Huron River Water Trail
Vision & Opportunity Plan

Commerce Township to
Island Lake State Recreation Area

DRAFT
4/7/09
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## Table of Contents

Introduction.................................................................................................................. 5
Overview of the Huron River Water Trail................................................................. 6
  Regional Context....................................................................................................... 6
  Assets & Needs Inventory....................................................................................... 7
    Character, Branding & Identity............................................................................. 7
  Access Points......................................................................................................... 8
  Obstacles................................................................................................................ 11
  Safety Concerns.................................................................................................... 11
Community Connections & Key Points of Interest................................................ 11
  Key Community Stakeholders.............................................................................. 12
Challenges, Opportunities & Recommended Strategies....................................... 13
  Priority Challenges & Opportunities.................................................................... 13
  Recommended Strategies...................................................................................... 13
Signage Needs Analysis............................................................................................ 14
  Overview................................................................................................................ 14
  Sample Signage Designs......................................................................................... 16
Summary..................................................................................................................... 19
Introduction

In 2007, Oakland County initiated a BlueWay Water Trail Exploratory Initiative to assist local communities in maximizing their river corridors as community assets through the development and promotion of water trails.

Paddlers have enjoyed the stretch of the Huron River between Commerce Lake and Island Lake State Recreation Area for many years. Heavner’s Canoe & Kayak Rental, based in the Proud Lake State Recreation Area, was opened by Stella and Chester Heavner in 1953 and is now owned and managed by their son, Alan Heavner. Village Canoe Rental also offers canoe rentals in the village of Milford. The experience along this stretch of the Huron offers paddlers a quiet wilderness retreat with slow, lazy currents and extensive wetlands and vistas. Multiple access points and stops along the way provide a wide variety of trip options and experiences.

This planning effort is part of a larger effort to assist local communities in maximizing their river corridors as community assets through the development and promotion of water trails. In the case of the Huron River Water Trail, the trail has been established and is used extensively. This effort sought to document current conditions along the water trail and identify any potential obstacles or opportunities for enhancement.

The following individuals provided invaluable assistance during the process through their participation in the Huron River Water Trail Working Group:

- Alan Heavner, Nature Connections, Owner Heavner Canoe & Kayak Rentals
- Dan Harrison, Historian, Henry Ford CC Librarian
- Kris Bennett, MDNR District Planner
- Rich Fannon, Commerce Township Plumbing Inspector
- Ann Barnette, Milford DDA Executive Director
- Jim Kropp, HCMA Planner
- JoAnn Stritmatter, Island Lake State Recreation Area Manager
- Paul Augsberger, Proud Lake State Recreation Area Manager
- Don Green, Milford Township Supervisor
- Arthur Shufflebarger, Milford Village Manager
- Laura Rubin, Huron River Watershed Council Executive Director
- Bill Hermann, Michigan Mountain Biking Association, Hermann Construction Inc.
- Joell Beether, Huron Valley Chamber of Commerce Executive Director
Overview of the Huron River Water Trail

Regional Context

The Huron River is approximately 136 miles in length, draining a watershed of approximately 900 square miles into Lake Erie. Headwaters of the Huron River are located at the Huron Swamp within Indian Springs Metropark, Springfield Township, Oakland County. The watershed contains several groundwater-driven tributary creeksheds, which originate high in the sandy, rolling Jackson Interlobate area of southeast Michigan.

The entire Huron River Water Trail section extends from Commerce Lake to the mouth of the Huron River at Lake Erie, a total of 115 miles. Other paddling opportunities exist in the upper tributaries of the Huron River Watershed, including a chain of lakes in the Portage Creekshed. The river stretch under consideration for this planning study is entirely within Oakland County, beginning at Benstein Rd. in Commerce Township and ending at I-96 as the Huron River flows from Kensington, totaling 21 miles.

Various liveries serve the existing sections of river. Heavner and Village Canoe primarily serve the upper part of the river in Oakland and Livingston counties. In the Ann Arbor area, liveries include Skip’s Canoe Livery, and those operated by the City of Ann Arbor at Argo Pond and Gallup Park. The lower river is served by Riverside Kayak Connection.

A movement to create a whitewater park through full or partial removal of the Argo Dam is underway. The City assembled an Impoundment Plan committee to study the issue and gather public input in 2006. The group is still studying the project and plans to recommend action to the City in spring 2009.

