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BENTON HARBOR

2015 PLACEPLAN: SQUARE 1 COMING TOGETHER @ CITY CENTER
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Mlplace Partnership

PlacePlans is supported by Michigan State University and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority as a component of the Mlplace Partnership. The Mlplace Partnership is a statewide initiative with the purpose of keeping Michigan at the forefront of a national movement known as placemaking. It is based on the concept that people choose to live in places that offer the amenities, resources, social and professional networks, and opportunities to support thriving lifestyles. The partnership helps communities create and strengthen those places. Learn more at miplace.org.

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Dwight Pete Mitchell City Center Park provides a symbolic center for Benton Harbor, serving as a public green and community gathering space right on Main Street in the heart of downtown. The current configuration of the park limits its functionality and appeal, however. The layout of the park includes a parking lot and alley that are remnants of the commercial buildings that formerly stood there, rather than features designed for park use, concerts, the farmers market, and other events.

This PlacePlan offers a new concept plan for the park’s physical layout, supporting the vision of the community for a park that brings people together from all parts of Benton Harbor. The concept arises from the input of hundreds of community members over the course of an eight-month-long public design process, reflecting the vision for an attractive space that welcomes people in year-round, tying together the civic infrastructure of City Hall and the Benton Harbor Public Library, the Arts District, and the business district along Main Street.

The plan also lays out a strategy of policy updates, funding opportunities, and ongoing engagement and programming that can move the concept towards reality. While the conceptual design is ambitious and will require an ongoing commitment over some years to be fully implemented, the City of Benton Harbor, the Benton Harbor Parks and Recreation Conservancy, and their partners throughout the community can pursue the following steps to advance the vision in 2016.
1. Develop a Structure for Action

Without a coherent structure for action, none of these recommendations, ideas, or strategies will be meaningful. Benton Harbor currently has an impressively dedicated core group of residents, non-profit organizations, and business leaders who volunteer significant time and resources to improving the community. But without clear leadership to drive the development of City Center Park, coalitions and volunteers will struggle to implement improvements within any timeframe.

As the entity tasked with managing Benton Harbor’s parks, the Parks & Recreation Conservancy must take leadership on this project. In 2016, the conservancy is responsible for putting together a parks and recreation master plan. Development of City Center Park should be at the top of their priority list. These leaders are responsible for continuing the momentum for the work done in the park.

In order to better manage improvements in City Center Park and others, the conservancy should also focus energy on raising enough money to hire an executive director to implement the master plan. This director should have experience in project management and be able to push the needle in accomplishing the community’s vision for City Center Park and recreation areas across the community.

Improvements within the conservancy can only go so far without the full support of the city. City commissioners should familiarize themselves with the Square 1 project and process, and pass a resolution in support of the concept. In 2016, the city will also be focusing efforts on creating an updated recreation plan, which should be in close alignment with the conservancy’s master plan. Creating a unified list of priorities across the two entities will be crucial for attracting funding opportunities. Similarly, the two entities should create a joint funding strategy and work collaboratively to seek grants and donations. The city needs to rebuild its reputation with community, state, federal, and private partners. Collaboration with Square 1 could be an effective way to get started. Park funding applications should come directly from the conservancy, but always with the support of the city, thus a unified plan, message, and communication stream is important.

2. Determine Final Design for Farmers Market and Events Structure, Secure Additional Funding

Before the PlacePlans design process began, the city of Benton Harbor had already been awarded a USDA grant for construction of a permanent farmer’s market structure in downtown. That grant, and the Community Development Block Grant dollars committed as a local match, total $100,000. That could be applied towards the construction of the 6th Street structure in the concept plan.

The clock is ticking on those funds, though. The USDA grant must be used by the end of June 2016. This is likely too short a time frame to complete construction plans and raise the additional funding necessary to develop the scale of structure envisioned in the concept plans. If the city and conservancy want to proceed with a market and events structure on this site, they should consider a multi-phase construction plan, perhaps building one wing along 6th Street as an initial investment that can leverage the USDA funds, with a larger fundraising target for the stage, the central portion of the shelter, and the other wing as events grow and a third round of funding can be secured.

Even this approach will likely require an extension of the federal grant, and the city should immediately begin that discussion with USDA staff, using the overall concept design for the park to demonstrate how the additional time will result in the greatest benefit from the construction of a market structure as part of a holistic plan.
3. Continue to Activate the Park and Consider Crowdfunding Opportunities

The steering committee engaged hundreds of residents and supporters throughout the process of this project. To continue momentum and begin incremental but impactful improvements to the space, the conservancy should continue to activate the park with more events and activities. This doesn’t mean the conservancy should do all of the activation itself, but rather offer the space to partners throughout the community. For example, ask the library to host a monthly read-a-thon in City Center Park; encourage the Arts District to host a workshop or artists market in the space; and offer the park to food truck operators to open their doors during the business lunch hour. Continuing to draw attention to the space will help build the momentum and support necessary to fund improvements.

The conservancy should also explore opportunities with crowdfunding to start building or activating improvements to City Center Park. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation is offering matching grants through the Michigan-based crowdfunding platform, Patronicity. So far, 47 projects across the state have raised more than $3.2 million through Patronicity, and more than $1.4 million has come from the matching grant opportunity through the MEDC. More information on this opportunity can be found at Patronicity.com/PureMichigan.

4. Apply Target Market Analysis, Redevelopment Ready Communities Findings to Adjacent Sites

Successful placemaking requires that public spaces and private investment work in concert. Benton Harbor is well-positioned for this coordination with their participation in other state-supported programs.

The city is part of a regional Target Market Analysis (TMA), coordinated by Kinexus and MSHDA, which will provide a 5-year forecast of potential downtown housing demand that could be captured by Benton Harbor. The TMA results, expected in Spring 2016, will include a detailed consideration of housing type (e.g. townhome vs. loft apartment), tenure (owner-occupied vs. rental), and price points that the city can use in conversations with developers to support a mix of residential opportunities in downtown.

City representatives have also completed the best practice trainings and self-evaluation offered by MEDC’s Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) program. RRC assists cities in making sure that their development regulations and processes support their goals, helping to secure appropriate development.

Benton Harbor can use the combination of market data, effective development processes, an exciting public space vision, and a track record of success with projects already on the table—such as the Federal Building reuse in the Arts District—to build the pipeline of investment that will support the city’s fiscal sustainability while creating additional job and housing opportunities. As the TMA wraps up and the city advances through the RRC program, it should next move to identify vacant city-owned properties near Dwight Pete Mitchell City Center Park that can be developed through public/private partnerships.
WHY PLAN FOR PLACE?

Benton Harbor is one of 19 cities participating in the PlacePlans pilot program, which began in 2012 as a collaboration between the Michigan Municipal League and Michigan State University (MSU), with funding support from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). PlacePlans assists communities with their efforts to carefully invest in key locations that will drive additional economic development and help them attract and retain residents and businesses.

MSU and MSHDA define placemaking as the process of creating quality places where people want to live, work, play, and learn. Successful placemaking is a dynamic, strategic approach to community and economic development based on an individual community’s strengths. PlacePlans is a joint effort between MSU and the League to demonstrate some elements of this process, working through and supporting the leadership of local governments, nonprofit organizations, and businesses.

The PlacePlans process is customized to each project and community, but each involves selection of a priority site in the community, an intensive community engagement strategy, and direct work with key community stakeholders along the way. Products of the PlacePlans projects include conceptual designs, market studies, analysis of community assets and opportunities, and better connections to state agency support tools. The goals are to positively impact each participating community’s ability to leverage their place-based assets as economic drivers and to provide lessons large and small for other communities across Michigan. For more information about placemaking in Michigan and the PlacePlans program, visit placemaking.mml.org.

Connection to Statewide Initiatives

The MIplace Partnership (www.miplace.org) is a statewide initiative to keep Michigan at the forefront of the national placemaking movement. The partnership helps communities create and bolster their places through education, technical assistance, and implementation tools. It is led at the state agency level by MSHDA, and coordinated through a public/private leadership collaborative known as the Sense of Place Council. MSU and the League, the partners in the PlacePlans program, are part of the Sense of Place Council.

In parallel to PlacePlans demonstration projects, the League developed Partnership for Place, a policy agenda that proposes to change the way local and state governments invest
in and support quality places. It is built on the idea of a partnership between the state of Michigan and its municipalities that will support sustainable economic growth and investment in key places. The agenda focuses on four fundamental areas of action:

- **Funding for the Future**
  Making sure that appropriate funds and tools are available to operate efficiently and work regionally in order to succeed globally.

