



**Parks and Public Works Committee
Regular Meeting**

June 23, 2026 – 10:00 am

*This is an in-person meeting at Saugatuck City Hall, 102 Butler St, Saugatuck, MI 49453.
The meeting will also be available live, virtually on Zoom.*

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Roll Call**
- 3. Approval of Agenda**
- 4. Approval of Minutes:**
 - A. Regular Meeting – June 2, 2026
- 5. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only (Limit 3 minutes)**
- 6. Discussion:**
 - A. DPW Administrative Update
 - B. Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area Trail Assessment Report
- 7. Public Comment (Limit 3 Minutes)**
- 8. Correspondence**
- 9. Committee Member Closing Comments**
- 10. Adjourn (Voice Vote)**

NOTICE:

Join online by visiting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/2698572603>

Join by phone by dialing:

**(312) 626-6799 -or-
(646) 558-8656**

Then enter "Meeting ID":
2698572603

Please send questions or comments regarding meeting agenda items prior to meeting to:

mondersma@saugatuckcity.com

Requests for accommodations or interpretive services must be made 48 hours prior to this meeting.

Please contact Saugatuck Deputy Clerk at (269)224-9507 or

sara@saugatuckcity.com for further information.



Parks and Public Works Committee

Meeting Minutes - DRAFT

June 2, 2026, at 10:00 A.M.

Saugatuck City Hall, 102 Butler St, Saugatuck, MI 49453

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 by Chair Kimble.

2. Roll Call

Members Present: Charak, Hoffman, Kimble, Roche, Stanton (online), Thiel.

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: DPW Superintendent Ondersma, DPW Project Manager Gibson, Deputy Clerk Williams

Others Present: None

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Hoffman, supported by Roche, to approve the agenda for the June 2, 2026, meeting. Via voice vote, motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Charak, supported by Roche, to approve the amended minutes for the March 24, 2026, regular minutes as presented. The minutes incorrectly spelled "Saugataco". Motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Comment on Agenda Items

None.

6. Discussion

A. DPW Administrative Update:

Department of Public Works Superintendent Ondersma reported that the Chain Ferry is operating, with only minor remaining work. They still have some touch-up painting on the dock on both sides, and they need to paint some fairing strips yellow to address tripping concerns. He noted that Maple Street construction is progressing well, with service tie-ins starting and

pressure testing and surface tie-ins expected around the end of the week or early next week, though no firm dates are set yet. Ondersma also explained that invasive species control work has begun at Mount Baldhead, the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area, and citywide. Regarding Oval Beach, he said that opening weekend went well overall. There was an initial “cash only” issue at the ticket booth which was resolved by having Frontier check the phone lines and then rerouting the credit card machine through the beach Wi-Fi, after which it has run smoothly without further complaints. Finally, he noted that the Garden Club selected and placed flowers throughout town with assistance from the DPW team.

B. CVB Artsy Bike Rack Project:

Ashley Siebelink from the CVB, gave a brief presentation on the CVB Artsy Bike Rack Project, which began under former CVB director Lisa Mize to create a more visually appealing “artsy” bike rack reflecting the area’s Art Coast identity. High school students in Vince Heiser’s architecture and design class submitted designs, with Tessa Knapp’s design selected and then fabricated by industrial arts students Nolan Lalande and Nick Moore. The CVB had the racks powder coated, and one is now waiting at DPW for installation. Siebelink provided a handout showing existing bike rack locations and asks where the new rack should go, emphasizing that it should be a visible focal point as people enter town. Members discuss options such as the information kiosk area, Village Square, Cook Park, and especially Coghlin Park, noting previous field visits and a desire to have welcoming piece at the city entrance. Ashley noted she is also working on a plaque and dedication with the students and city representatives.

Motion by Roche, supported by Hoffman, to recommend approval to City Council to have the CVB donated bike rack installed at Coghlin Park. Via roll call vote, motion carried unanimously.

