages of respectful use of the corridor and unique features.
- Provide mile markers with estimates of time that different loops would take to complete.

Wellness Areas

- Provide inspiring natural areas that are quiet and safe for people of all ages and abilities to meditate and reflect. Promote individual experiences and those for groups. Group activities could occur weekly or monthly for yoga, stargazing, guided coaching through high schools, and counselling sessions.
- Consider developing a mental health guide that describes how to get the most out of what OCPR has to offer.
- Designate quite areas, footpaths, benches, and flat surfaces that are easily recognizable (See Recommendation 4; Wayfinding).

Playscapes and Family Areas

- Enhance the historic and cultural nature of major parks by creating family play areas that allow for reflection even during play. Use the major cultural themes to create linkages to the greenway while subthemes could provide context to the story and the significant features of each park (i.e. as developed at Stearns Creek). Potential development concepts could include:
  - a logging rollway climbing area
  - mini ravines climbing wall
  - mini suspension bridge
  - animal spring rides of native fish and wildlife

Connect the Bayous

- Continue to link the many bayous by contiguous water and land trails and provide access for shore and canoe fishing, wildlife viewing, and bird watching.
- Provide land trails around the bayous that promote multiple uses. Use bayou access to promote unique experiences that attract people not currently experiencing the greenway. Possible opportunities include accessible fishing for the Latino and African American communities that would enhance their activities currently being enjoyed.
- Use the access points to provide a welcoming place for underserved groups by providing artwork and educational material developed with the respective communities. Connecting the bayous will be further explored in the recommendations section.

Hunting and Fishing Experiences

- Promote hunting and fishing by showing how the diverse habitats and species found within the parks provide wide-ranging opportunities to experience the outdoors through fish and wildlife harvest, and catch-and-release angling.
- Provide information on research studies and natural resources management actions that address sustainable fish and wildlife harvest. An example would be to educate the public of the lake at Ottawa Sands where the fishery could benefit from additional harvest of bass. This may seem counterintuitive to many people and provide an interesting lesson in predator-prey balance while informing the public of an angling opportunity.
- Promote a more nuanced and ecologically-based approach to selective harvest of fish. Programming could focus on appreciating the diversity of the Grand River fish species while encouraging harvest of abundant (e.g., channel catfish) and stocked species (e.g., walleye), and the catch-and-release of more heavily pressured and rare species.

GREENWAY IDENTITY

How Do You Know You are in the Greenway?

The greenway identity is still forming and while visitors and residents know specific properties there seems to be a lack of knowledge about the overarching greenway, how it connects Lake Michigan to Grand Rapids, and the opportunities for experiencing it. The stakeholder group discussed options that could provide an identity and make the interconnectedness of trails and resources more visible and accessible.

- Trail Continuity
- Greenway Welcome Center
- Gateway Campus of Culture and Research

TRAIL CONTINUITY

Promoting the connection between the cities of Grand Haven and Grand Rapids should be a primary focus. Throughout the history of these two cities the Grand River has connected the very different communities in commerce, environmental dependency, and culture. The common bond is still the river. The Grand River Greenway in Ottawa County and the "River for All" project in downtown Grand Rapids are two of the larger river focused projects in the State of Michigan with both efforts aimed to have communities turn their vision back to the river. This point in time provides opportunities for connections. The following strategies were discussed by the stakeholder group that could be used to connect local and regional communities to the greenway and the larger Grand River Watershed.

Regional (Radial) Connectivity

- A robust regional network of trails exist that could connect to the ecological and historical treasures of the region such as the Musketawa Trail, Fred Meijer trails, Kent Trails, White Pine trail, Lake Side Trail and Lake Shore Trail but there remain significant gaps, with substantial obstacles.
- Connect the Idema Explorers Trail to the cities of Grand Haven, Holland, Spring Lake, Jenison and Grand Rapids.
- Make linkages clear with signage and maps at every trail head showing the routes between regional parks for both land and water trails.
- Consider using ecological and historical loops to connect regionally, where each area has its own character and signature themes and subthemes (See Recommendation 6; Trail Connections-Ecological Loops).

Grand River Greenway Connectivity:

- Connect both sides of river. Target loops that connect the extensive trail network on the south riverside to parcels on the north bank (i.e. Crockery Creek Natural Area).
- Expand bayou connections. Five OCPR universally accessible access points exist and while largely connected to each other, one area exists where a long distance between sites is present. Establish ways to connect the OCPR access points with those owned by State and local government to showcase connection with bayous and to minimize gaps. Consider launches in bayous (See Recommendation 6; Trail Connections-Connecting the Bayous).

GREENWAY WELCOME CENTER

The Grand River Greenway Welcome Center would serve as a launching point for outdoor exploration and establish the identity and themes of the greenway. The center would be a "One Stop" central destination for all information needed to experience the greenway and be a place where every visitor feels the greenway is for them. The gateway would include language and art representing all cultures where each element would serve a distinct purpose.