- **Michigan in Motion**
  Shifting from near-exclusive vehicular-based investment to alternative modes of transportation that will accommodate all users.

- **Place for Talent**
  Partnering with the State to attract and retain talented workers in our communities through placemaking policies.

- **Strength in Structure**
  Seeking out solutions to invest in infrastructure and development where it will produce the best results and target resources with maximum outcomes.

You can find more information about the Partnership for Place at placemaking.mml.org

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**Project Overview**

Downtown Benton Harbor boasts passionate, engaged citizens; strong anchors ranging from business to arts to civic actors; and significant recent investment. Much work still remains in the revitalization of downtown, though, and the community identified Dwight Pete Mitchell City Center Park as an important central focus of this ongoing effort. The park serves as the primary public green and community gathering space for downtown Benton Harbor, but its design and configuration limit its use and appeal.

The city of Benton Harbor requested support from the PlacePlans program for an inclusive civic engagement process to examine how the park could best serve its role as the center of the community. A community-driven vision for the park would provide direction to the city and the Parks and Recreation Conservancy in making investment in the park that could support recreation and events as well as the continuing economic development efforts in downtown.

The park takes up a full city block between Main Street, Pipestone, Wall, and 6th Streets. While some improvements had been made to the park over time, adding plantings and seating, the basic form of the park reflected its origins. The historic commercial buildings that once occupied the block were torn down some decades ago, leaving behind an alley that bisects the park and a parking lot in one corner. These

The park provides green space in the middle of downtown, but it is under-used except during special events.
remnants of the block’s past role hinder rather than support its current use as a park. Named for Dwight Pete Mitchell, Benton Harbor’s city manager who retired in 2008 after more than 35 years of public service, the park deserves a design that reflects its importance to the community.

**Strategic Impact**

The Michigan Municipal League and Michigan State University School of Planning, Design, and Construction selected Benton Harbor’s proposal for technical assistance in the 2015 round of the PlacePlans program based on its potential to support the revitalization of downtown Benton Harbor. Dwight Pete Mitchell City Center Park is centrally located, has high visibility, and plays an important role in the community. Successful implementation of a broadly-shared vision will serve residents’ quality of life and sense of community pride as well as support nearby economic development.

The park is just across Main Street from the Arts District, flanked by the Benton Harbor Public Library and City Hall, and just a few blocks down Main Street from the new Whirlpool Riverview Campus and recent adaptive reuse mixed-use projects such as the Saranac Flats building. Several historic buildings adjacent to the park and in the surrounding blocks remain vacant, however. A successful placemaking effort focused on the park and these surrounding streets can tie together the various strands of development in downtown Benton Harbor and carry that momentum to these vacant spaces, creating additional housing and employment opportunities.
METHODOLOGY and Public Input

PlacePlans is centered on a public design process of establishing a shared vision for the future of Dwight Pete Mitchell City Center Park. To ensure that the process was grounded in local realities and reached enough community members to be an accurate representation of the needs and goals for the place, the League coordinated the design process with two additional input methods. A steering committee made up of community stakeholders and decision-makers assisted in defining the scope, planning public engagement, and developing the implementation strategy, while pop-up events used “lighter, quicker, cheaper” tactics to test out pieces of the concept on the ground.

Steering Committee and Anchor Institution Roles

To produce a plan that reflected the true public vision, the city convened a group of community leaders to serve as a steering committee. Creating the local committee allowed the city to raise project awareness, guide the PlacePlan process, and improve capacity for implementation. Committee members were a diverse sample of Benton Harbor leaders, all of whom offered varying perspectives in decision-making, and had regular access to different groups of residents.

With the guidance of League staff, Assistant City Manager Marja Farrou and Parks and Recreation Conservancy President Stephanie Harvey-Vandenbreg selected steering committee members based on community involvement, connection to the park, expertise, and representative diversity. The steering committee included perspectives from city hall, the Downtown Development Authority, the arts, real estate and development, nonprofits, local businesses, and active residents. City staff collaborated with the League to facilitate and document committee and public meetings. The group further developed the project’s direction by:

- Educating the community on placemaking and the project
- Planning and facilitating creative outreach and engagement activities
- Providing perspective on the direction and implementation of the project
- Deciding and implementing outreach methods and scope
- Guiding, facilitating, and participating in the project’s public events
- Being project ambassadors to the public

As part of the effort to promote the project and do outreach for events, the steering committee named the project “Square 1: Coming Together at City Center.” The committee used the Square 1 theme throughout the life of the project as a way to convey a collaborative effort to “start anew” in Benton Harbor.
Community members discuss ideas for the park at the June design workshop.
Public Design Process
In order to provide carefully considered asset, planning, and design recommendations for implementation of Benton Harbor’s park redevelopment project, the PlacePlans team carried out the following process for gathering the necessary information and input:

- Reviewed local/regional land use plans and relevant data
- inventoried policies against the MIplace Partnership’s Placemaking Audit Tool
- Conducted interviews with stakeholders
- Held four public community meetings:
  - Phase One: Community Visioning
  - Phase Two: Design Workshop
  - Phase Three: Preliminary Draft Review
  - Phase Four: Final Design and Implementation
- Hosted two on-the-street engagement opportunities and demonstration events
- Brought preliminary park designs to the Boys and Girls Club to collect youth input and perspective
- Facilitated regular local steering committee meetings throughout the project

National Charrette Institute’s Charrette System
The design process followed many practices recommended by the National Charrette Institute’s (NCI) Charrette System. Objectives include creating a safe environment in which all members can participate in planning their community; planning for scenarios at the neighborhood scale; bringing an on-the-ground reality to community planning by creating demonstration projects that often turn into real catalytic development; and anchoring public involvement with realistic constraints. With these objectives in mind, Benton Harbor was engaged in planning phases that helped guide development of a design that met needs tailored to the community.

Placemaking Assessment Tool
The design team also used the short form of the Place-making Assessment Tool developed by MSU’s Land Policy Institute1 to identify potential placemaking strengths and areas for improvement. This tool is focused on high-level plans and policies that can support or hinder placemaking, and can provide a starting point for discussions on additional, downtown-wide actions that would support and build from the work on Dwight Pete Mitchell City Center Park. The assessment can be found in Appendix 3.

1 Available online at http://landpolicy.msu.edu/uploads/files/Resources/Tools/MIplace_Partnership_Initiative/PlacemakingAssessmentTool_LPI_updated_041515.pdf

PUBLIC MEETINGS
Phase One: Community Visioning Kick-Off Workshop
The City of Benton Harbor hosted a kick-off Community Visioning meeting in March 2015. During the meeting, attendees were challenged to think about opportunities, discuss with others, and document their thoughts as it related to the project site. This included what about Benton Harbor makes them proud, what they are sorry about, and what they would like to see in the city (especially within the park and adjacent blocks) in the future. To encourage creative visions over the long-term, questions were posed such as “You’re in a hot air balloon over the site 15 years from now – what would you like to see?” Participants were provided with white sheets of drawing paper and markers to encourage not only written comments, but an opportunity to share visuals. A summary of comments from this meeting is provided on page 12.

Phase Two: Design Workshop
In June 2015, a design workshop was held to gauge stakeholders’ feelings towards the park and potential design recommendations. Prior to the meeting, an array of design images were produced to visualize the many directions in which the site could go. Designers followed several key themes taken from the kick-off meeting. These were:

Design Workshop Themes
1. Respect the scale of the park
2. Sustainable design practices
3. Connectivity to the surrounding area, especially the library and Arts District
4. Historical reflection
5. Setting for activities
6. Year-round opportunities
7. Family-oriented
8. Opportunities for all ages and abilities
9. Cohesive design
10. Public art
11. Multiple use facilities and areas
12. Beautification
13. Adjacent streetscape needs to be part of the design
14. Potential Farmer’s Market location
15. Opportunity for community resurgence
16. Consider maintenance needs
17. Think security
18. Think green
19. Positive energy
20. Support facilities; ex. restrooms
21. Consider expansion of the park area
22. Respect culture, diversity, and inclusion
Based on these key themes, two potential design plans were developed to receive further input from the community. These two design types were:

1. People’s Park that is Comfortable and Low-Key
2. Traditional Park with a Bold Architectural Attitude

After all of the images and concepts were introduced, participants broke off into small groups and sat down at tables where facilitators led discussions about the project. Participants recorded their preferences, concerns, and recommendations for design improvements and returned this input to the planning team. In addition, nearly 300 sticky notes were placed on dozens of design images and each recorded individually to ensure that citizen feedback was included in the final planning processes. Common feedback developed around the following areas:

1. Year-Round Multi-Use:
   The park, first and foremost, must be diverse in what it has to offer in order to meet the varied needs of the community. While the idea of having permanent functional structures is popular within the community, a concern shared by many residents focused on ensuring that such structures are flexible enough for year-round use. One example of this is having a covered facility that provides space for live performances and a farmers market in the warmer months and heated shelter for events in the winter.