C. Way Finding Signage:

Committee members Roche and Thiel explained that they reviewed the new signage system in Douglas as a model. They spoke with Douglas staff member Jenny Pearson, who managed that project and is willing to share details and lessons learned. They describe how Douglas first drove around to identify intuitive locations where people need directional help, then created a cohesive system in which all park signs, parking signs, municipal building signs, and landmark signs share consistent design and color-coding, giving the city a unified look. They show photos of examples, including the nautical rope-and-wood fencing used at park entrances to visually tie spaces together, which they feel could work well in Saugatuck (for example, at Village Square). They then did a similar pass on the Saugatuck side, identifying key intersections and destinations where signs would help both residents and visitors better navigate downtown and trail areas. Kimble suggests adding Peterson Preserve to the list because it is hard to find without signage. The group’s intent is for this baseline document – locations and concepts, not

final designs- to be handed off to staff and city council and used by the branding/logo and wayfinding efforts once a new city logo is finalized.

D. Parks – Benches and Table Needs:

Committee members Charak and Hoffman walked through needs, park by park, based on their site visits. They recommend additional benches near the busy Village Square playground, possible small game tables (e.g., chess/checker tables) in the quieter southwest corner, and more picnic tables and benches in underutilized areas of Wicks Park and Peterson Preserve. They also propose adding benches at Willow Park, an extra bench at the Rose Garden, and one bench plus one picnic table at Coghlin Park. The group discusses avoiding cluttering open green spaces, being mindful of DPW’s mowing/maintenance needs, and favoring durable composite picnic tables going forward. They explore funding and logistics, including using a standardized bench style, relying on donor “memorial” benches or plaques, checking an existing waitlist of willing donors, and potentially updating the city’s donation policy. The next step agreed upon is for Charak and Hoffman to work with DPW Project Manager Gibson to identify bench/table vendors, confirm what has been utilized in the past, gather pricing, and bring back prioritized recommendations that can eventually go to City Council.

7. Public Comments

Lauren Stanton (Parks & Public Works Committee Member- online): She thanked the committee members for their work on wayfinding signage and benches/tables and explains how their efforts will plug into upcoming city processes. She noted that the branding and logo committee meets on June 9, and Roche and Thiels’s wayfinding work will help determine where to place new signage once a logo is selected. She is enthusiastic about using SCA bathrooms as public restrooms and sees that as a good candidate for future signage. Regarding benches and picnic tables, she says she and staff (particularly City Manager Cummins and Mayor Anderson) can work with Mark to review and update the donation/memorial policy, including standardized plaques and options for benches, picnic tables, and possibly Adirondack chairs. She suggests that once pricing and preferred products are identified, they will ensure the policy is current and bring it to council as an agenda item so community donations can help fund these amenities.

8. Correspondence

None.

9. Member Closing Comments

Roche: She welcomed Mark and emphasized that the committee is a resource for DPW, then highlights several recent accomplishments: the one-year anniversary of the Wilds and the two-year anniversary of the Village Square Playground, both of which she describes as major community assets. She reports on the first “Krazy for the Kazoo” river stewardship day, where about 40 volunteers spread

across multiple parks removed roughly 250 pounds of trash and 80 pounds of invasive bittersweet. Roche then raised several practical park issues and ideas: promoting the John Woolham Trail as a safer partial walking route to Oval Beach, addressing loose utility lines at the trail crossing near Perryman, clearing downed trees on rustic trails (possibly with volunteer help), and considering whether the boardwalk should be formally named and treated as a destination like other cities' waterfront boardwalks. She closed by thanking the committee for its work and noting how critical the city's parks and green spaces are to local quality of life.

Charak: He said that he feels the committee has done "great work" over the last two months, particularly with the updates and recommendations on parks, benches, and tables. He expressed pride in the one-year anniversary of the Wilds and Village Square Playground and looks forward to the remaining sections of Village Square being completed. He added that he wishes they had "another project" lined up, but notes that summer is here, visitors are arriving, and it is exciting to see how much has been accomplished.

Hoffman: He is very pleased with the committee's work, describing the meeting as "really cool stuff." He specifically praised the signage efforts and the benches/tables planning as great and really important and concludes by saying he is really happy about it all and that it was a good meeting.