The Huron River presents a unique paddling opportunity within Southeast Michigan. It is the only river within Southeast Michigan to contain a natural river designation. The wild and scenic character of the river, stable flows, and good water quality make it a valued paddling resource for the communities through which it flows.
Assets & Needs Inventory

An inventory of physical characteristics of the Huron River Water Trail was undertaken in Winter/Spring 2007. The physical inventory included a “windshield” reconnaissance of access points along the Huron River Water trail as well as a virtual reconnaissance of the river corridor using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Google Earth. The character inventory consisted of focus group discussions with the Huron River Water Trail Working group. Assets were inventoried and catalogued, and gaps and needs identified.

Character, Branding and Identity

The Huron River Water Trail between Byer’s Homestead in Commerce Township and Island Lake State Recreation Area at I-96 can be thought of as having three distinct character zones.

In the first zone, the upper part of the water trail meanders through the extensive undeveloped wetlands and forests of the Proud Lake State Recreation Area (PLSRA). As the Huron River emerges from PLSRA, the river transitions into a second character zone as surrounding land use becomes increasingly urbanized toward the Village of Milford. Beyond Milford, the water trail enters a third zone in Kensington Metropark, as the Huron River is impounded and becomes Kent Lake.

Stakeholders discussed an identity concept for this water trail that centers around the Village of Milford as a recreational center or “hub” that integrates multi-modal land trails, water trails, and parklands with connections to the historic downtown. The Milford Community Master Plan lays policy groundwork and makes recommendations for the development of this vision, particularly in the Community Character Analysis and Building Regulating Plan Analysis.

The concept of the convergence of water trail, land trails, and Village as a recreational hub can be replicated in several areas downstream along the Huron River, particularly in the Ann Arbor area and the Downriver area.

Stakeholders identified their target user group for the water trail and recreational hub system as young, “New Economy” professionals looking for a unique and active living environment, while also being family-friendly. The ability to have many options from which people can choose to design their own experience while leaving activities for a return visit was identified as a critical component to the “hub” concept. Catering to the needs of visiting international executives was also deemed important. A targeted marketing plan to integrate these concepts together and promote the concept to the public was identified as a top priority.
Access Points
The Huron River Water Trail has many well-established, amenity-rich access points within the Proud Lake State Recreation Area, at Heavner’s headquarters, and within Kensington Metropark. Access varies from paved parking lots to required portages from parking areas. Several potential launch sites were identified as well: Byer’s Homestead within the Commerce Township Historical Park, and Camp Dearborn. The portage at Benstein Rd. remains a barrier.
1. Commerce Township Historical Park (Byers Homestead)
STATUS: Potential
TYPE: Natural
PARKING: 12 Spots, Trailer access
FACILITIES: Vault toilet in summer
NOTES: This is the historic first settlement of Commerce. An existing candy shop with private vendor operates at the site. Navigating Commerce Lake can be dangerous. Lower water levels in late season may impede access. Portage access at Benstein Rd. is required to connect this section downstream.

2. Bass Lake Rd. (Proud Lake State Recreation Area)
STATUS: Existing
TYPE: Natural
PARKING: YES
FACILITIES: NONE
NOTES: Access via Bass Lake Rd. is well used. Some small engine craft. Proposals to restrict motors on lower lake have been considered.

3. Tent Campsite (Proud Lake State Recreation Area)
STATUS: Existing
TYPE: Natural
PARKING: CAMPING ONLY
FACILITIES: Bathrooms
NOTES: Campsite access via Glengary Rd. Must be registered at campground.

4. Riverhawk Lodge (Proud Lake State Recreation Area)
STATUS: Existing
TYPE: Natural
PARKING: ACCESS VIA CONCESSION ONLY
FACILITIES: Vault toilet, picnic
NOTES: Not for public access. Launch downstream of control dam. Day use area for paddlers. Riverhawk lodge open to public for rental. Stocking location (brown & rainbow trout). Possible to paddle upstream. Large swimming hole upstream of dam.
5. Wixom Rd. “Huron River Fishing Site” (Proud Lake State Recreation Area)
STATUS: Existing
TYPE: Natural
PARKING: 20
FACILITIES: Vault toilet
NOTES: Well-used, accessible location. Picnic tables and interpretive sign would be nice enhancements.