2. Green Space
   Having open green space is a simple yet effective approach to creating an inviting and versatile park. While residents have indicated that they are in favor of having more trees in the park, they have also commented that any vegetation beyond that should be minimal. The idea is for the open space to play more of a utilitarian role (e.g., recreation, water retention, shade) than an aesthetic one (e.g., flowers, bushes, community gardens) – which can often be expensive to maintain. Park design needs to be transformative and eye-catching, but realistic to maintain.

3. Arts, Culture, and History:
   Many view the park as a place in the community where Benton Harbor’s rich arts, culture, and history can be showcased. Incorporating colorful, decorative, and informative elements to the area will demonstrate that the city is mindful of its diverse people, past and present.

**FIGURE 1: Community Visioning Summary Findings**

This overview of community input is not an exhaustive list of comments received by the PlacePlan team, but rather provides a snapshot of the overall themes of comments provided by the nearly 100 community stakeholders in attendance at the kick-off. A more exhaustive listing of community input is included in Appendix 4 of this report.
SOMETHING IS OFF WITH THE DOCUMENT CONTENT. IT APPEARS TO BE A MESS OF TEXT, MISMATCHED TEXT, AND RedUNDANT INFORMATION. IT'S DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT OF THE DOCUMENT. IT'S IMPORTANT TO MAKE SURE THE DOCUMENT IS CLEAR AND EASY TO READ. THE TEXT IS MIXED WITH TEXT THAT IS HARD TO READ AND UNDERSTAND. IT'S IMPORTANT TO MAKE SURE THE DOCUMENT IS CLEAR AND EASY TO READ. THE TEXT IS MIXED WITH TEXT THAT IS HARD TO READ AND UNDERSTAND.
In October, Benton Harbor celebrated the completion of the concept design.
Additional Engagement Activities

Less than a week after the two park design alternatives were presented at the Design Workshop, steering committee members hosted an additional engagement opportunity at the Benton Harbor Arts District Art Hop, a community art festival. During this district-wide art open house and festival, steering committee members displayed the design alternatives and a comment wall on the exterior of a participating Art Hop business. Here, they engaged visitors and collected feedback on the designs.

Steering committee members also took the two design alternatives to the Benton Harbor Boys and Girls Club. Here, they shared the designs with a group of youth and solicited feedback on how they wanted to use the space. Comments from these outreach activities was incorporated into the final park designs.

See Appendix 4 for a compiled list of feedback from these activities.

Phase Three: Preliminary Draft Review

In August 2015, the design team presented a single, near-complete draft concept for the park and adjacent streets, and asked for feedback on how well the concept reflected the goals and priorities developed at prior meetings. Attendees provided feedback that helped the PlacePlan team both refine the final design and develop implementation recommendations.

Phase Four: Final Concept Plan

On October 22, 2015, the PlacePlans team presented the final design concept and implementation recommendations to the community at The Livery, a pub/café a few blocks from the park. The final design and recommendations are detailed in the following section. The steering committee planned the event to be a celebration and to build momentum for project implementation.

Pop-Up Placemaking: Activating the Park During the Farmers Market

Following the Preliminary Draft Review, steering committee members wanted to solicit more feedback and test some of the ideas generated during the design process. They brought the designs to the park to get feedback directly from park users. To attract more people to the space, the steering committee hosted a pop-up demonstration event during a regularly programmed activity. Since design and use discussions center on the park’s farmers market, the market seemed like a natural event to host the pop-up.

Every Wednesday from July to October, the Michigan Farmers Market Association runs the Benton Harbor Farmers Market in Dwight Pete Mitchell City Center Park. Harbor Market is an independent local farmers market operating every Friday about a half mile away from the park, in the parking lot of Mosaic Café and Resale Store. Both markets are small and sometimes struggle to attract new patrons. The steering committee brought together both market organizers and asked them to host a joint market at City Center Park during the pop-up project to draw a wider audience and bring more activity to the space.

On August 19, Harbor Market and Benton Harbor Farmers Market gathered in City Center Park for a joint event while the League and steering committee set up tables and chairs, outdoor games, public art, sidewalk chalk, and an engagement board displaying park designs. With so much activity, the joint market attracted a large audience, many of whom also explored the park design options and shared comments.

The pop-up not only offered an opportunity to inform and engage a new audience on the Square 1 project, it also started conversations between the two market organizers and could promote further collaboration in the future.
Design Considerations

Concept Design Narrative

Dwight Pete Mitchell City Center Park is a place for all people of Benton Harbor. Its diverse landscape welcomes individuals, families, and large community gatherings: a true “People’s Park” for all seasons. As the invigorating focus of a vibrant and on-the-move Benton Harbor, it reflects the history of the community, while at the same time providing a symbol of the future at the core of the city.

The basic structure of the park is composed of five major elements. A central promenade mirrors the alley that goes through downtown, and also used to go through the park area when buildings were on the site. This promenade becomes the central pedestrian connector through the park and into the adjacent downtown areas. Sixth Street has been redesigned to allow for more pedestrian/park space, a location for the farmers market, and has the ability to be temporarily closed for multi-purpose community wide events. The large open lawn provides the opportunity for multiple uses, while also “greening” the park and downtown area. The west end of the park is a higher intensity use area with an interactive sculpture, shaded seating and table areas to support a wide range of activities, and restrooms. The final element is the connection to the adjacent downtown areas at each of the four corners of the park.
The central promenade provides a pedestrian connection
through the entire park and can also be used for commu-
nity events, such as art fairs. It would continue both east
and west of the park to connect with future redevelopment
projects. Paving, lighting, benches, and landscaping would
make the promenade an inviting place to stroll and relax.
Areas for public art along the promenade provide for a
display of the city’s historical past and local culture.

The large lawn areas have been purposely left open and not
filled with facilities. This provides for open play areas and
offers additional space for major community events, such
as seating for concerts. Landscaping around the perimeter
of the lawn areas will add to the beauty of the park. One of
the most important aspects of a park is that it can act as a
natural retreat in an urban area. Lush, green vegetation and
landscaping can give a place tranquility and serenity. The
people of Benton Harbor have expressed that retaining low
maintenance green elements in the park is of great impor-
tance and that enhancing their presence will help breathe
new life into downtown.
The west side of the park becomes active with a year-round interactive sculpture, with light and sound opportunities. Adjacent sculptural elements once again introduce public art and can be designed in such a way that they are also play elements. A fireplace and restroom facilities are also located here. Shaded sitting areas with benches and tables can be utilized by people of all ages and for a wide range of activities. Areas at both ends of the sculpture can be used for games and other activities. Pull-off areas have been included on Pipestone Street for food trucks to park and support lunch or dinner activities and use. This also allows for drop-off and pick-up for park users. A significant feature of this area of the park is a north-south connection between the Arts District and new development to the south. This is also an area of high-speed Internet access for all types of digital devices.

The park design proposes pedestrian and visual connections to the adjacent Arts District as well as the surrounding downtown. Improved pedestrian crossings at the four corners of the park, a bus stop on the north side of the park, well-designed and landscaped park signs, and new sidewalks all around the park are also part of the design. A grove of banners in the northwest corner of the park announce coming events. Appropriate lighting, landscaping, call stations, benches, trash receptacles, bicycle racks, and other related site elements are also included.

Appendix 1 contains additional images of the final concept design.
The planning and design team developed five major themes based on the input received and conversations with the general public and various representative organizations of Benton Harbor. Recommendations were made based on comments and discussion during the community meetings, a review of the project area using the MIplace Partnership’s Placemaking Audit Tool, and the PlacePlans team’s experience in other communities.