- The welcome center would possess art installations representing the four intrinsic resources of History, Culture, Natural Resources, and Recreation and Wellness. Artwork would elevate the design through sculpture, photography, installation, video, works on paper, and commissioned works where artists of all backgrounds would help imagine and create a place to learn and explore.
- The center would provide a 'Choose Your Own Adventure' wayfinding guide, with information on historical sites, culture, and natural resources. It would also provide information on ongoing research.

Information Available:

- Seasonal activities and calendar of events (eg. hunting, fishing, birding, and nature programs).
- Choose Your Own Adventure ('Cheater's Guide'). The guide would describe how loops provide a range of diverse options to fit the needs of any visitor. Information could include trail lengths and time to complete (See Recommendation 6; Trail Connections-Ecological Loops).
- List of recreational activities (See Recreational and Wellness intrinsic resource).

Natural Resources:

- Descriptions and exhibits featuring geology and special features of the greenway.
- Interactive exhibits connecting geological zones, land use, water resources, biological diversity, and habitat.
- Infographics on animals of the greenway, their associated habitat, and list of recent sightings with general locations and access sites.
- Descriptions and infographics featuring current fish and wildlife research and management occurring in the greenway.

GATEWAY CAMPUS OF CULTURE AND RESEARCH

The Grand River Greenway could become a hub for local research, knowledge sharing, and cultural education. The stakeholder group suggested a campus center be dedicated to supporting watershed research and Native American culture, as it would help forge a greenway identity and messaging for protecting and enhancing greenway resources. Strong partnerships already exist to support this effort.

A possible location could be Allendale because of its central location in the greenway, proximity to GVSU, tribal groups (including Grand Rapids), and properties adjacent to the Grand River.

PARTNERSHIPS

- Tribal governments
- United Tribes of Michigan
- Grand Valley State University
  - Native American Advisory Council
  - Kutsche Office of Local History Advisory Council
- Michigan Sea Grant
- Grand Rapids Public Museum
- Lower Grand River Organizations of Watersheds
- John Ball Zoo
- "Dusty Dozen"-local historians

The campus could provide support and space for high school, undergraduate, and graduate researchers in the sciences (biological, political, and social) and humanities and be a hub for addressing greenway related topics. The campus could protect and help preserve the Native American culture through supporting indigenous research that would benefit the native communities, provide opportunities for Indigenous and Western knowledge to both contribute and thrive, and educate the public in culture, heritage, and language.

A research focus could be creating the best possible water quality for the Grand River. A main conversation point for the focus group was the lack of coordinated and systematic water quality monitoring and water quality benchmarks. The campus could provide infrastructure for a clearinghouse of water quality data, coordinated monitoring and annual reports, identification of knowledge gaps, and promotion of best management practices.

A cultural activity center could maintain a permanent and prominent Native American presence in the greenway. Indigenous issues and culture could be supported by programming that include speakers, artist talks and installations, and conversations with indigenous knowledge holders and leaders. The cultural center could serve as a gathering place for Native Americans, as well as other groups, to nurture community wholeness through collaboration and kinship.

Potential role of the Gateway Campus of Culture and Research:

- To stimulate, support and carry out research to benefit OCPR, GVSU, the Native American community, and the academic community by providing a comprehensive center for greenway-oriented research;
- To be a central water quality monitoring hub for the Lower Grand River Watershed by establishing monitoring strategies, a clearinghouse for data, and strong monitoring partnerships;
- To protect and preserve the natural heritage of the area including the linguistic, cultural, and archaeological resources. Be a central hub for historical and archaeological information.
- To educate the public in 'what we are learning about the greenway' and its culture, heritage, and natural resources.
- To provide hands-on opportunities to learn about traditional living in the greenway including carving, basket weaving, fishing, ethnobotany, and storytelling.

Possible research topics to stimulate synergistic Indigenous and Western Knowledge oriented research:

- Develop Grand River Index of Biotic Integrity (IBI) and Qualitative Habitat Evaluation Index (QHEI).
    - A similar project is underway in the City of Elkhart for the St. Joseph River (St. Joseph County, IN; https://www.elkhartindiana.org/department/division.php?structureid=245)
- Monitor Ottawa County Groundwater (https://www.miottawa.org/GroundWater/study.htm).
- Identify and inventory locally significant plants and wildlife.
- Assess the many Endangered and Threatened Species in the greenway.
- Standard assessments for fish and wildlife in bayous.
- Understand the importance of cultural resources.
    - Black Ash Swamp Research
    - Ethnobotany
- Restoration opportunities for cultural resources, rare habitat types, and ecosystems.
- Trail interpretation relating intrinsic resources of Culture, History and Natural Resources.