Thiel: She echoed the positive tone of the meeting, saying it was a great meeting and that she is happy to see everyone again after a bit of a time apart. She also extends another welcome to Mark and briefly added that she likes the idea of designating the boardwalk as a named designation, signaling her support for that concept.

Kimble: She thanked everyone for their work, noting how well the committee followed through on the projects they had delegated, especially benches/tables and way finding. She explains that a separate planned project to evaluate restroom improvements was effectively paused once she learned there is a 2027 project to fully refurbish both public restrooms, so staff will just handle maintenance for now. She then updated the group on her Pocket Prairies initiative and related native-plant efforts, including planned plantings at Peterson Preserve with Connie Dean using donations from Jeff Scott, and suggests working with DPW Project Manager Gibson to identify additional planning locations and potential enhancements at the Rose Garden, which she feels needs attention and more suitable plantings. She also supports exploring the boardwalk as a designated destination and reviewing the city's donation policy for benches and similar amenities. Kimble closed by welcoming Mark and thanking Gibson for her work.

10. Adjournment

Motion by Charak supported by Roche, to adjourn. Via voice vote, motion carried unanimously. Chair Kimble adjourned meeting at 10:52 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Sara Williams, Deputy Clerk
City of Saugatuck

Trail Assessment Report



Property Under Review: Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area

Location: Oval Dr, Saugatuck, MI 49453

Prepared for: City of Saugatuck

Prepared by: ODC Network (ODC Conservation Services)



Contact Information:
odc@outdoordiscovery.org
616-393-9453

Project Background

The ODC Conservation Services team conducted a trail assessment of parcel #'s: 57-004-008-00, 57-004-010-00, and 57-004-008-10, located on Oval Dr in Saugatuck, MI. The site consists of a coastal dune and interdunal wetland complex characteristic of the Lake Michigan shoreline, supporting a mosaic of sensitive plant communities and dynamic dune processes.

This assessment evaluates existing informal and established trail conditions and provides recommendations related to trail alignment, decommissioning of redundant routes, wayfinding improvements, and opportunities for interpretive signage. No construction-level design or engineering is included as part of this phase of work.

Multiple field assessments were conducted between **April and May of 2026**. The methodology consisted of a comprehensive pedestrian survey of accessible trail corridors across the property, with field observations documented on-site and reviewed in conjunction with available aerial imagery and LIDAR-derived topography. Key assessment priorities included:

- Identification of an optimal trail footprint with an emphasis on protection of sensitive ecological communities
- Identification of informal, redundant, or unsustainable trails recommended for decommissioning
- Recommendations for improved wayfinding and visitor circulation
- Identification of key natural features suitable for interpretive signage and educational programming

Executive Summary

The existing trail system requires targeted modifications to reduce impacts to sensitive ecological communities while improving overall circulation, safety, and visitor experience. Based on our assessment, the system could be consolidated into a single primary loop without the need for substantial new infrastructure investments, allowing the site to function more sustainably while still accommodating public access needs and showcasing the unique ecology of the site.

A refined trail alignment would help concentrate use within more resilient and established corridors, reducing fragmentation and minimizing disturbance to interdunal wetlands, open dune habitats, and adjacent upland communities. These systems support a high diversity of plant and wildlife species, many of which are sensitive to compaction, repeated off-trail disturbance, and informal path creation. By guiding users more intentionally through the landscape, the redesign would help balance ecological protection with recreational and educational access.

In addition to ecological benefits, the revised layout provides an opportunity to elevate the interpretive value of the site. Key natural features including dune succession gradients, wetland transition zones, and associated native plant communities could be highlighted and protected through strategic trail placement and potential interpretive elements. In coordination with the ecological evaluation scheduled for completion in September 2026, these improvements could support expanded educational programming, including field-based learning opportunities and culturally informed interpretation where applicable.

Clear access points, improved wayfinding, and reduced trail redundancy would also play a critical role in minimizing user confusion and limiting off-trail disturbance. This would help protect sensitive vegetation communities, reduce maintenance needs over time, and improve long-term resilience of the trail system.