The major planning themes determined through this process, designed to make Benton Harbor a vibrant and active community in concert with the expressed desires of the community, are as follows:

- Enhance Multi-Use, Year-Round Capacity of the Park
- Engage Resident and Business Partners in the Vision
- Incorporate Benton Harbor’s History as a Major Theme of the Park
- Connect the Park to Surrounding Areas
- Support Park Use with Appropriate Private Investment on Nearby Sites
Making a Well-Rounded Place

While the bulk of this report is focused on proposed changes to the built environment in and around Dwight Pete Mitchell City Center Park, creating a quality place requires a focus on more than just physical design. The League has identified eight assets that each thriving community must build in today’s global competition for residents, visitors and businesses. Physical design is only one of the eight. A brief summary of the other seven follows.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Placemaking is strongly connected to environmental concerns because of the critical role that Michigan’s waterways, parks, and green spaces play in defining our communities. Whether through access to healthy local food, recreational trails, streets that prioritize walking and biking, or clean air and water, the environment is a vital part of healthy vibrant communities. Young educated workers consistently express preferences for living and working in communities that value the environment and communicate those values.

CULTURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Arts and culture are essential components of a thriving, knowledge-based economy. A healthy creative sector attracts and retains residents and businesses, and produces economic benefits including jobs, a stronger tax base, downtown and neighborhood revitalization, and tourism.

WELCOMING TO ALL

Successful 21st century communities are inclusive and welcoming to all, embracing diversity and multiculturalism as a competitive advantage. These types of communities are most attractive to new businesses, and today’s fluid, mobile, and global workforce seeks out places that embrace people of all ages, religions, ethnicities, national origins, and races.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Growing jobs by ones and twos is key to creating strong local economies in the 21st century. Local communities are fueled by small start-ups and growth on main street and economic gardening strategies aimed at developing the talent and potential that already exists right at home. Also central to success are social entrepreneurs, who act as change agents within a community, seizing opportunities others miss to create social value rather than profits. This type of entrepreneurial activity resonates especially with students and Millennials looking to apply their optimism, energy, passion and skills for a positive, tangible impact, as well as Baby Boomers looking for new business opportunities.

MESSAGING AND TECHNOLOGY

People communicate, connect, and engage differently today than they did ten years ago, or five years ago, or last year, or even last month! Rapidly evolving Internet and communication technologies are allowing people to share information in the virtual world in unprecedented ways. Communities that use cutting-edge strategies in their approach to branding, engagement, and communication with new demographics, businesses, cultural institutions, and philanthropic communities are ahead of the game.

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Thriving regions offer a range of transit options, from walking and biking to buses and other modes of transit. Developing effective transportation options is a necessary tool for all communities interested in attracting and retaining residents, workers, and businesses. Research shows that people across the nation are choosing communities that offer various modes of transportation, with easy access to the places they live, work, and play. Multimodal transit can be as complex as rail systems and as simple as trails and bike paths.

EDUCATION

Education is critical to competing in a global, 21st century economy, and centers of education are vital anchor institutions within communities. From K-12 schools to community colleges, and technical schools to state universities, educational institutions bring innumerable benefits to a community. They are the hub not only for learning, but sports, entertainment, arts and culture, healthcare, and recreation, and serve as engines of economic development. Vibrant communities successfully collaborate with a full range of educational institutions to develop intellectual, human, and physical capital. Collaboration can be as simple as sharing physical facilities such as ballparks and swimming pools, or as complex as formal town-gown strategic plans.
Enhance Multi-Use, Year-Round Capacity of the Park

Much like the residents, stakeholders, and businesses of Benton Harbor, the ideas that have been generated for City Center Park are diverse. While the community has endorsed the idea of a traditional park with open space and benches, it has voiced even greater support for integrating those elements with more creative and functional features that can be used year-round. Although the size of the park many restrict the number of structures, that does not mean the same for the activities they host and the purposes they serve. For example, a pavilion can serve as a source of shade, a place for live music, and a covered facility for a farmers market. In order to ensure that the park has a multi-use capacity, the following steps are recommended:

Build Size and Sustainability of Farmers Market

Throughout the process, community members stated that they very much appreciate having the farmers market downtown, but that the market is small enough and has a short enough season that they were cautious about planning too much else around it. The market can and should be a reliable anchor for the park, but does need attention to reach this potential.

- Review policies and strategies around vendor mix to see how fresh food, “cottage food business” products like baked or canned goods, and craft items can be balanced to make the market a good draw, especially early in the season when fresh produce options are limited.
- Provide centralized credit card processing, so customers who don’t carry cash can still shop. This can be done similarly to the market’s EBT processing, with customers given tokens to spend with vendors, who then redeem them at the end of the market.
- Evaluate market hours to provide ample access to customers. While the market does have a lunch hour draw, weekday markets can be inaccessible to working residents. Shifting the hours of the market to capture people during the evening commute hour may be an

Popup Lawn Games
opportunity to add business, but this requires a conversation with vendors on availability.

- Review city and county ordinances to ensure that food trucks and similar activating uses are specifically permitted around the park to support the market and community events.

The most difficult question to address is creating a critical mass of vendors that draw in customers—and a critical mass of customers that draw in vendors. Market-goers generally seemed to appreciate the experiment of combining the Wednesday Benton Harbor Farmers Market and Friday Harbor Market, and also noted the existence of several other small markets in the area. Market managers and vendors should discuss consolidating markets as a potential pathway to the critical mass that benefits vendors and customers.

**Provide Utility Connections for Events**

Event organizers and farmers market vendors stated that the park is currently challenged by a lack of electrical outlets, sometimes requiring stringing extension cords down the block even for smaller uses. The Parks Conservancy should engage these users when preparing construction designs to make sure adequate hookups are available in the places they will need to use them. The stage area will require special attention to make sure that the lighting and sound systems required for larger community concerts have enough capacity.

When considering utility access, water connections may be another need to address, though likely not as universally as electricity. Providing a public Wi-Fi connection should also be considered at the same time as electricity. This can potentially be done with wireless mesh repeaters that draw signal from a main network connection at City Hall, the library, or another nearby sponsor, rather than by providing network wiring within the park.
In communities across Michigan that struggle with financial limitations, partnerships between committed community organizations can make a major difference. Groups that bring together local business owners, residents, neighborhood groups, and large regional organizations can assist in capitalizing on existing efforts and maximizing the impact of committed city residents. In order to ensure that the development of the park proceeds in a manner that includes all residents of Benton Harbor, the following steps are recommended:

**Provide Space for Public Event Announcements and Community Postings**

Successful events require publicity, and an early implementation step could be the creation of an announcement board for the park. Telling people about upcoming events as they drive past the park on Main Street or visit the library or city hall would help build the success of those events and bring people together. This topic came up repeatedly in the public meetings. Whether it was the date of the Coming Home Coming Together concert or a reminder to stop by the Farmers Market tomorrow, high-visibility announcements are a critical need. Some of this need may be filled with a changeable-message monument sign. Banners on light posts can also advertise events, especially for annual or weekly events that can reuse the banners.

Another need that community members mentioned was to create a space for more informal postings, such as flyers for concerts, neighborhood meetings, or garage sales. Providing a message board or kiosk in the park for posting this type of announcement encourages people to stop and browse as well as creating connections between community members—the original social media.

**Build a Collection of Games and Activities for Park Visitors**

Design features like the open lawn space and game tables provide space for casual activities. Lawn games and activities were a large part of the steering committee’s August pop-up event. Here, kids accompanying their parents to the market stayed occupied with games like badminton, soccer, and sidewalk chalk, while adults working downtown took a break with a game of corn hole.

The physical space can be supported by providing visitors access to lawn games, board games, or other equipment that they can use in the park.

The city of Hastings provides a good example of this approach. That city included spaces for public art in their streetscaping, public parking areas, and splash pad, but then invited private donors to participate in developing the collection. Hastings worked with the Midwest Sculpture Initiative to lay out a catalog of options—but then left the final decision of which pieces to put in those spaces to donors.
The Benton Harbor Public Library may be best suited to host this collection, as they are already set up to check-out materials to members of the public, whether that’s a book or a beanbag set. Building a collection of materials for park activities could be the target of a donation drive, either of money or gently-used equipment. If space or systems limits prevent the library from hosting such a collection without impeding its other functions, a nearby business may be interested in taking on this role.

Engage Donors in Developing Public Art Features

Public art can be an opportunity that allows people to feel ownership over making the park concept a reality. In the PlacePlan design renderings, we note areas where art installations could be appropriate, but we don’t get to the level of detail of saying what should go there. These decisions should be made collaboratively with local artists and art or community organizations to create an organic and community-driven art collection in the park.