PROGRAMMING EXAMPLES

What Programs Could Connect People to the Greenway?

The advisory team developed a series of programming activities to actively engage people and tie together the intrinsic resources of History, Culture, Natural Resources, and Recreation and Wellness.

Mail Courier Adventure Race

Targeted Participants: Competitors

Use: Bike, canoes, Grand Lady

Programming: Greenway history and connections to wet/dry trails.

Activity Details:

- Travel to first mail outpost and receive mail route itinerary with map of mail delivery stops.
- Each successful mail stop gains points.
- Use historic mail route, historic characters, and landmarks.

Beer & Birds

Targeted Participants: Adults, over 21

Use: Hiking

Programming: Exploring the rich, seasonal biological diversity

Activity Details:

- "Beers" brings a new audience to the parks
- "Birds" introduce them to an aspect of nature they haven't yet experienced.
- We know that beer tourism is a large, emerging economic sector. Why not take advantage of this phenomenon!

Trail to Table – Forage in the Parks

Targeted Participants: All ages and physical abilities

Use: Hiking

Programming: Sustainable use of resources, ethnobotany, plant diversity and invasive species

Activity Details:

- Guided seasonal walks to find edible plants.
- Harvest native plants (fiddleheads, leeks) and invasive plants (Autumn Olive).
- At each stop provide a taste of the plant (Elderberry Tea, Autumn Olive Jam).

BioBlitz

Targeted Participants: Everyone **Use:** All modes of transportation

Activity Details:

- Could be at any park, but Grand Ravines would be interesting because GVSU could partner.
- A BioBlitz could have multiple levels (i.e. "beginner" - guided hikes; "expert" - on-your-own).
- Participants would spend 1/2 or full day in the park searching for and cataloging species followed by a community meal where species found were highlighted, described, and recorded.

Down on the Bayou

Targeted Participants: Everyone **Use:** Canoe and kayak trip

Activity Details:

- Explore bayous from Grand River Park to Eastmanville Bayou.
- Highlight backwater/bayou accessibility and connectivity.
- Provide itinerary for different trips lengths and ability levels.
- Describe best routes for wildlife watching and fishing in both backwaters and main channel.
- Partner with local outdoor adventure businesses.

Float Fulton Street to Grand Haven

Targeted Participants: Everyone **Use:** Canoe and kayak trip

Activity Details:

- Explore connections between upstream to downstream and urban to wild.
- Describe historic water routes and uses through storytelling.
- Highlight the significant river restoration in Grand Rapids and the Lower Grand River Watershed.

Yoga at the Viewscapes

Targeted Participants: Everyone **Use:** Passive recreation

Activity Details:

- Enjoy yoga classes in a perfect setting and be in harmony with nature while overlooking the Grand River or ravines.
- The location could stay constant or change for each class or session.

Greenway Phone Application

Targeted Participants: Everyone **Use:** All modes of transportation

Activity Detail:

- Setup activation points (i.e. QR Codes) in areas of historical, cultural, and natural significance.
- Use existing trail routes to populate layers, such as, the 'A Self-Guided Auto Tour'.
- Content could be provided through the existing framework of GRPM's "River of Time" application.
- Each interest point could be a gateway to other uses – someone who sees a sign at a dog park would also see signs advertising other uses such as historical sites, stargazing, and kayaking.
- For each use that exists in multiple locations, make a collection of points with interconnected signs. These would not give a list of specific locations, only the general section of the greenway. On the park website, have a downloadable phone application that can read barcodes off the plaques. People would sign up for the game to find the plaques at each site. Collect them all!
- There is also potential for teamwork which could be useful for kids.
- The goal is to encourage diverse uses and exploration of the parks.

24-hour Progressive Speaker Series

Targeted Participants: Everyone **Use:** Hiking or by watercraft (Grand Lady)

Activity Detail:

- Morning, daytime, and evening speaker events, with different themes, held across the greenway.
- Activities could include morning birding or mushrooming; daytime turtle viewing or fishing; evening traditional knowledge sharing or stargazing.
- The goal would be to show the diverse opportunities and connectedness of the greenway.

Other Possible Activities:

- Art on the river. Coordinate with regional art events and have art and artisans at numerous locations.
- Biking for waypoints: 40 badge system. Have pedal and electric bike rentals available.
- Hike, bike and drive the historic trail themes – A Self-Guided Auto Tour, Old Mail Route 2, and Native American Trails.
- Overnight camping.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following recommendations were identified during advisory team conversations. For each recommendation, the corresponding goal(s), and objective(s) from the Ottawa County Parks,

1. PREPARE A GREENWAY INTERPRETIVE AND PROGRAMMING PLAN

Recreation, & Open Space Plan (2016) are identified in Appendix A.