The proposed approach supports a phased, low-impact implementation strategy that can be aligned with ongoing site management goals and stakeholder input. By prioritizing consolidation and clarity over expansion, the project emphasizes ecological integrity, long-term sustainability, and a more intentional visitor experience rooted in the unique characteristics of the landscape.

Current Trail Network

The current trail network (see Appendix A) consists of a broad and poorly delineated system of informal and formalized pathways. Several trails terminate without clear destinations or interpretive value, while others are degraded or in an unsafe condition due to erosion, overhanging vegetation, limited maintenance, or repeated off-trail use.

The lack of consistent wayfinding and defined circulation patterns contributes to user confusion and encourages the creation of informal social trails, further fragmenting sensitive ecological areas. In several locations, multiple parallel routes have developed, resulting in unnecessary habitat disturbance and increased edge effects within adjacent plant communities. As habitat becomes increasingly dissected by trails, a greater proportion of the landscape is influenced by edge conditions, including altered light and moisture regimes, increased human disturbance, invasive species encroachment, and reduced habitat connectivity. These changes can negatively affect both plant and wildlife communities by reducing the extent and quality of intact interior habitat.

Overall, the existing trail network does not clearly guide users through the site's key ecological features, nor does it effectively concentrate use within appropriate corridors. This contributes to both diminished visitor experience quality and increased anthropogenic pressure on sensitive habitats, particularly in interdunal wetland and transitional zones.

The accompanying map in Appendix A illustrates the current trail network in its existing condition, highlighting redundant segments, unclear junctions, and areas where trail proliferation has resulted in ecological and safety concerns.



Figure 1. Photo showing parallel trail networks causing unnecessary soil disturbance.

Trail Recommendations

We recommend simplifying the overall trail layout to improve ecological protection, user experience, and long-term manageability of the site (see Appendix B). Based on field surveys and observed use patterns, several lesser-used or redundant paths should be closed and restored to reduce unnecessary disturbance to sensitive ecological areas and prevent encroachment on private property.

Consolidating the system into a more defined primary loop will help focus visitor use within more resilient corridors while reducing fragmentation of interdunal wetlands, open dune habitat, and transitional plant communities. This approach also reduces the proliferation of informal social trails, which are currently expanding anthropogenic pressure into areas not intended for recreation or foot traffic.

Trail closures should be paired with clear physical and visual cues such as signage, small physical barriers, or blocking with large logs or other natural materials. These efforts should be followed by passive restoration using native seed and plantings appropriate to each impacted community type. Over time, this will help reestablish vegetation, stabilize soils, and discourage reuse of closed segments.

In addition, redefined access points and improved wayfinding are recommended to guide users onto the primary loop and reduce confusion at trail junctions. This will support safer circulation patterns while also enhancing the interpretive value of the site by directing visitors toward key ecological features rather than dispersed or fragmented routes.

The accompanying map in Appendix B identifies the simplified primary trail alignment, providing a clear framework for phased implementation.



Figure 2. Photo showing a stretch of the simplified single loop trail concept.

Trail Wayfinding & Interpretive Signage

A clear and consistent wayfinding system is recommended to support navigation throughout the simplified trail network and to reduce the development of informal social trails. Signage should be strategically placed at key decision points, including trailheads, junctions, decommissioned trails, and transitions between major habitat types, to reinforce the primary loop and improve overall user orientation within the site (see Appendix C).

Given the ecological diversity of the area, including interdunal wetland, Great Lakes marsh, and open dune systems; interpretive signage represents a strong opportunity to enhance visitor understanding of site ecology and sensitivity. These systems can be used to communicate key concepts such as hydrologic connectivity, dune dynamics, and vegetation succession, while also reinforcing the importance of staying on designated trails and not disturbing sensitive plants.

While signage design and production are not included as part of this assessment, the recommended framework identifies key locations and interpretive themes where future signage would be most effective. Our team, or a qualified partner, can support subsequent phases of signage design and production if desired.

Wayfinding elements should remain clear, durable, and context-sensitive, using a consistent design approach that is appropriate for a natural setting. A simple hierarchy of information is recommended, prioritizing navigation at primary junctions and more interpretive content at key ecological focal points.

