

Rose Garden Warming Station Proposal
Presented to the City of Saugatuck Parks & Public Works Committee
By the Saugatuck/Douglas Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

Summary

The Saugatuck/Douglas Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) respectfully requests the Parks & Public Works Committee's recommendation to proceed with the installation of a permanent warming station at the entrance to the Mize Memorial Rose Garden.

Designed as a welcoming public gathering place, the warming station will encourage year-round use of one of Saugatuck's most beloved parks while thoughtfully preserving the character and beauty of the Rose Garden.

The funding for this project comes entirely from lodging assessments paid by overnight visitors, not local property taxes.

Project Vision

The vision for the Rose Garden Warming Station is simple: Create a beautiful, permanent public gathering space that encourages people to enjoy downtown Saugatuck throughout all four seasons.

Rather than serving solely as a fire feature, the warming station is intended to become a place where friends meet, families gather, visitors pause during winter walks, and residents enjoy the outdoors even on cooler days.

Respecting the Rose Garden

The Mize Memorial Rose Garden is one of Saugatuck's most treasured public spaces, and preserving its character has remained one of the project's highest priorities. Throughout the design process, the project team has worked to ensure the warming station complements rather than competes with the existing garden.

Feedback from the public consistently emphasized the importance of respecting the Rose Garden's legacy. Survey respondents specifically encouraged preserving existing plantings where possible, and maintaining the garden's historic character.

Project Design

The design of the warming station has been guided by a commitment to preserving and enhancing the Mize Memorial Rose Garden. Throughout the design process, Martin Horner, owner of Souci Horner Design Collective and a member of the Saugatuck/Douglas Area Convention & Visitors Bureau Board of Directors, has worked closely with John Cannarsa, owner of Cannarsa Structure & Design, to ensure the project complements the existing landscape while honoring the garden's original vision.

A custom natural gas fire feature will serve as the focal point of a new gathering area, surrounded by brick pavers and landscaping that integrates seamlessly with the existing park. As part of the project, the existing wrought iron fence will be removed and replaced with low masonry seating walls. This enhancement opens the garden visually, provides additional seating, and invites residents and visitors to pause, relax, and enjoy the space.

The design also improves accessibility by creating two new entrances into the Rose Garden, making the park easier to access from multiple directions and strengthening its connection to the surrounding sidewalks.

Rather than functioning solely as a warming station, the space is envisioned as a year-round gathering place. During the cooler months, the fire feature will provide warmth and encourage outdoor activity. Throughout the rest of the year, the seating walls, landscaping, and open design will continue to serve as an attractive public amenity that enhances one of Saugatuck's most cherished parks.

The proposed location and site layout are illustrated in the attached landscape plan.

Community Support

In November 2025, the CVB conducted a Community Support Survey regarding a warming station in downtown Saugatuck. The survey received **171 responses** representing residents, business owners, visitors, and other community stakeholders.

Overall Support

- **74.7%** Support
- **18.3%** Oppose
- **7.1%** Neutral/Unsure

Among business owners who expressed an opinion, support was overwhelmingly positive, with only four respondents indicating they believed the warming stations would negatively impact their business.

Common themes from public comments included:

- Creating a more welcoming downtown during winter
- Encouraging year-round activity
- Increasing community gathering opportunities
- Respecting the historic character of the Rose Garden
- Providing additional seating and thoughtful landscaping

A complete summary of the survey results is attached.

Project Funding

The Saugatuck/Douglas Area Convention & Visitors Bureau has committed to funding the construction of the Rose Garden Warming Station.

Estimated Project Costs

Item	Cost
Masonry Construction	\$35,910
Fire Feature	\$12,565
Decorative Log Assembly	\$20,000
Landscaping	\$35,000
Estimated Total	\$103,475

Proposed Timeline

July 2026

- Parks & Public Works Committee Review

August 2026

- Historic District Commission Review

September 2026

- Saugatuck City Council Review

Fall 2026

- Construction

Prior to the Community Tree Lighting and Whootville Parade

- Project Completion
-

Requested Action

The Saugatuck/Douglas Area Convention & Visitors Bureau respectfully requests that the Parks & Public Works Committee recommend approval of the Rose Garden Warming Station project so that it may proceed to the Historic District Commission for review.