Coordinate with Volunteer Gardeners to Support Landscape Maintenance

Downtown Benton Harbor already works with volunteers to maintain the streetscape flower pots and planting areas. Volunteer arrangements can help the conservancy maintain landscaping in the park while also giving residents a way to feel ownership over part of downtown. Volunteers are not a magic bullet; the community needs to have reasonable expectations about the amount and type of landscaping that can be maintained. Their role can be supported, though, by formal recognition such as the creation of a “Friends of the Park” group, or programming such as youth gardening clubs.

Continue Steering Committee Structure to Support Implementation

The Square 1 steering committee provided many benefits to the PlacePlan process and their involvement should continue after the grant term ends. By raising awareness, gathering feedback, and promoting placemaking throughout the process, steering committee members are now viewed as project experts and have a unique position to take on further leadership roles through implementation. Similar to the Flint case study below, using the steering committee model can help improve communication, enhance transparency, and facilitate community ownership of the project.

Keeping the group involved will help ensure that activities which reflect the community’s interests continue throughout the longer planning process. The Parks and Recreation Conservancy should consider establishing the group as an ad hoc committee to provide an ongoing channel for advancing this project.

In addition to being community leaders, steering committee members are in the best position to assist with improvements to the park since they’ve spent the past year engaged in the project. Their involvement, passion, and experience with the process make them expert decision-makers – this talent should not be lost even though the PlacePlans grant term is over.
Case Study: Imagine Flint Master Plan Implementation Task Groups

Following the 2013 adoption of the Imagine Flint Master Plan, the city created Implementation Task Groups devoted to carrying out the policy proposals of each chapter of the master plan. Implementation Task Groups ensure that citizens are engaged in the process of seeing planning documents become reality and provide an opportunity for residents and business owners to work together in implementing a shared community vision. A similar task group devoted to implementing this PlacePlan could ensure the collaboration of business and resident groups in improving Dwight Pete Mitchell City Center Park.

(http://imagineflint.com/PlanImplementation/ImplementationTaskGroups.aspx)

Case Study: Sharing the Love in Muskegon

Some Michigan communities are getting creative with messaging, and even letting residents do some of the work. In an effort to promote Muskegon, a group of young professionals designed a logo and slogan for the community, “Love Muskegon,” and started boosting the city’s online presence. The open-sourced logo was widely dispersed throughout the community, which sparked events, photo opportunities, and gave residents an excuse to “have a love affair” with their city. In Benton Harbor, the Square 1 steering committee established #BelieveinBH to use in talking about the park and other great things happening in the community. Continuing to use this hashtag and other Square 1-themed marketing could benefit the community and help improve positive storytelling.

Tactical Placemaking – Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper

There were a number of lessons learned from the Square 1 August pop-up activity that can be applied to future years in the park. It was clear that the public was open to increased activity with the combination of two markets, lawn games, live music, public art, places to sit, and a food truck. Using the park more often for fun, day-to-day events like this would likely be a popular attraction. Promoting park programming to nearby businesses and institutions could bring more activity to the downtown and more people to City Center Park.

The Parks and Recreation Conservancy and other partners (i.e. the library, farmers markets, local restaurants, and arts organizations) could manage different aspects of tactical placemaking and programming projects, depending on their specialty. For example, a local gallery could manage rotating public art exhibitions and weekly live music; the library could provide lawn games and an outdoor lending library; a health organization could host free adult or youth outdoor fitness classes, and a local restaurant could provide weekly or monthly outdoor dining. These lighter, quicker, cheaper approaches to park improvements would attract people to the space and encourage more people to visit, interact with, and enjoy Benton Harbor.

The Steering Committee led outreach throughout design process.
History plays an enormous role in defining the character of a particular place. Putting emphasis on an area’s history can help attract people who are unfamiliar with the community but have an interest in learning about it. By letting history become a visible element in a place, the message becomes clear that the place inherits significant meaning and continues to draw from the past to improve its future. Aside from the historic buildings in the surrounding area, City Center Park is currently not reflective of Benton Harbor’s rich past. But as a community space that symbolizes the potential for new development, the park holds the opportunity to showcase to residents and visitors the city’s achievements through a variety of media. Under this theme, the following recommendations are proposed:

Incorporate Benton Harbor’s History as a Major Theme of the Park

Ypsilanti Community Schools students designed and painted this mural to memorialize HP Jacobs, a prominent leader of Ypsilanti’s African-American community during the Civil War.

Incorporate Local History into Public Art

Public art is a great opportunity to showcase a community’s history and culture. Whether statues of prominent figures, murals, or temporary installations, public art that draws from local history helps emphasize a unique sense of place.

Benton Harbor already has examples of this approach, such as the mural on the wall of Brammell Supply in the Arts District. Similarly, art in City Center Park should represent the vibrancy of Benton Harbor’s history and culture to unite the community.
PlacePlan: Benton Harbor, Michigan

and inspire inclusive growth. It’s also important to capture energy from local artists in this process. These will not be just commissioned public art pieces, they will build momentum that can encourage vibrancy, culture, and inspiration throughout the community. Examples of this type of public art across the country are given below.

**Establish a Historic District Including Adjacent Buildings**

Placemaking relies on the interaction of buildings with streets and public spaces. The attractive historic structures in the surrounding blocks can contribute to the appeal and activity of the park. However, several of these buildings are vacant and in poor condition. While the park owes its existence to the demolition of buildings, the community should work to keep the remaining historic structures as part of downtown’s character.

The city has previously studied parts of downtown for historic significance, but has not yet enacted a local historic district that would support the preservation of these structures as part of downtown Benton Harbor. The establishment of a local historic district can also directly support reinvestment by making these buildings eligible for Federal historic tax credits, worth up to 20 percent of the cost of rehabilitating them.

Right: Artist Candy Chang used temporary spray chalk to create a 300-foot-long pedestrian timeline of local events on Governor Island, New York. A temporary approach like this could be used to test the timeline idea along the alley in conjunction with other downtown events. Images courtesy of the artist: candychang.com/pedestrian-timeline

Above: Downtown Ann Arbor features several translucent panels showing historic photos of nearby areas—standing in a particular spot, a viewer can look through the image to see it overlaid on top of the current streetscape. This approach could allow Benton Harbor to incorporate images of the buildings that used to be located where the park is today.
Throughout the process, residents cited the potential of the park to serve as a central gathering place that brought people together from across the community. To serve this social connecting purpose, the park must be connected physically to the surrounding districts and neighborhoods. Several design and policy actions can support this goal:

**Inventory Public Parking Usage and Consider Wayfinding Needs**

Since the concept plan includes removing the parking lot within the park to create more usable space, the parking areas nearby may need to be examined to make sure visitors can easily find their way to and from the park. Neither public meeting attendees nor farmers market visitors stated a strong concern for removing this parking, reflecting the fact that there is a significant amount of public parking nearby. However, since much of the nearby parking is in the Arts District, out of sight from the park and Main Street traffic, the city may need to evaluate the wayfinding signs in the area to make sure that visitors can find their way to parking and then from their car to the park.

**Develop a Complete Streets Policy and Bicycle Network Around Downtown**

Driving and parking is, of course, not the only way people will get to the park. Many residents of nearby neighborhoods—especially younger ones—need to be able to safely get to the park by walking or biking. Main Street generally provides good bicycling and walking access to the east and west, and any future reconstruction of streets to the north and south should consider bike lanes, as well as filling in any gaps in the sidewalks. Recent road improvements on Colfax illustrate the city’s dedication to complete streets: when the city repaved the road, they added bike lanes as a low-cost and quick solution to improving connectivity.

In the short-term, even adding sharrows—pavement markings that show cyclists are expected to ride in the same lanes as other vehicular traffic—to appropriate streets can raise awareness for both cyclists and drivers. For longer-term improvements, adopting a Complete Streets ordinance that commits the city to providing for all travelers when working on streets, will support the development of safe biking and walking access. Additionally, supporting bicycle access requires providing secure bike parking throughout downtown.

**Connect the Park to Surrounding Areas**

Blank side walls of buildings can serve as canvasses for wayfinding, as seen in the Old Market District of Omaha, NE. While that district uses these hand-painted signs to point the way to individual businesses, Benton Harbor could also use this technique to highlight the neighborhoods that lie beyond downtown in various directions.
Ferndale has addressed demand for bicycle parking by deploying several protected bike racks around their downtown. Each of these racks can convert a single on-street or surface lot parking space into parking for a dozen bicycles; planter boxes at the ends increase visibility as well as protecting the bikes from accidental damage by adjacent automobiles.