Interpretive messaging should focus on helping visitors understand the distinct ecological functions of the site's major communities, including the water storage and biodiversity value of interdunal wetlands, the dynamic and disturbance-driven nature of open dunes, as well as site history, cultural significance, invasive species education, and the habitat complexity of Great Lakes marsh systems.

The accompanying map outlined in Appendix C identifies recommended signage locations and interpretive nodes aligned with the proposed trail consolidation, providing a framework for future design and implementation.



Figure 3. Photo showing the proposed trailhead kiosk location for improved access.

Appendix A: Current Trail Layout (GPS taken from April 2026 field survey)



Appendix B: Recommended Trail Layout



Appendix C: Recommended Interpretive Signage Locations



RESTORING NATIVE PLANTS

Landscaping that Improves Water Quality




ISSUES IN LAKE MAC

The greatest pollutants in our waters are fine sediment and excess fertilizer, which both contain phosphorus. Excess phosphorus allows algal growth that damages plants, animals, and humans.

THE SOLUTION:

Grow native plants between problem areas and the lake to filter pollution out of runoff before it reaches the water.

Native grasses are taller than turf grass, which slows the speed of runoff and allows the fine sediments to settle out of the water before being carried to the lake. Reducing the amount of turf grass limits the amount of maintenance needed at this site, saving time and reducing fossil fuel demand.

Native plants provide food for pollinators too!



NATIVE PLANTS HAVE DEEPER ROOTS

Deep roots anchor soil in place, preventing erosion.

Deep roots create pathways in the soil, allowing water to percolate instead of running over the surface.

MACATAWA WATER QUALITY

No Industrial Pollution Here, Just Dirt

ISSUES IN LAKE MAC

Fine sediment washing off unprotected soil from farm fields, pavement, and suburban yards makes the water of Lake Macatawa cloudy.

Fine sediment does not settle out of the water easily, which limits how deep sunlight can reach, affecting sightlines for animals living in the water and for birds that hunt aquatic prey. Sediment may also carry phosphorus from fertilizers, and causes more algae to grow. Too much algae uses up the oxygen in the water, making it harder for fish and other animals to breathe.

MEASURING CLARITY:

Water clarity can be measured with an instrument called a secchi disk. The disk is lowered into the water until it can no longer be seen.

DO YOU SEE GREEN WATER?

ALGAE COULD INDICATE A PROBLEM



Algae are microscopic and naturally occurring, but can form thick mats when there are too many nutrients.

DUCKWEED IS GOOD FOR WILDLIFE



Duckweed is a very small, native plant that floats on the water. Its an important food source for animals and helps regulate water temperatures.

Bald Eagles and other birds that hunt fish need clear water to see their prey.





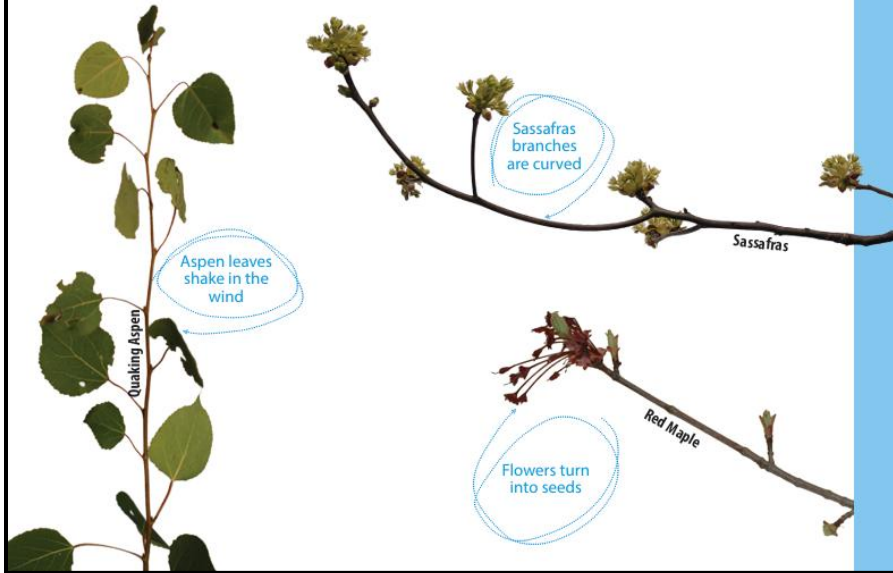



Deciduous Trees

Deciduous trees may lose their leaves when conditions are unfavorable.