The CVB appreciates the Committee's thoughtful consideration of this proposal and looks forward to continuing its partnership with the City of Saugatuck to invest visitor-generated revenue into projects that strengthen our community and improve public spaces for everyone.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN FOR:

SAUGATUCK WARMING STATION

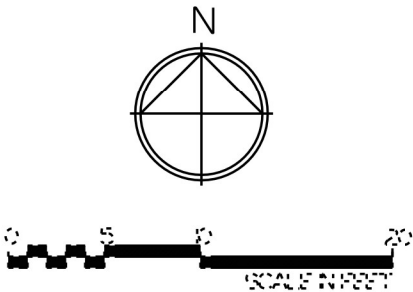
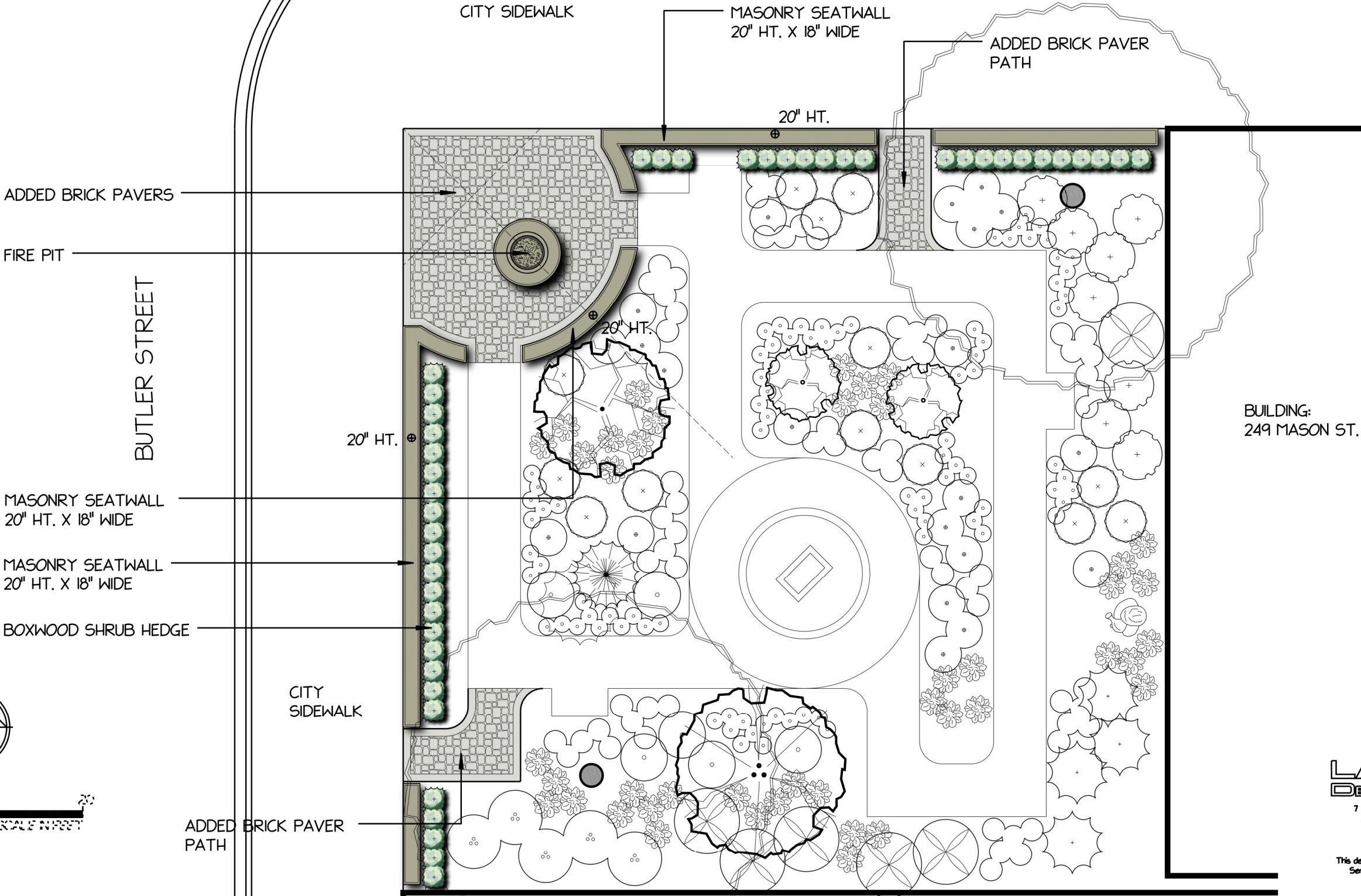
MEMORIAL ROSE GARDEN