6. Heavner’s Headquarters
STATUS: Existing
TYPE: Natural/Concrete
PARKING: 50
FACILITIES: Bathrooms
NOTES: Heavner’s Headquarters.

7. Garden Rd. (to Norton Creek)
STATUS: Existing
TYPE: Natural
PARKING: Limited
FACILITIES: NO
NOTES: Access at end of dirt cul-de-sac from Wixom Rd, or on west side from Milford. Large parking area on west side with connections to multi-modal trail system and Kensington. Norton Creek wetlands to south, Huron River to north.

8. Power’s Beach (Proud Lake State Recreation Area)
STATUS: Existing
TYPE: Natural
PARKING: 150+
FACILITIES: Bathrooms
NOTES: Access at end of dirt cul-de-sac. Norton Creek wetlands to south, Huron River to north. Pond fills up with weeds in summer, making paddling somewhat difficult. Weed management is needed.
9. Village Canoe Rental
STATUS: Existing
TYPE: Natural
PARKING: YES
FACILITIES: Bathrooms
NOTES: Concession only. For Sale.

10. Milford Central Park
STATUS: Existing
TYPE: Natural
PARKING: YES
FACILITIES: Bathrooms
NOTES: Opportunities for connections with downtown and park activities. Bank erosion and geese are problematic. Potential for design of put-in location in mill race. Potential hub for intermodal network; needs overall strategy and master plan in conjunction with Hubbell Park. Village is concerned about use conflicts.

11. Camp Dearborn
STATUS: POTENTIAL
TYPE: NATURAL
PARKING: NONE
FACILITIES: PRIVATE GOLF COURSE
NOTES: Potential Access Point; need to work with Camp Dearborn.

12. & 13. HCMA Canoe Camp & Dawson Rd.
STATUS: EXISTING
TYPE: NATURAL
PARKING: YES
FACILITIES: Bathrooms
NOTES: Must register with HCMA
14. Multiple Sites Within Kensington Metropark
- Dawson Road Access
- Farm Center - Accessible Only by Canoe
- Shorefishing Picnic Area
- Boat Rental
- East and West Boat Launches & Fishing Piers
- Multiple picnic areas
NOTES: Kensington is day-use only.

15. Island Lake State Recreation Area
The ILSRA contains multiple access points as well as camping along the river.
Obstacles

Two potential obstacles were identified. The Milford Dam has a very nice portage; still caution is warranted. The bridge at Benstein Rd. is not passable and requires portage access for connection of Commerce Lake and the upstream river.

Safety Concerns

The water quality and quantity of this river stretch is not likely to be a safety concern. A 2005 USGS study evaluated *E Coli* in the Huron River, and found that 2/15 samples exceeded partial body contact standards (Aichele 2005). This stretch of the Huron River has a very stable hydrologic profile owing to its position high in the watershed, high degree of groundwater inputs, relatively low levels of impervious cover, and extensive intact wetland systems. According to the USGS, 88% of the average annual streamflow component is supplied by groundwater (Aichele 2005). This hydrologic stability provides very safe, gentle, family-friendly river with reliable water levels.

Community Connections & Key Points of Interest

The water trail connects three major regional parks (the Proud Lake State Recreation Area, Kensington Metropark, and Island Lake State Recreation Area). Downtown Milford serves as a multi-modal trailhead, linking water, hiking, biking and equestrian trails, while also functioning as a regional social and recreational hub.
Historic and Cultural Resources

This section of the Huron River is rich in historical and cultural assets. Within the historic Commerce village settlement area, the Andrews-Leggett House is listed on the National Registry and several other sites are listed on the State Registry. Byers Homestead, the first white settlement in Commerce Township in 1825, is listed on the Michigan State Register of Historic Places. The Commerce Roller Mill, a state-registered site, harnessed the Huron River between 1825 and 1939 to grind flour and livestock feed until it was destroyed by fire in 1939. Excavations for the mill race, the flume, and stone foundations remain today.