A comprehensive interpretive and programming plan would engage visitors in the History, Culture, and Natural Resources at park lands, on the trails, water, and open spaces. The plan would describe an inter-related set of experiences to connect the Idema Explorers Trail and Grand River Heritage Water Trail to other trail loops, parks, and open spaces. The Plan would provide a cohesive and continuous vision for storytelling and interpretation at each greenway park and segment through the overarching themes of adaptation, resiliency, and uniqueness of the Grand River Greenway and its people (See box below).

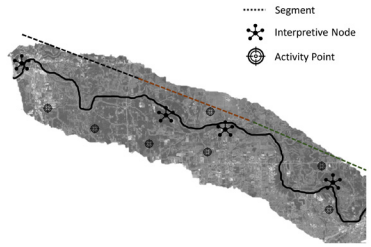
- Develop interpretive segments to create transitional interpretation, recreational programming, and signage.
- Establish 6-8 interpretive nodes that span the entire Grand River Greenway length.
    - At each interpretive node develop site specific interpretive themes, stories and needed infrastructure (based on Stearns Creek Connection Framework, Appendix B) through staff and stakeholder engagement.
- Establish transitional interpretation and programming based upon thematic elements at the interpretive nodes.

OVERARCHING SEGMENT INTERPRETATION

Interpretive Segments

Many stories of the Grand River are site specific while some convey geographical relationships covering larger 'interpretive segments' and transcend to the entire greenway. Three to four interpretive segments should be established upon unique features/attributes where stories are assembled into thematic threads that are explored along segments and transition into the next.

Example Interpretive Segments Illustration



Interpretive Nodes

An interpretive node is where substantial site-specific opportunities exist for interpreting stories and engaging users in History, Culture, Natural Resources and Recreation and Wellness. The nodes bring unique stories that connect into their respective interpretive segment. At Stearns Creek the focus group piloted an interpretive framework and assembled a set of possible themes and stories for programming. By following this framework at other interpretive nodes the segment themes can be created to provide a variety of stories, and local themes, across the greenway.

Possible Interpretive Nodes:

Ottawa Sands	Stearns Creek	Crockery Creek	Connor Bayou	Riverside Park
Eastmanville Farm	Grand Ravines	Bend Area	A Jenison Area Parcel	

Interpretive Node Features:

- Trail (land and water) connector signs, with distances and times identified to each of the interpretive nodes and significant features.
- Community gathering and picnic areas, with shelter and shade, and restrooms.
- Formal educational spaces that could be combined with community gathering areas.
- Wayfinding elements at parking areas, trail heads, water access, and along the trail.
- Interpretation and art to tell a progressive story along the trails that describes interesting features and activities. Include benches along trails for quite reflection and interpretation.
- Secure watercraft, bicycle, and auto parking between interpretive nodes (every 3-5 miles).

Connecting Interpretive Nodes:

Each interpretive node could focus on one to two themes while still emphasizing all four. This would allow each node to connect to adjacent nodes through finding common thematic features. As an example, the newly acquired Ottawa Sands parcel could be a recreational node focusing on water sports, camping, and backcountry skills while interpreting its unique landscape features. This could allow connections to Stearns Creek node because of the shared richness in water features. Both would offer unique opportunities, such as natural resources and culture at Stearns Creek and recreation at Ottawa Sands, while providing visitors a link for visiting the other park.

2. NATIVE AMERICAN INTERPRETATION

Presenting Native American interpretation to largely non-native people provides great challenges while being an important element in telling the greenway story and reconciliation between cultures. The Native American stories relate to a sacred history of place, ceremonies, and kinship to the human and animal 'people'. The stories are elaborate metaphysical interpretations of the world where nature is imbued with a spiritual presence. These stories are for the Native American people to determine and share. For this to happen, a relationship between OCPR and Native American communities must be forged on trust and listening, where OCPR believes in the legitimacy of local and Indigenous Knowledge. Special areas (i.e. ceremonial) and natural resources management should be addressed that meet the specific needs of Native Americans. Because of the complex cross-cultural dynamics and implications, a separate 'engagement template' for facilitating this relationship is under development.

3. GREENWAY CORRIDOR FEATURES AND DESIGNS

The greenway corridor already has a forming identity that connects people to the landscape, from the names of its parks, the Idema Explorers Trail, the Grand River Heritage Water Trail and interpretive information across the landscape. Opportunities to continue highlighting the local uniqueness of the Grand River Greenway is an objective and can be promoted through the features found at each stop and destination.

WAYFINDING

Wayfinding will need a system management process beyond the scope of this project but feedback from the focus group provided basic elements that could help set standards to provide a unique identity for the trails, interpretive nodes, gateways, and activity points.