Image courtesy Melanie Piana, Mayor Pro-Tem, City of Ferndale.
While placemaking begins with public spaces like streets, parks, and plazas, these must be paired with businesses and residences to create successful communities. Benton Harbor’s Main Street and Arts District have seen large and small investments in recent years, with vacant buildings being renovated to create new apartments, restaurants, and office space, alongside major projects like Whirlpool’s new complex. Continuing this trend with additional investment that brings a mix of retail businesses, offices, and mixed-income residential options will help support activity around the park.

Encourage Adaptive Reuse of Adjacent Buildings

Targeting vacant structures around the park for rehabilitation and reuse can both preserve buildings key to the history of Benton Harbor and also activate the streets and sidewalks bordering the park. Public investment in the park and private investment in these vacant properties should be coordinated to have the most benefit for the community. While the PlacePlans team was working on designs for the park, we also connected the city to a faculty-student team at MSU who put together ideas and layouts for several of the vacant buildings in the adjacent blocks. These are very preliminary ideas, rather than specific plans, but can be used by the city to talk to property owners and developers about what might be possible. They can be viewed online at https://prezi.com/gne2419fiwuj.

Similarly, the city and local partners have engaged students from Andrews University to explore place-based improvements on the Whirlpool campus and to better connect it to destinations across Benton Harbor, such as the area surrounding City Center Park. This study, along with renderings from MSU, should act as a stepping stone to long-term improvements.

Complete Redevelopment Ready Communities Program

The state’s Redevelopment Ready Communities program provides cities with education and training; an outside review of development ordinances and procedures; and technical assistance in making needed changes. The intent of the program is to help cities ensure that their development requirements are supporting their vision for their community, rather than working against it, and to ultimately provide a verification of the city’s practices that supports new investment. Benton Harbor staff have participated in some of the best practice workshops and other preliminary steps in the RRC program, and the city should continue to work with MEDC through the later phases.

In particular, the program includes a component of site-specific planning for target redevelopment properties, which MEDC then assists in marketing to potential developers. The city should work with property owners to include at least one of the vacant properties around the park in this planning as the park itself is improved.

Develop Employee Residency Programs

There is a pent-up demand across Michigan for opportunities to live in downtowns, large and small. However, the complexities of urban development paired with ingrained habits mean that a downtown like Benton Harbor’s can use some support in pulling in those potential residents. A number of cities around the country have established “live downtown” programs that combine incentives, events, and marketing to reach potential residents. Downtown employers are an important partner in these programs.

Through their hiring processes, employers are in a unique position to support downtown living. By giving information about housing options to job seekers from out of town, they have the opportunity to put downtown on the table right when potential residents are making decisions about where to live. Sometimes just getting those options onto a new hire’s radar can lead them...
to look at neighborhoods that they may not have otherwise considered. Beyond this marketing role, some employers and foundation partners have developed financial incentive programs for downtown living. The Live Detroit and Live Midtown programs are the largest and most well-known in the state, but smaller examples exist, too. The Live Ypsi program, funded by Washtenaw County, DTE Foundation, and the EMU Foundation, offers employees of Eastern Michigan University down payment assistance on homes within the City of Ypsilanti, on the condition that they both remain employees of the university and remain in that home for at least five years.

**Pursue Mixed-Income Residential Opportunities**

Part of ensuring that downtown Benton Harbor is a place for all parts of the community is making sure that a range of housing choices exist. This means that downtown should include affordable housing options alongside un-subsidized “market rate” housing. But it also means that downtown cannot focus exclusively on affordable housing.

The city is working with Kinexus, MSHDA, and other regional partners to prepare a Residential Target Market Analysis. The TMA report, expected in Spring 2016, will provide the city with an idea of what residents are moving into the area, and what types of housing those potential residents are seeking. Once the TMA is complete, the city can use it to discuss gaps in the existing housing stock with development partners. The city should also work with MEDC and MSHDA staff to make sure those agency’s investments are coordinated within individual developments.

**Case Study 2: Midtown Detroit**

While working to redevelop several key spaces in Midtown Detroit, Midtown Detroit Inc. worked to establish historic districts throughout the neighborhood to preserve the neighborhood’s rich history and to provide additional avenues to finance key developments. After establishing the districts, MDI was able to use funding to restore several key structures and even make investments in parks within the neighborhood. The establishment of these districts has allowed for flowering development that has respected the importance of these structures and their place in the diverse history of Detroit.

(https://www.midiownetrotinc.org/what-we-do/community-development)

Placemaking should support new businesses and residents in surrounding buildings.
FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The park as envisioned will likely require phasing over time and the use of multiple funding sources. Benton Harbor should expect local dollars to be a part of this mix, such as from the DDA or the city’s general fund. However, a number of state grant programs and other funding opportunities can also be tapped for this project. The following considerations have been compiled from conversations with city staff, state agency representatives, and other Michigan cities that have undertaken similar projects.

Construction Considerations

After completion of the concept designs for the park and adjacent streets, the League approached Abonmarche to provide an opinion on rough cost estimates for final design and construction of the concepts. The line items and unit costs in these estimates can be used as a guide when preparing the city’s capital improvement program or grant proposals, in combination with city staff’s experience on past projects.

However, significant caution should be used in referring to these estimates. Because the designs developed in the PlacePlans process are at a conceptual level, and do not include precise measurements or survey work, these numbers should be used as an order of magnitude, and not be relied on for precise costs. Final design and field conditions may create significant changes in costs, either higher or lower.

The rough estimates are included in Appendix 2.

USDA Farm Market Grant

Prior to beginning the PlacePlans design process, Benton Harbor had been awarded a $65,000 USDA grant for development of a farmers market structure, and committed $35,000 in CDBG funding as a local match. This funding could be applied towards the construction of the market and events shelter along 6th Street. However, this funding must be used by July 2016, which is an extremely tight timeline for creating a final design for the shelter and coordinating additional funding.

If the city and conservancy want to proceed with creating a permanent market and events shelter along 6th Street, as the Square 1 concept shows, they should immediately move to identify and secure additional funding. Additionally, they should discuss the PlacePlans process and concept with USDA grant staff to secure any needed extensions of that funding.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Recreation Grants

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources administers several annual grant programs for development of recreation facilities. These programs are an obvious source to look at for development of the concept plans. While the city would need to be the applicant, the Parks and Recreation Conservancy could manage the park development. DNR notes this is a common type of partnership for these grants.

The city could apply to any of three DNR-administered programs for “development” funds for this purpose. All have annual application deadlines of April 1, with awards announced late in the calendar year. (e.g. April 1, 2016, application for funding that could be used for the 2017 construction season.)

- Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund: maximum $300,000 award for development projects, with separate category for applications under $50,000; local match of at least 25 percent of total project cost
- Michigan Recreation Passport: maximum $45,000 award; local match of at least 25 percent of total project cost
- Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund: maximum $100,000 award; local match of at least 50 percent of total project cost

For all three programs, the city must have an up-to-date five-year recreation plan and include the proposed project in its Capital Improvement Plan. The facilities funded must all be located on publicly-owned property, and operate for recreational use in perpetuity. Neither of these conditions should pose a challenge for Dwight Pete Mitchell City Center Park.

DNR staff did note that they are still working through resolution of some concerns regarding a past acquisition
grant for Jean Klock Park, and until that issue is resolved, an application to any of these programs would face significant point penalties. The city and conservancy should engage with DNR staff to resolve issues before discussing opportunities with City Center Park. The League can assist in connecting the community to appropriate staff.

**Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) Grants**

Michigan’s Department of Agriculture and Rural Development provides annual grant funding for the development of regional food systems, with a call for proposals late in the calendar year. Specific funding priorities for the late 2015 call for proposals were not yet determined at the time of this report’s preparation, but this program could potentially be a target for a few different implementation steps:

- Construction of the market and events structure, in support of increasing access by consumers to local farmers and food producers
- Capacity building and strategic planning for the farmers market, to increase the number and variety of food producers at the market
- Development of “value added” uses near the park that could build on the market’s presence with prepared foods, such as a shared commercial kitchen space for training and small business development by local residents

Past rounds of the program have provided up to $75,000 in grant funding, with a minimum 10 percent local match requirement.

**Public Spaces Community Places Crowdfunding Match Program**

The Public Spaces Community Places program provides a 50/50 match of up to $50,000 to successful crowdfunding campaigns by the community for public space improvements. Proposals are reviewed on an ongoing basis, with no deadline, but a limited amount of match funding is available statewide each year.