The river flows past the scenic historic Oak Grove Cemetery, which was established in 1845 and is the final resting place for veteran’s of the War of 1812 and the Civil War, just before entering the historic Village of Milford. Within Milford, several state and nationally-registered sites are within walking distance of the river, including the Milford Rural Agricultural School, and McPherson Oil Co.’s Service Station. The River flows through several historic settlement areas, including Commerce, Oakley Park, Milford, and Kensington/Kent, and crosses three major historic Native American trail routes, including the Pontiac and Shiawassee trails.

While the Pettibone Creek Hydroelectric Station, located in Milford Central Park, is not currently listed on an official historic registry, the Milford Historical Society has been active in restoring and promoting the site. The story of the station integrates themes of water resource use and automobile heritage, and is an important part of Milford’s community history. Easily accessible from the Huron River at Milford Central Park, this resource is a key interpretive opportunity for users of the water trail.

The Pettibone Creek Hydroelectric Station was built in 1939 as part of Henry Ford’s vision of “Village Industries” - industrial centers in rural settings. The site has been the focus of a restoration effort spearheaded by the Milford Historical Society.

Source: http://www.umd.umich.edu
Source: www.milfordpowerhouse.com
Key Community Stakeholders

The following groups were identified as key stakeholders that must be involved in future planning and development of the water trail:

Public Agencies

- Milford Township  milfordtownship.com
- Village of Milford  villageofmilford.org
- Commerce Township  commercetwp.com
- Milford Downtown Development Authority  meetmeinmilford.com
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources  michigan.gov/dnr
- Oakland County  oakgov.com
- Huron Valley Schools  huronvalley.k12.mi.us
- Milford Public Library  milford.lib.mi.us
- Huron Clinton Metropark Association

Recreational Groups

- Michigan Horse Council  michiganhorsecouncil.com
- Friends of Proud Lake  friendsofproudlake.org
- Proud Lake Trail Riders  proudlaketrailriders.org
- Kensington Trail Riders  kensingtontrailriders.org
- School for Outdoor Leadership & Recreation (SOLAR)  solaroutdoors.com
- Southern Michigan Adventure Club (SMAC)  smacworld.com
- Huron Valley Outdoor Recreation Club
- Oakland Trail Advisory Council (OTAC)  oakgov.com/parksrec/program_service/trails_otac
- Michigan Mountain Biking Association  www.mmba.org

Environmental Groups

- Huron River Watershed Council  www.hrwc.org
- Sierra Club- Huron Valley Group  michigan.sierraclub.org/huron/
- Washtenaw Audubon Society  www.washtenawaudubon.org

Businesses and Business Organization

- Nature Connections (No Child Left Inside)  heavnercanoe.com
- Heavner Canoe Concession  heavnercanoe.com
- Huron Valley Chamber of Commerce  www.huronvcc.com
- Milford Business District Association
- Carls Family YMCA  www.ymcadetroit.org
- REI  rei.com
Challenges, Opportunities & Recommended Strategies

Priority Challenges & Opportunities

The following priority challenges/opportunities were identified and ranked in order of importance through a stakeholder focus group discussion:

1. Enhance Connection of Water Trail with Downtown Milford

   The potential for downtown Milford to serve as a destination point along the Huron Water Trail is currently impeded by the lack of facilities, a system for wayfinding, and promotion for canoes/kayaks within the Village. Physical impediments include lack of designated launch area, lack of signage, and the railway embankment.

2. Brand and Promote Milford as a Regional Recreational Hub

   A great deal of interest in the potential for branding Milford as a regional recreational hub has surfaced in the last several years. The convergence of the village with the river, surrounding large state and HCMA recreation areas, and multi-modal trail connections creates an opportunity for enhancing community identity and character as well as for economic development related to recreation and tourism. Recent developments supporting this concept include pursuit of official designation of Milford as a Ride Center by the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA).

3. Plan for the Entire Huron River Water Trail

   The long-term management of this water trail segment will require local leadership, organization, and resources. At the same time, efforts to plan and promote water trails have surfaced along downstream segments of the Huron River. Each of these efforts involve a variety of stakeholders, including public agencies, private liveries, and the general public. A coordinated effort to share resources among local groups and create consistent standards and protocols is needed.

Recommended Strategies

The following recommended strategies were identified by the stakeholder group.