145 BUTLER ST. SAUGATUCK, MI

DATE: 04/06/26

SCALE: 1" = 10'-0"

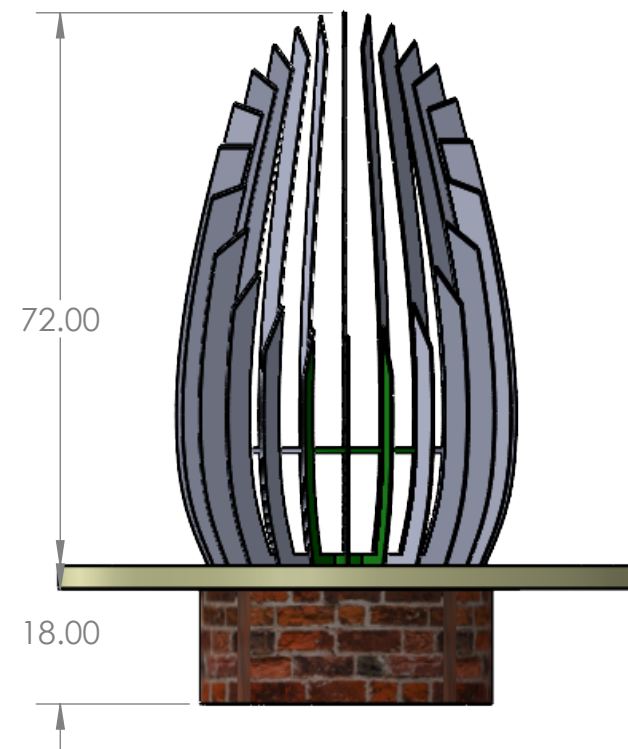
MASON STREET



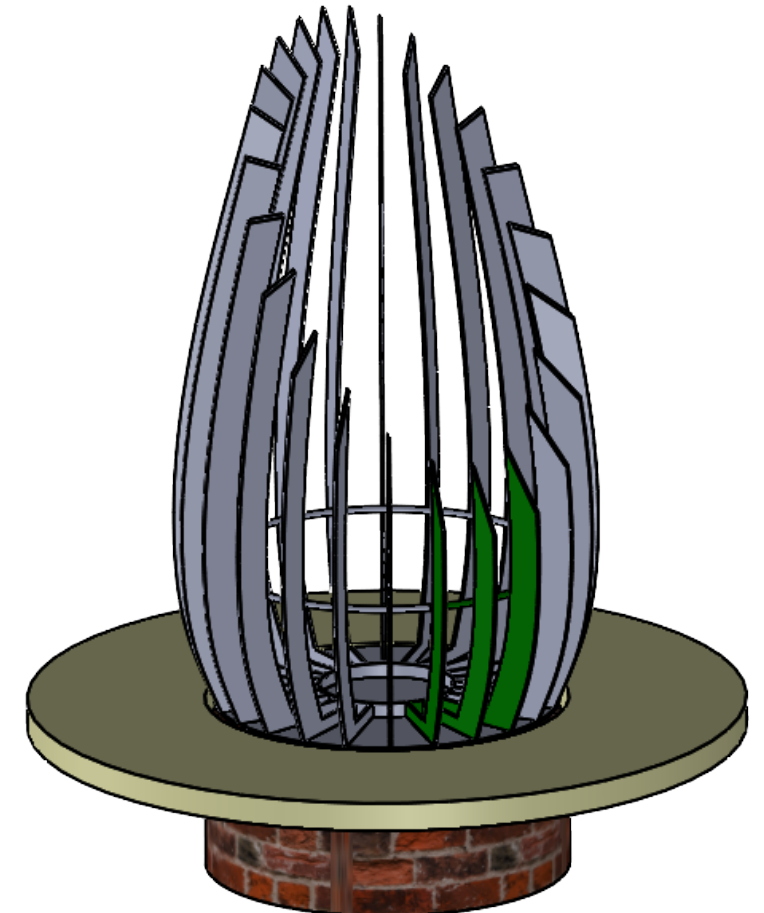
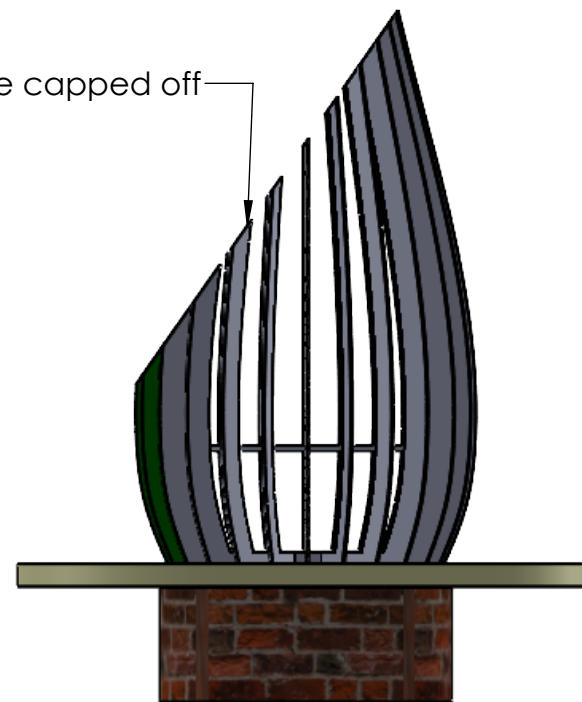
**LANDSCAPE
DESIGN SERVICES**