- Establish wayfinding standards to clearly convey the identity and attractions of the greenway while promoting a uniform approach.
- Use locally produced artwork to develop imaginaries at interpretive nodes that provide historical, cultural, and natural resources interpretations to the main themes and features of each park and trail.
- Use multilingual interpretive signage at popular locations, areas where native plants or features are explained, or at trails that tell a story of culture. Signs would explain the respective area in English and provide the Aniishinabemowin or Spanish placename, as well as, the words for plants and animals found in the vicinity.
- Use Aniishinabemowin directional signs to recognize the past and present indigenous culture(s) of the greenway (See box below).
- Name trail spurs and water access points based on major themes, stories, and special features (i.e. Aniishinabemowin names for pre-settlement trails and places).
- Use Native American artwork and knowledge at OCPR restoration practices. An example would be telling the story of fire and forest succession through an on-site, progressive mural.

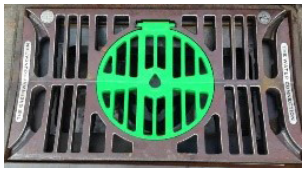
- Establish local common design cues for wayfinding elements (such as monuments, directional systems, and interpretive signs). Establish an advisory group of local artists, community knowledge holders and local government officials to recommend design cues. Specific and unique design cues could include quiet (meditation) places, fishing and watercraft access, outdoor art, edible plant harvesting areas, playscapes and family areas and ceremonial areas.
- Use "River-for-All" wayfinding elements for trail directional signage that references a connection to the River-for-All project area.

UNIQUE WAYFINDING ELEMENTS & COMMON DESIGN CUES

- Multi-lingual – Spanish, Aniishinabemowin
- Historical, Cultural, Natural Resources intrinsic resources
- Unique typography, color, shape, and material

Areas

Fishing Access



Water quality gutter bin[1]

Meditation garden[2]

Trail Signage

Monumental Art

Jason Quigno

Furnishings

1 - http://thewaterconnection.org/index.php/applied-innovation/
2 - https://maryknollmissionarchives.org/

INTERPRETIVE NODES

Establishing interconnected interpretive nodes will be a key to providing Recreation and Wellness opportunities that are multi-modal and accessible to visitors with varying physical abilities. At each mode provide inclusive interpretation and a sense of identity. Detailed recommendations for interpretive nodes are found in Recommendation 1.

4. PHONE APPLICATION

A phone application should be built or expanded upon (GRPM has developed a potential platform), to encourage users to explore and interact with the history, culture, natural resources, and science of the greenway through their smartphones, iPhones, or tablets. Utilizing new technology will encourage different user groups to engage in the greenway. The application could expand to connect land and water trails, locations and features from different municipalities and geographic areas. The application could be populated with existing Michigan Natural Features Inventory data already collected at the park parcels and through a stakeholder engagement process (Appendix B).

5. ARTS AND CULTURAL DESTINATIONS

Arts and cultural destinations should be used to enrich neighborhoods, communities and the greenway and be used as focal points where trail routes merge and where innovative greenway programming can coalesce. Arts institutions are potential partners in programming for greenway use. A public strategy is needed to effectively integrate art broadly into the greenway and this can be done through the development of Art Master Plans and Public Arts Strategies. The Rose Kennedy Greenway established a Public Arts Strategy which consisted of conceptual frameworks to guide art proposals and included connection, activity, civic dialogue, ecology, and the environment.

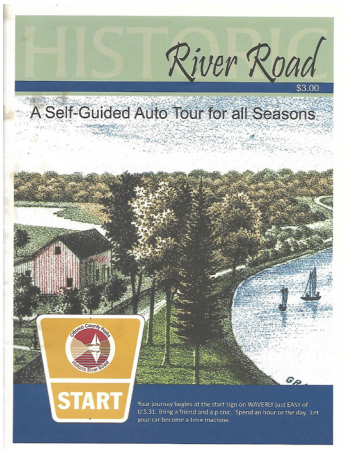
Many of the greenway's arts and cultural destinations are in Grand Haven and could function as a community anchor along with creating an eastern anchor possibly in Jenison.

- Develop an Arts Master Plan to set goals and vision, integration with other art planning, funding, artist and site selection, and maintenance.
- Incorporate multi-year installations and those that are seasonally relevant.
- Incorporate art throughout the greenway to support the themes developed for Culture, History, Natural Resources, and Recreation and Wellness.
- Provide opportunities for artists in residence, expositions, and exhibits at select greenway communities, parks, and segments.
- Establish art trails at each interpretive node that supports the specific site themes.

