



## City Council Agenda Item Report

**FROM:** Ryan Cummins, City Manager

**MEETING DATE:** June 18, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Kalamazoo River Greenway Plan Presentation and Request for Financial Investment

**DESCRIPTION:**

In 2018, in partnership with the Outdoor Discovery Center (ODC) and municipalities throughout the County, a lower Kalamazoo River Greenway Plan was created. In 2019, City Council endorsed the plan as an advisory document to guide a comprehensive approach to restoring the Kalamazoo River and its tributaries and help engage public involvement to determine financial feasibility of any proposed projects. A copy of the plan can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/ry4r7s>

The ODC recently held a meeting with other tri-community stakeholders to discuss the progress we have made on the plan. The City had a lot of great progress to report on the goals of the plan including:

- Intercommunity Pathway
  - We remain hard at work on this with the Township, Douglas and Friends of the Blue Star Trail.
- Accessible launch
  - We continue to have a boat launch on Spear and we have now transient/shopper boat docks installed outside of Coughlin Park.
- Habitat Restoration in Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area
  - We had the Land Conservancy do an updated assessment of SHNA and incorporated their assessment into updates of the SHNA Master Plan.
  - The wildlife committee has made recommendations on the deer concerns.
- Harbor Sediment Removal/Management
  - The Harbor Authority has requested funding support for consulting services to define goals and work that is needed in the harbor.

- The Township Manager and I recently met with the Army Corps staff to discuss regular dredging of their areas of responsibility and to discuss a request to conduct further sediment testing.
- Invasive Species Treatment in Harbor
  - We have been treating for Milfoil.
- Green Stormwater Infrastructure
  - We now have our engineer reviewing new building or extensive addition plans and making sure that proper stormwater is incorporated into the plans. We have previously allowed ODC to install temporary rain barrels around downtown for education. The Parks and Public Works Committee recently received an educational presentation on stormwater management.
- Concrete repairs are in the works for the boardwalk.
- Saugatuck Wilds Nature Preserve will be opening soon to the public.
- Improvements to the Mt. Baldhead restrooms and upper platform are actively being worked on.
- The City Council approved a new Waterfront Preservation zoning ordinance.

The Outdoor Discovery would like to present an update to City Council and financial request to help fund future projects. They are doing the same with Douglas and the Township.

If Council is interested in providing financial support, further clarity should be provided on which projects would be prioritized. Council should also advise whether there is interest in the City participating in an advisory board and if so, who should represent the City.

**LEGAL REVIEW:**

N/A at this time.

**SAMPLE MOTION:**

N/A. Workshop item at this time.

May 19, 2025

Ryan Cummins, City Manager  
Holly Anderson, Mayor  
102 Butler St  
Saugatuck, MI 49453



Dear Ryan and Holly,

On behalf of ODC Network, I would like to express our gratitude to Saugatuck for collaborating with us on many community initiatives. We would like to thank Saugatuck for your interest in partnering with us in the important work to implement a greenway corridor along the Kalamazoo River addressing environmental restoration, recreation, conservation and education.

The Kalamazoo River Greenway plan was completed in 2018 with the goal to bring communities together with a shared interest in environmental stewardship and economic vitality. Saugatuck established a resolution to endorse the Lower Kalamazoo Greenway Plan on June 10, 2019 to be used as an advisory document guiding public officials on a comprehensive approach to the Kalamazoo River and its tributaries and engage public involvement to determine financial feasibility of any proposed projects.

If Saugatuck were to establish financial support of the Kalamazoo River Greenway it would be pivotal in the advancement of the plan's goals. We are excited to work on issues of importance to Saugatuck, including but not limited to:

- Habitat conservation
- Invasive species consultation
- Recreation programming
- Project management
- Grant writing for the KRG Mission
- Inter-park pathway planning/development
- Trail development & review
- EPA Superfund coordination
- Educational programs
- Water trail establishment
- Property acquisition planning
- Community/school collaboration

Our continued partnership with Saugatuck is very important for our organization and the community. In light of this, **we respectfully request a 2025 financial investment of \$5,000-\$10,000 for the Kalamazoo River Greenway.**

By collaborating with local units of government, corporations, foundations and individuals, we can create a vibrant community for people to live, work, play and learn. Thank you again for your support and leadership in our community. Please feel free to contact us should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Dan Callam, ODC Greenways Manager

A scenic view of the Kalamazoo River at dusk or dawn. The sky is a deep blue with scattered white clouds. The river is calm, reflecting the sky and the surrounding landscape. On the left bank, there are several houses and a large, dark, wooded hill. On the right bank, there are more houses and a small white building. A wooden dock is visible in the foreground on the left.