To qualify, communities must submit a proposed project for review by MEDC, MSHDA, and crowdfunding partner Patronicity. Projects must be located in a traditional downtown, activate a public space, and demonstrate that the funds raised through the campaign will be adequate to implement the project. (Projects that are larger than the maximum $50,000 match + $50,000 crowdfunding must demonstrate that the other required funds have already been committed, so that the funds raised through this program will be the “last dollars” needed for implementation.)

Because a project under this program has be the right size to hit fundraising targets within a short timeline, backers would need to select a specific part of the plan to tackle with this funding source. Several pieces of Benton Harbor’s park concept make sense to look at through this program, such as:

- Construction of the market and events structure
- Creation and installation of public art
- Development of the fireplace and seating area

A crowdfunding campaign may be sponsored by a local unit of government (the city, DDA, or county) or by a 501(c)3 non-profit. In any case, the project proposed should have a realistic expectation of hitting crowdfunding goals. While Patronicity will help project sponsors craft their outreach campaign, the sponsoring organization should select projects that local residents and businesses will rally behind and contribute to monetarily. Nearly 50 campaigns have been successfully completed through the program, providing good case studies of successful asks. The Square 1 steering committee and partners involved in the PlacePlan should have an active role in decision-making and promoting the crowdfunding campaign.

**Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Transportation Alternatives Program**

The TAP program uses Federal dollars, administered by MDOT, to fund pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, streetscaping, wayfinding, and similar amenities. Unfortunately, program staff have suggested the streetscape portions of this project would not be eligible. A TAP grant was used in the mid-2000s for existing seating and lighting on this site, so the park could not be the target of an additional grant until the end of the design life of those elements—around 2025.

Benton Harbor should still consider the TAP program as a good option for any bicycle or pedestrian improvements that link the park to surrounding neighborhoods.

**Community Grantor Opportunities**

Benton Harbor should use the Square 1 project to start or repair relationships with private and community grantors. With documented and improved relationships between the city, conservancy, and supporting entities, leaders should start hosting conversations with local funders, such as the Berrien Community Foundation. Once a structure for action is established and there is capacity at the conservancy for project implementation, grantors will be more likely to engage in conversation and consider funding. The League may be able to act as convener with certain funders once structure and capacity are more established.
APPENDIX 1: Benton Harbor PlacePlan Design Images

CITY PARK IMPROVEMENT PLAN
BENTON HARBOR, MICHIGAN

[Map of Benton Harbor PlacePlan Design Images]
PlacePlan: Benton Harbor, Michigan
## Preliminary Cost Estimate

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<td>Utility Relocation (Fire Hydrant)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>$ 5,000.00</td>
<td>$ 5,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banking Station Removals /Relocation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>$ 5,000.00</td>
<td>$ 5,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc. Removals Benches, Picnic Tables Planters, Sculpture, Etc.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>$ 10,000.00</td>
<td>$ 10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc. Landscape Removals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>$ 5,000.00</td>
<td>$ 5,000.00</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Subtotal:** $ 187,650.00

### New

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Unit Cost</th>
<th>Item Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site Grading</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>$ 100,000.00</td>
<td>$ 100,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>3150</td>
<td>SFT</td>
<td>$ 200.00</td>
<td>$ 630,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-use Structure</td>
<td>8750</td>
<td>SFT</td>
<td>$ 80.00</td>
<td>$ 700,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restrooms</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>SFT</td>
<td>$ 220.00</td>
<td>$ 220,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concrete Curb</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>FT</td>
<td>$ 18.00</td>
<td>$ 27,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMA, 36A (3')</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>TON</td>
<td>$ 100.00</td>
<td>$ 40,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate Base, 6 inch (Drives and Parking)</td>
<td>2280</td>
<td>SYD</td>
<td>$ 10.00</td>
<td>$ 22,800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subbase, CIP (12&quot; - Drives and Parking)</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>CYD</td>
<td>$ 10.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conc Pavers, Vehicular</td>
<td>20690</td>
<td>SFT</td>
<td>$ 20.00</td>
<td>$ 413,800.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conc Pavers, Non-Vehicular</td>
<td>11900</td>
<td>SFT</td>
<td>$ 15.00</td>
<td>$ 177,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggregate Base, (8' - Paver Areas)</td>
<td>3810</td>
<td>SYD</td>
<td>$ 12.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paver Concrete Edge</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>FT</td>
<td>$ 15.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embankment/Fill (For Stage - 3' Height)</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>CYD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concrete Sidewalk</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>SFT</td>
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<td>$ 3,250.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colored Concrete</td>
<td>5025</td>
<td>SFT</td>
<td>$ 15.00</td>
<td>$ 75,375.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ornamental Light Pole w/ Banner</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$ 8,000.00</td>
<td>$ 144,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornamental Lightpole</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$ 7,000.00</td>
<td>$ 63,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Street Lightpole</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$ 10,000.00</td>
<td>$ 70,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Banner pole</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$ 5,000.00</td>
<td>$ 15,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sod</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>SYD</td>
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<td>$ 72,000.00</td>
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<td>Topsoil Furn, 6 inch</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>SYD</td>
<td>$ 6.00</td>
<td>$ 36,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mulch</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>SYD</td>
<td>$ 8.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fountain Allowance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$ 25,000.00</td>
<td>$ 50,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sprinkler Allowance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>$ 20,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freestanding Planter - 3' x 3'</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>EA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wall Planter</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>LFT</td>
<td>$ 150.00</td>
<td>$ 82,500.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metal Table 4 seat attached at base (no game)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$ 3,500.00</td>
<td>$ 17,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood Rectangular Game Table 4 seat no back</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$ 8,500.00</td>
<td>$ 61,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wood Game Table 4 seat with back</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$ 6,800.00</td>
<td>$ 34,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bistro Table 3 seat</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$ 3,500.00</td>
<td>$ 24,500.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bistro Table 2 seat</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$ 2,500.00</td>
<td>$ 17,500.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trash Receptacles</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$ 1,200.00</td>
<td>$ 14,400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree Grates, 5' x 5'</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$ 3,500.00</td>
<td>$ 45,500.00</td>
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<td>Shade Tree</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$ 500.00</td>
<td>$ 22,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornamental Tree</td>
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<td>EA</td>
<td>$ 350.00</td>
<td>$ 6,300.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavement Markings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>$ 5,000.00</td>
<td>$ 5,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bike Loop</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$ 750.00</td>
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<td>Planting Bed Plantings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ALLOW</td>
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<td>$ 50,000.00</td>
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<td>Drainage Improvements</td>
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<td>$ 20,000.00</td>
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</table>

**Subtotal:** $ 3,419,345.00
**Preliminary Cost Estimate**

### Speciality Items - (Cost may vary significantly dependent upon materials selected)

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<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Unit Cost</th>
<th>Item Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Seating and Fireplace</td>
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<td>LS</td>
<td>$35,000.00</td>
<td>$35,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactive Sculpture</td>
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<td>$60,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Custom Cube</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$8,000.00</td>
<td>$56,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Custom Block Seat</td>
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<td>EA</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
<td>$25,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Custom Art (Soccer Ball)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$10,000.00</td>
<td>$80,000.00</td>
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<td>Light wand</td>
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<td>EA</td>
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<td>$120,000.00</td>
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<td>Historical Marker</td>
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<td>EA</td>
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<td>$50,000.00</td>
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<td>Park Entry Signage Feature</td>
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<td>$30,000.00</td>
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<td><strong>Subtotal</strong>:</td>
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<td><strong>456,000.00</strong></td>
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</table>

### Construction Subtotal:

$4,332,995.00

### Construction Contingency:

15% $649,950.00

### Construction Total:

$4,982,945.00

* Does not include pricing for utilities (Storm/Sanitary/Water/Electric/wifi)
APPENDIX 3: MIplace Placemaking Assessment Tool

Placemaking Audit Tool Short Edition – Benton Harbor, MI (March 2015)

Background on this Tool
This tool was developed by the Land Policy Institute of Michigan State University in collaboration with the MiPlace Partnership Initiative.

Purpose of the Assessment Tool
There are three main purposes for this Placemaking Assessment Tool.

1. To help neighborhoods and communities understand the scope of what might be involved in different types of placemaking. The text that follows in this introduction section should help communities decide which of four different types of placemaking they are prepared to pursue.

2. To help communities think about placemaking in the context of larger efforts of strategic planning for the community and region. Placemaking is a vital part of strategic planning for economic development.