6. TRAIL CONNECTIONS

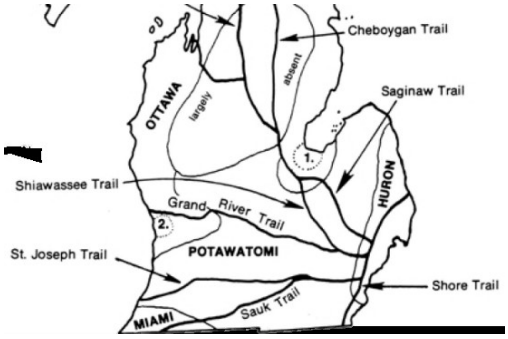
Perhaps the most resounding focus group recommendation was the need for clearly marked and connected trails where visitors would encounter history, culture and natural beauty while having options for level of time, distance, and physical activity. The Grand River corridor already has existing trail resources where other trail and road networks could incorporate smoothly. This reduces the need to develop additional infrastructure yet will provide connectivity between corridor themes and resources. The Idema Trail, the Grand River Heritage Water Trail and Self-Guided Auto Tour are a backbone that can provide for various trail spurs and connections. The following recommendations are for additional or enhanced connected trails.

NATIVE AMERICAN TRAIL GUIDE
EXPAND THE 'A SELF-GUIDED AUTO TOUR'



The Auto Tour (Historic River Road and the Self-Guided Auto Tour) is an expansive and engaging route by automobile that visits 30 sites and explores many of the greenways interesting features and characters. Impressively, the tour was conceived and brought to fruition by a local historian, Marjorie Bethke Viveen. The Auto Tour continues to be a tool for exploration, and it is recommended here that a complimentary tour be developed - the Historic and Current Native American Trails of the Greenway.

The Grand River in Ottawa County is a major treaty border and a part of Indian Country. It possesses historic Native American trailways, trail spurs that connected the many villages across the landscape, and a vibrant community of Native American people. A trail tour could provide the local Native American community an opportunity to tell their story and promote exploration into a largely unknown side of the Grand River's history. The story could involve the major themes described in this document that include resiliency of a people, adaptation to a diverse environment, and the continuing relationship to the landscape and other human cultures. It could provide for meaningful relationship building between OCPR, local historians, and Native Americans to develop interpretation in a manner that benefits all groups.



- Develop a comprehensive map of major Native American trails and those that led to villages and seasonal areas of occupations (including water trails).
- Include the Native American trail network into a connection point with Kent County Greenway as the trails and narrative connect the two.
- Partner with Native Americans representatives from Tribal Cultural Preservation Offices, Native American knowledge holders, GVSU, historians, Grand Rapids Public Museum and OCPR staff. Chairman Ron Yob and the Grand River Band have extensive knowledge and archival information and should be included.
- Include indigenous artists in imagining ways to present the trails (https://www.digital-democracy.org/blog/indigenous-cartography-decolonizing-mapmaking/)

ECOLOGICAL LOOPS
CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

Greenways in Minnesota and Missouri have embraced a multi-functional approach to connect major parks (interpretive nodes), tie together isolated parks, and protect natural resources through ecological loops. The ecological loops concept allows greenway visitors to have a wide variety of options for their visit and to "Choose Your Own Adventure" through a series of linear, circular, and circuitous pathways. This type of layout provides visitors a wide variety of options including different lengths, themes, and destinations along their path. A benefit for a high density of local trails is how it meets the needs of local people who more frequently use the trails and make shorter trips for commuting, recreation, or exercise. The ecological loops can be viewed as "mini-greenways" or "Pockets of Green" rather than the sparser network of long-distance recreational greenways. The loops can also be connected into the regional trail network to provide longer duration experiences.

The OCPR greenway already has loops at many of its parks with a number near or connected to the Idema Explorers Trail and the Grand River Heritage Water Trail. These two trails could form the backbone of the loops, and the loops would connect major parks (interpretive nodes) to communities and locations that are now disconnected from the trail network. There are parks not well connected to other existing trails that have extensive loops already developed (i.e. Crockery Creek). Formation of loops could also connect and protect parcels not in OCPR ownership. The following are recommendations to establish a network of ecological loops:

- Evaluate options for linking trails, with major and minor loops, between interpretive nodes.
    - Focus on geological diversity of the loops including bayous, ravines, shorelines, and viewscapes.
- Form a team that includes OCPR, municipalities with nearby tails, and community advocates to evaluate and select options for establishing new inter-connected loops.
- Determine the historical, cultural, and ecological themes that could be associated with each loop (See Stearns Creek Connection Framework; Appendix B).
- Provide a variety of trip options at each loop including water and land trails.
- Determine ways for loops to connect the north side of the river.
- Develop connection points to the greenway trail network through parcels not owned by OCPR. Especially sites that have historical, cultural, or ecological value.
- Engage tribal governments in planning of loops and consider that land that may come into tribal ownership could be an option for connecting greenway loops and trails.
- Develop maps highlighting access and describing ecological loops for each greenway segment for websites, informational signs, and phone applications.