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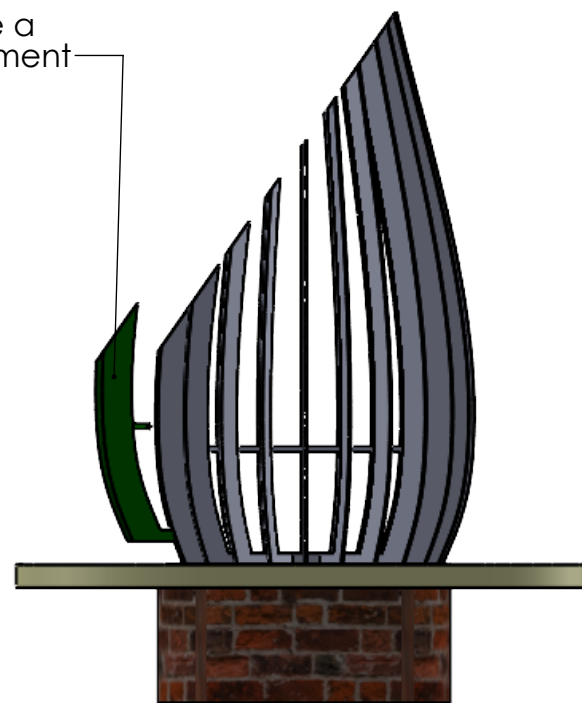
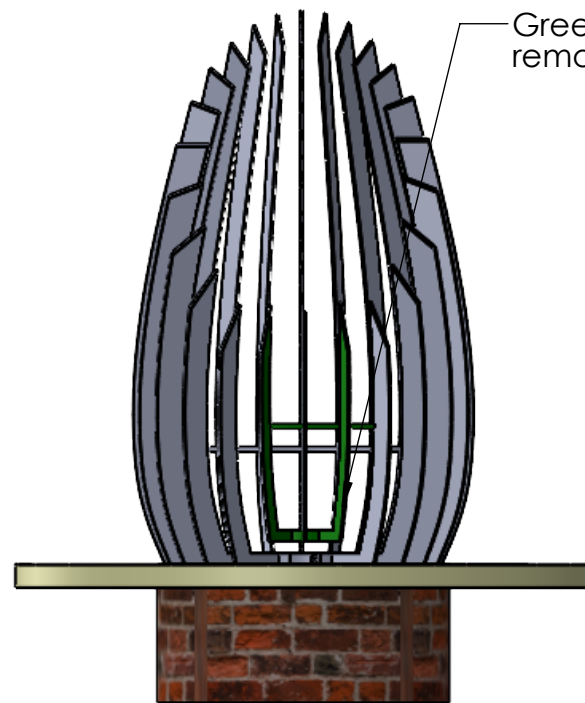
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Top to be capped off