In Michigan, deciduous trees lose their leaves in Autumn, in preparation for lower light and drier conditions of Winter.

Most of our deciduous trees in Michigan are also flowering trees. Many of those trees have small flowers and bloom in early Spring, before leafing out again.



Deciduous Tree Area
Sponsored by:

**Community Foundation of the
Holland/Zeland Area**

Sensory Experiences



Look at the branches of the trees along this portion of the trail. Notice the leaves may be directly across from one another or in a zig zag pattern along the branch.



Smell a sassafras leaf or freshly broken twig.



Listen for the rustling leaves of the aspen trees along this portion of the trail.



Touch the bark and the leaves of the trees along this stretch of trail. Leaves may have a unique edge or texture.



Managing Habitat with Fire

Fire returns nutrients to the soil and helps remove invasive plants.

Non-native and invasive plant species do not provide food for wildlife. Removing the plants that are not supposed to be here helps us maintain high-quality habitat for wild animals.

Native plant species are tolerant of burning. Controlled burning lowers the danger of wild fires and promotes quality, native habitat.



When conditions are appropriate, the ODC conducts a controlled burn in the spring. We contract with PlantWise, a native habitat restoration company.

Did you know?

Fire = Faster Growth

Removing the dead plant stems allows the sunlight to reach the soil. The black earth left behind after the fire absorbs sunlight and heats up quickly. Native warm season grasses and wildflowers germinate faster and grow better in the warm soil.



Grassland plants have annual growth that dies after each year though the roots are still alive.

Dead plant stalks provide fuel for the fire.