CONNECTING THE BAYOUS

Bayous are a defining and plentiful greenway feature which provide for high biological diversity, flood protection, an engaging history, and opportunities to make linkages between parks, and water and land trails. Water access to the bayous is extensive with five universal access points and several non-universal access points owned by OCPR, State and local governments. A major recommendation from the focus group was to 1) make bayou linkages more visible because they are “currently difficult to find.”, 2) provide shore access not requiring hiking through dense shoreline vegetation, and 3) create a range of opportunities from shoreline angling to paddling between the bayous. The following recommendations are designed to bring more visibility to the bayous and expand opportunities.

- At each bayou provide site specific and overall greenway information.
    - Site specific signage would describe access points, recreational features, and fish and wildlife communities.
    - Overall greenway signage would provide route details amongst the bayous (paddle time, access points), a brief description of amenities and recreational opportunities available at each bayou, and unique geology and fish and wildlife.
- At each bayou where shoreline trails or access are not available or are limited, determine the feasibility of expanding access.
- Develop a Bayou guide similar to recommendations found above for Native American Trails.
- Determine feasibility, and prioritize development, of an access site between Grand Ravines and Kuits Bayou (Current distance is ~4.25 miles in between without access).
- Develop annual recreational activities to showcase the bayous (See Connect the Bayous in Greenway Programming and Experiences).

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Multi-day Adventures (See Greenway Programming and Experiences)

- Provide multi-day options that include camping, canoeing, and fishing.
- Increase public awareness of the opportunities for extended trip experiences.
- Work with municipalities and local businesses to identify opportunities for guided services, maps with sponsorship, and needed infrastructure (i.e. campgrounds, rental equipment).
- Establish regulations that support multi-day opportunities while addressing environmental protection and social issues that may arise.
- Provide 24-hr access (camping areas). For rustic camping Bend Area, Eastmanville Bayou and Bass River system may be good candidates. For less primitive opportunities Ottawa Sands may be a good candidate.

Designate Quiet Areas, Ceremonial Areas with footpaths, and areas for edible plant harvest.

- See Greenway Programming and Experiences and Programming Examples.

PRIORITIES AND NEXT STEPS:

The following chart summarizes ESC's view on priority actions to implement the advisory teams' recommendations outlined in this document. Each action has a timeframe to signify when it should be addressed and the value which the action would bring.

Actions	Time frame	Value
PLANNING PRIORITIES		
Form advisory committee(s) for interpretive nodes, interpretive segments and wayfinding elements	Immediate and on-going	Engages a wide-range of community members (including African American and Latinx) and establishes essential relationships to reach plan recommendations.
Establish 6-8 interpretive nodes	Immediate and on-going	Provides information to connect nodes and develop interpretive segments. Engages community.
Develop interpretive segments	Immediate and on-going	Ensures cohesive programming where multiple storylines transitionally connect interpretive nodes.
Establish ecological loops (could be explored during action 1)	Immediate and on-going	Establishes trail connection, provides a range of experiences, and engages multiple stakeholders.
Explore a Gateway Campus of Culture and Research	Medium Term	Establishes community connections, research and management capacity, stakeholder synergy and national visibility. Develops place for exploring Native American Interpretation.
Establish at least one welcome center.	Medium Term	Creates a launching point for greenway exploration and a place for all people to feel "at home".
PROGRAMMING PRIORITIES	**Time frame**	**Value**
Implement programming ideas from advisory team	Immediate and on-going	Reaches a wide audience and uses greenway specific programming ideas developed by stakeholders.
Develop a phone application for exploring the greenway	Medium Term	Establishes a method to help meet almost all advisory team recommendations. Connects younger demographic. Partner relationships currently in place.
Produce a Native American Trail Guide	Medium Term	Enhances the "Auto Tour" and would meaningfully engage tribal communities in telling their story. Could integrate into phone application.

APPENDIX A

Identification of how recommendations meet the Goals and Objectives from the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan.