# Kalamazoo River Greenway

June 18, 2025

# Meeting Outline



- Kalamazoo River Greenway (KRG) Plan
- Kalamazoo River Greenway Plan Stakeholder Update
- Municipal Resolution
- ODC Network Scope of Work
- Funding Framework
- Long-Term Goals

## TRI-COMMUNITY PARKS AND RECREATION VISION

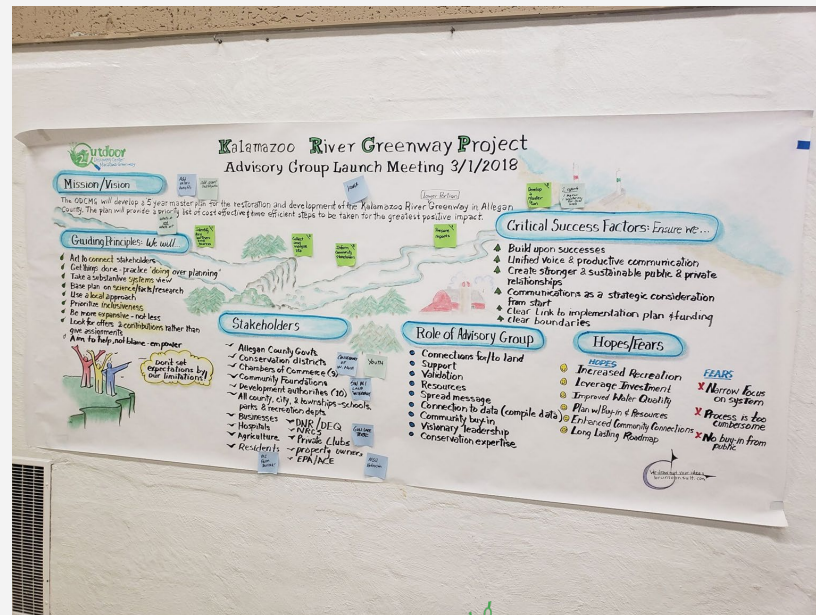
Cultivate a unified park system that offers diverse recreational opportunities for our vibrant and engaged community, expands upon our legacy of coastal conservation and environmental stewardship, and welcomes and inspires all who visit.