Green Panels are a removable weldment



NOTE: Inside of firepit will be wrapped in either expanded metal or perforated sheet metal per fire code for the city.



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Customer: Saugutuck

Job Num:

Material: -- Select Material --

Gauge: -- Select Gauge --

Finish: -- Select Finish --

DWG: Firepit

Descrp:

DWG BY: ZJH

DATE: 5/19/2026

Quantity:

SCALE: NTS

SHEET 1 OF 3

Warming Stations Community Support Survey Summary

Overview

The Warming Stations Community Support Survey was sent out in November 2025, and received 171 responses from residents, business owners, visitors, and other community stakeholders. Overall, the survey demonstrates strong support for installing winter warming stations (fire pits) in downtown Saugatuck and Douglas.

Respondent Profile

The majority of respondents identified as:

- Saugatuck residents: 105 responses (61%)
- Business owners in Saugatuck: 28 responses (16%)
- Visitors/non-residents: 10 responses (6%)
- Other respondents included Douglas residents, township residents, workers, taxpayers, and part-time residents.

Overall Support for Warming Stations

Response	Number	Percentage
Strongly Support	101	59.4%
Somewhat Support	26	15.3%
Neutral / Unsure	12	7.1%
Somewhat Oppose	12	7.1%
Strongly Oppose	19	11.2%

Key Finding

Nearly 75% of respondents (74.7%) support the project, while 18.3% oppose it and 7.1% remain neutral or unsure.

Business Impact

When asked whether warming stations would positively impact their business:

Response	Number
Yes, positively	36
Neutral / Unsure	14
No, negatively	4
Not a business owner	97

Among business owners who expressed an opinion, support was overwhelmingly positive, with only four respondents indicating they believed the warming stations would negatively impact their business.

Common Themes from Comments

A total of **100 respondents provided written comments**. Several clear themes emerged.

Positive Feedback

Many respondents described the project as:

- A "great idea" and a creative use of public space.
- A way to make downtown more welcoming during colder months.
- An amenity that could encourage people to spend more time downtown.
- A visual symbol of warmth, activity, and community during the winter season.
- An attractive feature similar to successful warming stations seen in neighboring communities.

Representative comments included:

"Such a great idea!"

"A great idea to bring people downtown during our quiet season."

"Whether/how much they are actually used, the visual is impactful—showing warmth, activity, and welcome even in cold weather."

Concerns and Suggestions

While support was strong, respondents also raised several thoughtful concerns:

Preservation of the Mize Rose Garden

The most common concern involved protecting the character and legacy of the Rose Garden.

Several respondents expressed support for the warming station concept while encouraging designers to:

- Preserve as many existing roses and plantings as possible.
- Maintain elements of the current garden layout.
- Respect the original donor intent behind the space.
- Avoid making the area feel overly hardscaped or "sterile."

Design Considerations

Some respondents suggested:

- Refining the fire pit design.
- Retaining portions of the existing fencing.
- Incorporating additional seating.
- Considering multiple warming stations throughout the community.

Operations and Safety

A few respondents requested additional information regarding:

- Fuel source and operation
- Hours of use
- Liability and safety considerations
- Ongoing maintenance responsibilities

Conclusion

The survey results indicate **broad community support for the installation of warming stations in downtown Saugatuck and Douglas**. Nearly three-quarters of respondents support the project, and business owners generally believe the warming stations will have a positive impact.

The strongest feedback centered on ensuring that the final designs preserve the character of existing public spaces—particularly the Mize Rose Garden—while creating welcoming gathering places that encourage year-round community activity.

Overall, respondents view warming stations as a positive enhancement that can help reinforce the area's reputation as a welcoming, four-season destination.