7 days after the burn

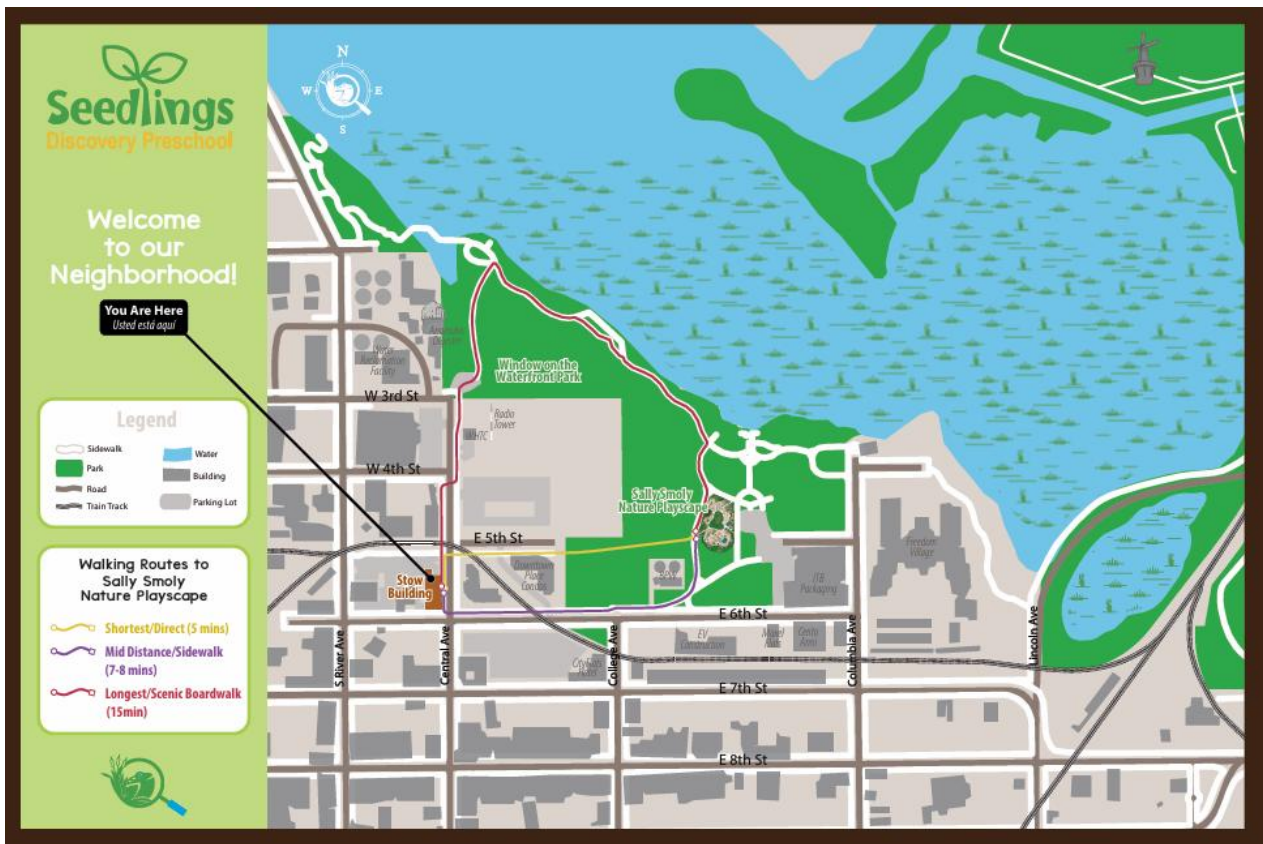
10 days after the burn

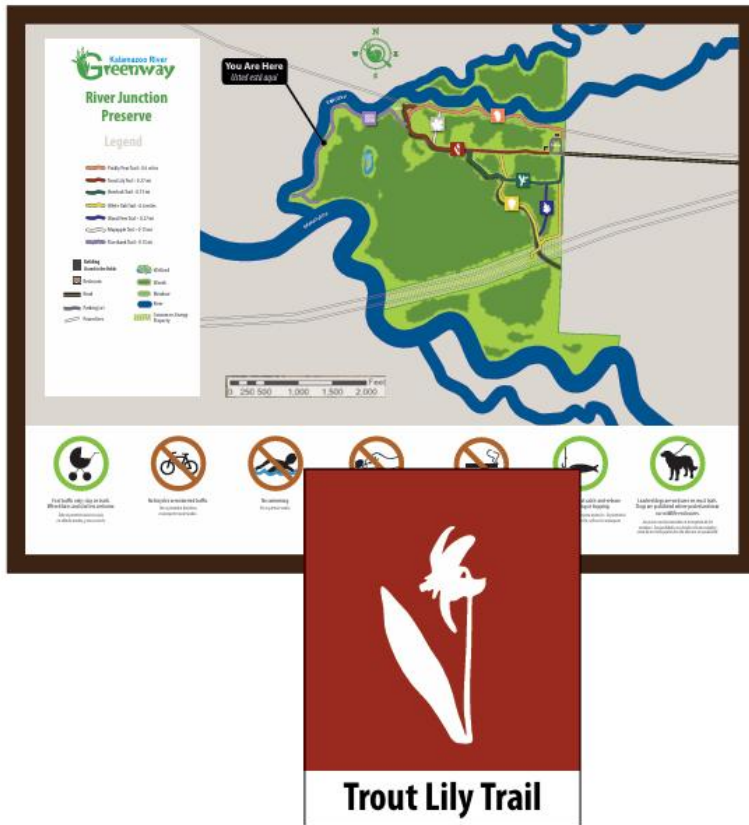
20 days after the burn

31 days after the burn

Appendix E: Examples of Trail Wayfinding Signage Produced by ODC







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Note: These examples of interpretive signage concepts were developed by ODC and are provided for conceptual reference only. They are intended to illustrate potential styles, layouts, and integration within a natural landscape setting. Final signage design is not included within the scope of this assessment; however, interpretive signage could be developed in the future through coordination with ODC or another qualified design partner to highlight the site's unique dune ecology and associated ecological communities.

For custom signage design and production support, please contact our Creative Director, Dylana Eisaman (dylana@outdoordiscovery.org)

Appendix F: Reference Images of Trailhead Kiosk