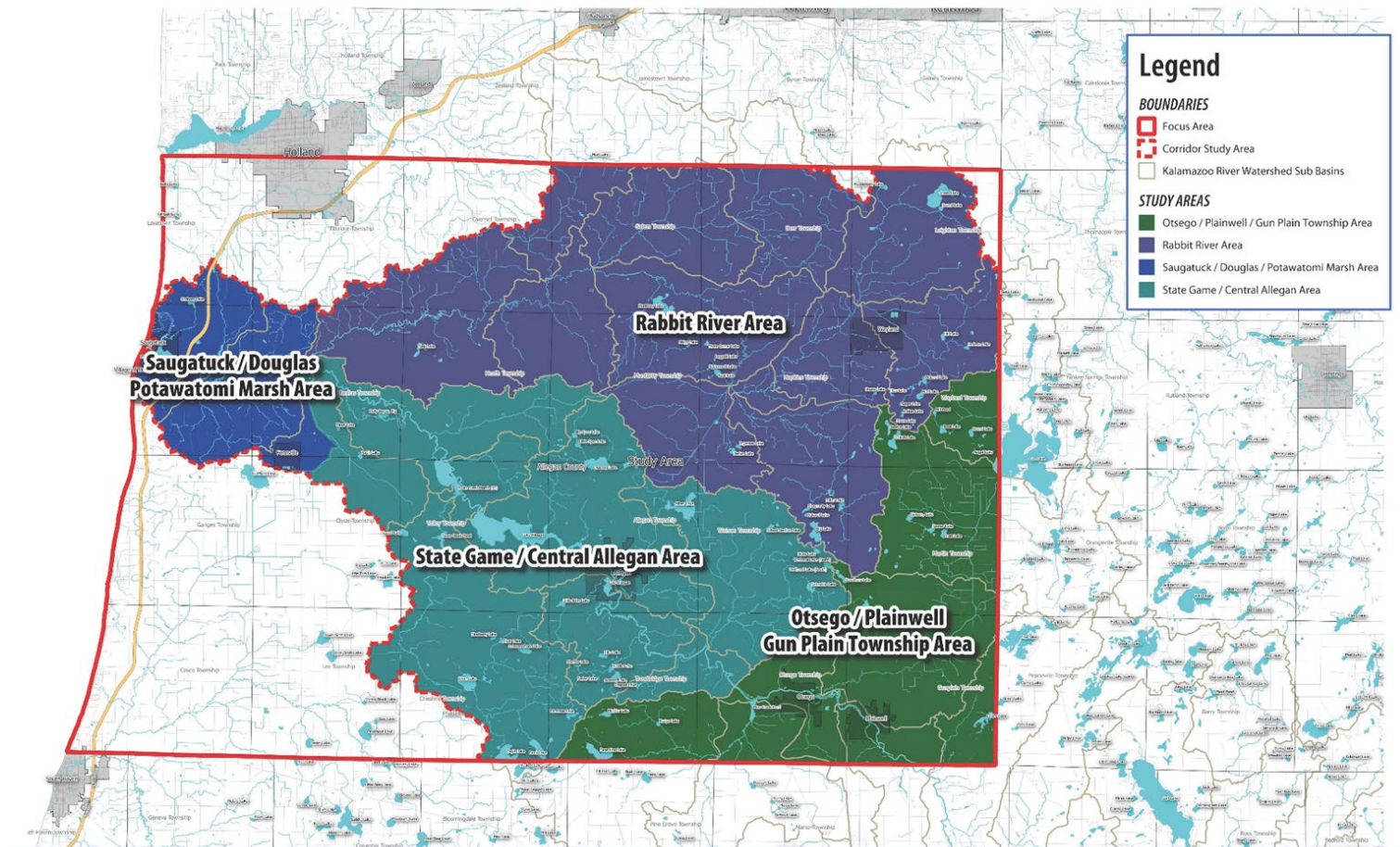
Created by the Tri-Community Parks and Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee, 2023



Pillars are the fundamental principles or core values that guide the development, planning, and management of parks and recreational programs within a community. The Tri-Community Pillars serve as the foundation for creating a comprehensive vision for the future of parks and recreation system, aligning with the community's goals and aspirations. They serve as guiding principles that inform the long-term vision, strategic planning, and decision-making processes related to parks and recreation. By integrating these core values into planning efforts, the community can create vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable parks and trails that contribute positively to the overall well-being and quality of life for residents and visitors.

- Established the plan in 2018
- Designed for collaborative planning efforts addressing environmental restoration, recreation, conservation and education
- 300+ stakeholders engaged over 15 months
- Resolutions signed by municipalities 2019-2020





# Update to Activities Along the River



- Calkins Dam
  - Consumers evaluating dam fleet, decision in Q2
- City of Allegan Dam
  - City planning for dam removal with help from EPA, DNR
- Trowbridge Dam
  - Removal currently underway
- Longer-term restoration work in Otsego, Plainwell
- Agriculture's ongoing impact
- Kalamazoo River Watershed Council

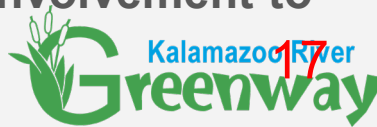


# City of the Saugatuck Resolution No. 190610-A

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- Signed June 10, 2019
- Whereas, the Greenway Plan was designed to **bring together the diverse communities** scattered along the Kalamazoo, Rabbit and Gun Rivers to coordinate planning efforts and work together as a unified county on **addressing ecological, educational, and developmental issues related to the river...**
- Whereas the Greenway Plan address issues related to environmental **restoration, recreation, conservation and education** which may include **seeking collaboration and funding for projects** such as...
- Be it resolved the **Saugatuck Council hereby endorses** the Lower Kalamazoo River Greenway Plan to used as an **advisory document** guiding public officials on a comprehensive approach to restoring the Kzoo River and its tributaries and **help engage public involvement to determine financial feasibility of proposed projects.**



# ODC Work Scope (not Limited to...)

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- Habitat conservation
- Invasive species consultation
- Recreation programs
- Project management with annual report and meetings
- Grant writing related to KRG mission
- School partnership
- Multi-community collaboration for regional plan
- EPA Superfund coordination
- Educational programs
- Water trail establishment
- Natural area consultation
- Trail development and review
- Property acquisition planning
- Inter-park pathway planning and development