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan		Advisory Team Recommendations							
GOALS	OBJECTIVES	MEETING AN OBJECTIVE							
Goal 1	Preserve and manage park and open space lands which protect and enhance significant landscapes and natural communities, to benefit both people and wildlife.								
	a) Provide a high level of stewardship for natural lands.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	b) Identify high quality natural resource features and seek to preserve key parcels and interconnected natural lands through new parks and open spaces.†	1	2					7	
	c) Advocate for improved water-quality levels.†	1	2	3					
Goal 2	Provide high quality outdoor and natural-resource based recreation opportunities for residents and visitors of all levels of ability.								
	a) Provide a wide range of outdoor and natural resource-based recreation opportunities and facilities. †	1	2		4	5		7	8
	b) Identify areas not adequately served by park lands and activities, and expand recreation opportunities when natural resource features suitable for county park development are available.	1					6	7	8
	c) Provide lands and facilities which are accessible to individuals of all levels of ability. †	1	2					7	8
Goal 3	Promote understanding and appreciation of the natural and cultural history of Ottawa County and awareness of Commission-operated facilities, programs, and services.								
	a) Provide a wide range of educational and outdoor recreation programs and events for people of all ages, interests, and abilities. †		2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	b) Provide interpretive facilities for natural and cultural history. †	1	2			5		7	
	c) Promote good stewardship of county park lands and open spaces.	1	2			5	6	7	8
	d) Utilize programs and special events to promote awareness and use of the park and open space system.		2		4	5		7	8
Goal 4	Ensure organizational sustainability.								
	a) Emphasize a strong communications and marketing program to make the public aware of the lands, facilities, and programs.	1		3	4	5		7	8
	b) Expand partnerships to help achieve identified goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

† Goal or objective was slightly modified from original text to fit table.

APPENDIX B

Stearns Creek Connection Framework.

Stearns Creek

Ottawa County Parks and Recreation

Greenway Focus Group

The Storyline.

ADAPTABLE

From Glaciation to now, the people of Stearns Creek have built an adaptable relationship with the land in the face of changing conditions. Stearns Creek provided hunting, fishing and gathering, then logging and agriculture, and now recreation and restoration.

RESILIENT

Stearns Creek's natural resources continue to heal and provide a diverse ecosystem for all life, regardless of harm that has occurred.

UNIQUE

An "Epoch in an afternoon"; explore the diverse natural and culture resources of historic Stearns Creek.

The Special Features.

DIVERSITY

- Stream through ravine
- Old growth trees
- Glacial geology and topography
- Water viewscapes
- Freshwater estuary
- Rare plant community
- Medicinal plants and wild rice
- Vollmer Farm Artifacts –Fencing, Tree Farm

The Perspectives.

A SPECIAL PLACE

"The creek and river views could offer inspiration"

"Stearns Creek tells a story across time, cultures, and ecosystems"

"There is a remoteness and dark woods from the old trees but it feels safe and inviting"

"The varied geology and freshwater estuary are unique"

"A central and unifying educational property"

Historic White Pine Fencing

Shelf Fungus

The Programming.

UNIFYING THEME

Connect Stearns Creek to the Greenway through Geological History describing the uniqueness and common features; ravines, glaciation, and freshwater estuary.

K-12 EDUCATION

School fieldtrips designed to include social studies, history, earth science and ecology all linked to content standards. Students would visit multiple parks throughout their education.

ARTWORK

Minimize words with art progressively telling the story along trails, where visitors create their own interpretations. Include Native American sculptures and paintings near interesting features. Art would connect the socio-ecological story of Adaptability, Resiliency and Uniqueness.

- Fox pens, white pine fences and Christmas tree farm.
- Native American trails.
- Ecological succession and glaciation.
- Restoration projects and native species.

The Engagement.

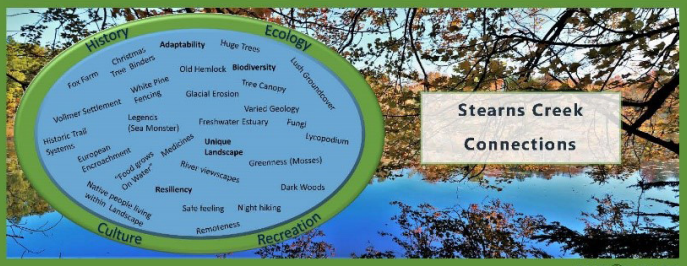
ACTIVITIES

- **Art.** Engage artists, poets, writers and musicians to showcase the parks uniqueness. Promote an Artist in Residency Program.
- **Native Culture.** Highlight the First People of this Place with culturally inclusive events on the vibrancy of the community. Events could include medicinal plants, seasonal practices (Wild Rice), and sacred histories.
- **Settler History.** Provide guided hikes where Vollmer artifacts come to life. Use power of storytelling to showcase the legends and people that build an intriguing narrative.

The opportunities.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Community Gathering Area.** Provide a pavilion and picnic area near parking lot with restrooms. Create seating with benches in a circle.
- **Water Access.** Provide a rustic kayak and canoe launch at the bayou.
- **Water Viewsheds.** Focus on high spots accentuating the Grand River, interior ravine, and bayou.
- **Quiet Trail:** Promote mental health ("forest bathing") in the deep, dark woods. Have a "quite zone" sign.
- **Name trail spurs:** Names can tell story of legends and native American resiliency. Use language that tells story (i.e. Anishinaabemowin).
- **QR Codes:** Code on each educational sign for people to dig deeper and understand recreational opportunities.



ENCOMPASS
Socio-ecological Consulting