1. Create a specialized subcommittee of the Milford DDA tasked with:
   (1) identifying alternatives for the physical connection between the water trail and the Village
   (2) identifying alternatives for launch and storage infrastructure at Central Park in Milford
   (3) identifying alternatives for the design, funding, and implementation of an interpretive/wayfinding signage system
   (4) pursuing the development of a plan for implementing and marketing Milford as a regional recreational hub.

2. Continue to meet as a group while keeping in touch with the Huron River Watershed Council, Downriver Linked Greenways, and other groups as needed to coordinate efforts.
# Signage Needs Analysis

## Overview

A workshop held in October 2008 brought water trail stakeholders together for the purpose of learning about wayfinding and identifying signage needs along their water trails.

The group decided to employ a mileage system based on setting the river mouth at Lake Erie as zero. This consistent mileage system will enable paddlers to easily navigate the river system and plan trips along its length.

The table on this page and map on facing page summarize the identified signage needs. Standard interpretive kiosks will contain an overview map of the entire Huron River Water Trail, local wayfinding and amenity information, and interpretive information about the Huron River Watershed and the local community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bass Lake Rd. at Entrance to PLSRA</td>
<td>Road sign to direct motorists to start of Huron River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bass lake boat launch</td>
<td>Standard interpretive kiosk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bass lake campsite</td>
<td>Standard interpretive kiosk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Within braided channel area exiting Bass Lake.</td>
<td>Veer to right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Riverhawk Lodge Area</td>
<td>Standard interpretive kiosk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Huron River Fishing Site on Wixom Road</td>
<td>Standard interpretive kiosk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Heavner’s Launch</td>
<td>Downstream to downtown Milford; Upstream to PLSRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Power’s Beach</td>
<td>Standard wayfinding interpretive kiosk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Garden Rd. Cul de Sac</td>
<td>Map/directions for Norton Creek Spur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mont-Eagle Rd. launch</td>
<td>Standard interpretive kiosk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Milford Central Park</td>
<td>Standard interpretive kiosk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Peters Rd.</td>
<td>Road crossing/mileage and WARNING: Dam Ahead!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Left bank after Peters Rd. Bridge</td>
<td>Hubbell Pond Park to Right; Dam Ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Hubbell Pond Park</td>
<td>Map of Huron River Water Trail and connecting land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>At top of portage on Milford Dam.</td>
<td>Portage to right. Yield to cyclists on pathway. Do not block path.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Bottom of portage on Milford Dam.</td>
<td>Portage to left. Yield to cyclists on pathway. Do not block path.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>General Motors Rd.</td>
<td>Road crossing/mileage and WARNING: Dam Ahead!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>HCMA Canoe Camp</td>
<td>Standard interpretive kiosk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>HCMA Road Crossing</td>
<td>Road crossing/mileage and WARNING: Dam Ahead!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Dawson Road Crossing</td>
<td>Road crossing/mileage and WARNING: Dam Ahead!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Right Bank upstream of Buno Rd.</td>
<td>Wayfinding and amenity information for farm center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Shore fishing area</td>
<td>Wayfinding and amenity information for shore fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>East Boat Launch</td>
<td>Standard interpretive kiosk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>West Boat Launch</td>
<td>Standard interpretive kiosk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Upstream of I-696 Bridge</td>
<td>Road crossing/mileage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
- Wayfinding Only
- Interpretive Kiosk
- (Wayfinding + Local Interpretive Information)
The Huron River Water Trail

Signage Needs

- Wayfinding
- Interpretive Kiosk
- Road Crossings (Miles to Lake Erie)

- Parks and Schools

Legend:

- Green: Parks and Schools
- Purple: Interpretive Kiosk
- Yellow: Wayfinding
- Black: Road Crossings (Miles to Lake Erie)

Map Indications:

- Orange: Huron River
- Blue: Lakefield
- Green: Parks and Schools
- Black: Road Crossings (Miles to Lake Erie)

Scale: 1 Mile

Map Areas:

- Kensington Metropark
- Huron Valley
- Huron River
- Lakefield
- Potawatomi
- Stetina
- Hubbell Pond Park
- Mystic Creek Golf Club/Camp Dearborn
- Johnson Elementary
- Herschel Elementary
- Southfield Elementary
- General Motors
- Hubbell Pond Park
- Sattery

Map Locations:

- Hubbell Pond Park
- Mystic Creek Golf Club/Camp Dearborn
- Johnson Elementary
- Herschel Elementary
- Southfield Elementary
- General Motors
Sample Signage Designs

Road Crossings Signs

An opportunity to enhance the experience of paddlers on the Huron River Water Trail lies in setting up a consistent navigation system for the entire river system, by which paddlers can identify their location within the context of the entire watershed. By marking road crossings with respect to their distance from the river mouth at Lake Erie, the paddler not only has the ability to calculate distances between points, but also has a sense of location with respect to the region and the Great Lakes. The sample signage design at right is an example of a road crossing sign that can be affixed to bridges, either constructed from sheet metal or applied as a stencil.