# KRG Update/Outcomes

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- Area stakeholder meeting April 22, 2025
  - Short-Term Ideas
    - Advisory Board
    - Universal logo on tri-community signage
    - ODC funded to manage plan
    - Water Trail
    - Education/Access to River
  - Long-term Ideas
    - Land Acquisition
    - Connectivity of trails, parks, downtowns
    - Pure Michigan Trail Town

# Funding Framework

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- Municipalities: \$5,000-\$10,000 annually
  - City of Saugatuck
  - Saugatuck Township
  - City of the Village of Douglas
  - Fennville
- Non-profits: \$5,000-\$10,000 annually
  - S/D Rotary
- Business
- Endowment

# Project Possibilities



- Water trail
  - Mapping/Signage
- Community Clean-ups
- Educational programs
- Green Stormwater projects
  - Rain gardens/barrels
- Pocket prairies
- Collaborate with SPS students
- Reforestation
- Meadow restoration
- Water Quality Studies
- River Restoration
- Conservation
- Wayfinding and Signage
  - Universal across towns
- Best Management Practices w/ agriculture or homeowners
- Land Acquisition
- Connectivity of Trails
- Dark Sky Initiatives
- Pure Michigan Trail Designations
- Safe River Access Points

# Next Steps...

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- Presentations to KRG funding partners (May-June)
- Funding decisions made in June
- Meet individually with partner/stakeholders to determine their key priorities/values
- Host first Advisory Board meeting to define KRG Plan update, process and goals for 2025
- Continue to build an incredible, collaborative quality of life for our community



Thank you!

**CITY OF SAUGATUCK  
COUNTY OF ALLEGAN  
STATE OF MICHIGAN**

**RESOLUTION NO. 190610-A**

**A RESOLUTION TO ENDORSE THE LOWER KALAMAZOO RIVER GREENWAY PLAN**

Council Member Johnson, offered the following resolution and moved for its adoption, seconded by Council Member Spangler:

**WHEREAS**, The Kalamazoo River and Kalamazoo Lake, located in City of Saugatuck, traverses approximately two miles of the City of Saugatuck, a prominent and defining feature of the City closest to the mouth at Lake Michigan; and

**WHEREAS**, At the request and with the assistance of State Representative Mary Whiteford, the Outdoor Discovery Center Network (ODC) began developing a plan for a greenway corridor in Allegan County along the Kalamazoo River in January of 2018; and

**WHEREAS**, The Greenway Plan was designed to bring together the diverse communities scattered along the Kalamazoo, Rabbit, and Gun Rivers to coordinate planning efforts and work together as a unified county on addressing ecological, educational, and developmental issues related to the river; and

**WHEREAS**, Through a planning process that involved over 300 people and dozens of meetings, the Greenway Plan was developed to identify types of projects along the river corridor; and

**WHEREAS**, The Greenway Plan reflects the feedback received during the planning process, yet remains adaptive and flexible enough to be updated or adapted based on future needs and accomplished projects; and

**WHEREAS**, The Greenway Plan addresses issues related to environmental restoration, recreation, conservation, and education which may include seeking collaboration and funding for projects such as improving river access, addressing pollutants, treating invasive species, creating pathways, creating improved educational opportunities, and preserving the highest quality habitats.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** the City of Saugatuck City Council hereby endorses the Lower Kalamazoo River Greenway Plan to be used as an advisory document guiding public officials on a comprehensive approach to restoring the Kalamazoo River and its tributaries and help engage public involvement to determine financial feasibility (tax payer capacity) of any proposed projects.

YEAS: Council Members: Johnson, Spangler, Hess, Bekken, Peterson, Verplank & Trester

NAYS: Council Members: None

ABSTAIN: Council Members: None

ABSENT: Council Members: None

**ADOPTED** this 10<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2019

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ken Trester, Mayor

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Monica Nagel, City Clerk

#### CERTIFICATION

I, Monica Nagel, the duly appointed clerk of the City of Saugatuck do hereby certify the foregoing is a true and complete copy of a resolution adopted by the Saugatuck City Council at a regular meeting held June 10, 2019, in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, Act No. 267 of the Public Acts of Michigan, 1976, as amended. The minutes of the meeting were kept and will be or have been made available as required by said Act.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Monica Nagel, City Clerk