Paddlers would benefit from road crossing signs providing the name of the road and the mileage with respect to Lake Erie.

Standard Interpretive Kiosk

To maintain a consistent sense of identity along the water trail, a standard signage system should be designed which provides basic wayfinding information combined with local interpretive information. The system should have a standardized design that can be customized to each location as needed. The wayfinding element should include a system-wide map as well as a more detailed local map, with guides to local parks, trails, and business establishments. Basic safety information and paddling etiquette information should also be incorporated.

Interpretive elements can combine big-picture, watershed-wide information with local interpretive information. Every effort should be taken to make the paddler aware of his or her place within the context of the river system and the larger geography, while also pointing out and interpreting local features such as unique ecosystems, geological information, and points of historic or cultural interest.

The sample panel on the facing page is an example of how such information may be represented. This can be a stand-alone sign or can be part of a multi-panel kiosk which can include bulletins and a map box.
SAMPLE STANDARD INTERPRETIVE KIOSK PANEL

Huron River Water Trail

Wayfinding Guide to Local Assets: Businesses, Parks, Trails etc.

Standard Safety and Etiquette

Watershed and Local Interpretive Information

Graphic illustrating the elevation profile of the river including the paddler's current location.

Local Wayfinding and Safety Information (Text & Graphics)

Watershed Graphic.

Interpretive Information (Text & Graphics)

Name of Location

Local Wayfinding Map

Name of Location: Milford Central Park
Next Steps

Huron River Water Trail stakeholders involved in this project have identified three major goals to further the cause of the water trail:

1. Enhance Connection of Water Trail with Downtown Milford

2. Brand and Promote Milford as a Regional Recreational Hub

3. Plan for the Entire Huron River Water Trail

To achieve these goals, stakeholders recommended the creation of a specialized subcommittee of the Milford DDA tasked with:

(1) identifying alternatives for the physical connection between the water trail and the Village

(2) identifying alternatives for launch and storage infrastructure at Central Park in Milford

(3) identifying alternatives for the design, funding, and implementation of an interpretive/wayfinding signage system

(4) pursuing the development of a plan for implementing and marketing Milford as a regional recreational hub.

In addition, stakeholders recognize the need to coordinate with groups downstream, and to continue to meet as a group while keeping in touch with the Huron River Watershed Council, Downriver Linked Greenways, and other groups as needed to coordinate efforts.

Stakeholders meet to plan for the future of the Huron River Water trail in March of 2008.
Summary

The Huron River Water Trail is a rich local amenity. The river itself is well-protected by public and private parklands, water quality is excellent, and the hydrologic regime provides favorable paddling conditions. Use of the water trail itself is well-established with adequate access and is well-served by local liveries.

Planning and development needs and opportunities for the Huron River Water Trail primarily relate to enhancing community connectedness, leveraging community resources, enhancing wayfinding, and integrating marketing efforts to serve multiple needs. The Milford area is rich in recreational, cultural, and historic resources. Cooperative efforts between community interests such as the DDA, local outdoor groups and public recreation agencies have the opportunity to synergize. The concept of developing and marketing Milford as a recreational “hub” has great appeal and potential to serve multiple community interests. In Milford, the whole truly is greater than the sum of its parts.

Opportunities for visitors to integrate multiple aspects of the community into their experience abound but require proper guidance. An integrated, consistent interpretive signage and wayfinding system is critical. Such a system will increase the comfort level of users while arming them with the information needed to maximize their experiences. Such an effort should be coordinated with interests along the full length of the water trail from headwaters to Lake Erie.

Major goals of this study will be addressed by a specialized subcommittee of Milford DDA, which will coordinate with downstream efforts.