3. To help neighborhoods and communities determine their capacity to do effective placemaking at the present time, and determine what to do to become more effective in the future.

Placemaking Defined
“Placemaking is the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play and learn in.” What is critical to understand is that placemaking is a process, it is a means to an end; the end is the creation and ongoing maintenance of quality places. People know and understand what quality places are when they are in them. They tend to be walkable, provide the opportunity for people to gather, are welcoming, have amenities such as places to sit and art or fountains to look at, and are surrounded by interesting buildings. Quality places also provide for economic, social and cultural exchange among people, businesses and institutions.

Plans Reviewed in the Development of this Assessment
In developing this assessment specifically for the City of Benton Harbor, general web searches and reviews of city websites and community organizations were completed. In addition to these more cursory reviews, Benton Harbor’s current Master Plan, zoning ordinance, and other key development documents relevant to this development site were reviewed extensively and are cited throughout this assessment.
# City of Benton Harbor Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Short Assessment</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does your community encourage art in public spaces through</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Master Plan, Pg. 20.</td>
<td>Centered on the Arts District, but across the city public art is promoted in private and public developments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coordination with local arts organizations, schools and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.michigan.gov/mshda/0,4641,7-141-54317_19320_62049-57490--,00.html">Link</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>external funding opportunities?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community plan and put on festivals, fairs, or</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Master Plan, Arts and Culture Plan,</td>
<td>Again focused on the Arts District, the plan calls for more festivals to highlight this area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outdoor concerts?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Area of Focus F. (Pg. 45)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community provide public space for a Farmers’</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Place Plans Letter of Intent</td>
<td>Farmer’s Market is at City Center Park and is proposed to get a permanent shed in this PlacePlan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community intentionally make its institutional</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>No mentioning of such a requirement</td>
<td>Benton Harbor does have a Historic District ordinance, but no actual Historic Districts. The idea receives some attention in the Master Plan, but a heightened focus is needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buildings (government offices, libraries, schools, etc.) a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>in the Master Plan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focal point in the community, maintained well and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>landscaped, oriented toward the streets and pedestrian traffic,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and complemented by amenities, such as bike racks, lighting,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>benches, etc.?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community engage in cooperative, historic</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.michigan.gov/mshda/0,4641,7-141-54317_19320_62049-57490--,00.html">Link</a></td>
<td>The plan discusses partnerships with several orgs. (New Territorial Arts Alliance) in the Arts District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preservation efforts through coordination with historic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preservation boards, education to increase public awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and build support, and maintaining a historic resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inventory that is consistent with or more extensive than</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that maintained for your community by the Michigan State</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Preservation Office?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community have an active arts organization?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Master Plan, Arts &amp; Culture Plan, Pg.</td>
<td>The plan discusses partnerships with several orgs. (New Territorial Arts Alliance) in the Arts District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4. Short Assessment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community have public spaces (plazas, parks, institutional building entry areas or front lawns, wide sidewalks, or downtown street parking spots) that could be transformed into small sites for temporary or extended recreation or commercial activities?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>PlacePlans LOI</td>
<td>City Center Park and the PlacePlan proposal is designed specifically to achieve this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community have buildings or sites of historic significance, either on an -historic registry or not?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>National Parks Service – National Register of Historic Places.</td>
<td>Benton Harbor has several buildings on the NRHP, however the city does not have a certified historic district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the community’s Master Plan include standard, creative or tactical placemaking as strategies for community improvement?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Master Plan</td>
<td>The Master Plan never uses the term Placemaking at any point in the document.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community have a business organization (Chamber of Commerce, Visitors and Convention Bureau, Downtown Business Association, etc.) that has expressed an interest in placemaking or downtown improvements?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>No documentation could be located</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the Master Plan include the creation of quality public spaces as a goal, objectives and strategies?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Master Plan, Residential Framework Plan, Area J.</td>
<td>The plan focuses on creating good public spaces in residential areas. There is a not a high level of focus on commercial districts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your Master Plan encourage the development of 3rd Places/Spaces in dense areas of the community for social gathering opportunities with a strong sense of place?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Master Plan, Illustrative Riverfront Concept. (Pg. 28)</td>
<td>The Illustrative Riverfront Concept is a key example of this sort of 3rd Space community development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total this page (sum of the number of Yes and No responses):</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Table 4. Short Assessment Question</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community have a sign ordinance that permits decorative banners, and appropriate temporary signs to advertise festivals or other activities?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Zoning Ordinance, Section 4.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any codes that specifically enable placemaking, such as allowing sidewalk seating for restaurants, or public gathering permits for outdoor activities by right?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Zoning Ordinance Section 2.5.4.A</td>
<td>Outdoor and patio seating are allowed with “Eating and drinking establishments” as an accessory use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community permit food trucks or carts on public property?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Zoning Ordinance.</td>
<td>There is no mention of food trucks in the 2012 Zoning Ordinance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community’s Zoning Ordinance permit related commercial activities near recreation and heritage sites (rivers, lakes, parks, trails, historic districts, etc.), such as kayak or canoe rentals, bike or Segway rentals, walking tours, etc.?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Zoning Ordinance</td>
<td>Such a permitted use is not referenced in the Zoning Ordinance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community’s Zoning Ordinance permit community gardens or small urban farms?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Zoning Ordinance, Pg. 2-6</td>
<td>Community gardens are a permitted use in the R-M, C-L, C-G, I-L, and I-H districts and a special use in the R-S and P-R districts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community have an active garden club, which may include a Master Gardener education program that devotes efforts toward plantings in civic spaces?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Master Plan, various sections.</td>
<td>The Master Plan does not specifically mention such an organization, but places a high emphasis on growing a community gardening culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community have, or is it in the development stages of an entrepreneurship incubator, innovation incubator, kitchen incubator, or similar program?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Master Plan, Community Facilities Plan, Area of Focus D.</td>
<td>This area of focus states, “Work with the school district to identify space needs, and facility needs within the community and to facilitate cooperative educational opportunities especially with local businesses for entrepreneurship classes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community have, or is it planning to develop fiber cable, broadband, or community Wi-Fi?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Master Plan, Community Facilities Plan, Area of Focus F. (Pg. 71).</td>
<td>Plan calls for the City to work with fiber optic and other communication companies to provide a high level of service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4. Short Assessment Question</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community have, or is it planning to develop a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line or smaller-scale bus/trolley along a major corridor or fixed route? If so, where will it run?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>No documentation found that this is ongoing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your community implementing complete streets?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Master Plan, Pg. 20 under “Sustainability”</td>
<td>Plan calls for the city to “implement complete streets policy when improving streets.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do your community’s economic development officers understand and practice private- public partnerships as an investment strategy for new development and redevelopment?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parks Conservancy, Master Plan Transportation &amp; Circulation Plan Area of Focus K (Pg. 59)</td>
<td>Only direct reference in the Master Plan relates to developing a parking structure to reduce surface parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Low Impact Development (LID) the default approach for stormwater management?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Master Plan, Sustainability Framework Plan, Area of Focus D (Pg. 67)</td>
<td>Plan directly calls for using LID methods in new developments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community have a green building ordinance, or require submission of a LEED-ND checklist for proposed projects?</td>
<td>X (With Conditions)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Master Plan, Sustainability Framework Plan, Area of Focus D (Pg. 67)</td>
<td>Plan calls for adoption of a green building ordinance, but such an ordinance could not be located on the municipal website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do your community codes permit green roofs and living walls on buildings?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Zoning Ordinance</td>
<td>No mention in the zoning ordinance of any specific approval of green roofs or living walls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community employ Charrette-type public planning sessions for its key centers, nodes and key corridors, or other methods, including through a Community Involvement Plan? (this question relates to the Redevelopment Ready Community Best Practice Review Process)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Master Plan, Section 1: Community Outreach (Pg. 3)</td>
<td>Master Planning Efforts, including targeted corridor improvements, totaling 18 public engagement events during the 20 month planning process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community engage in activities to promote community interaction between merchants and residents in mixed-use areas?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Master Plan, Arts &amp; Culture Plan, Area of Focus C. (Pg. 44)</td>
<td>This section calls for the development of a main street district that brings residents and business owners together. There are not many other mixed-use districts, so Downtown and the Arts District would encompass such efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community have, or help organize, ride-share, car-share, or bike-share programs?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>No documentation could be found for such a program.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4. Short Assessment Question</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community participate in a Main Street program, at either the Associate, Selected, or Master level?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Michigan Main Street Center</td>
<td>Benton Harbor is a Main Street Associate Community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your community have high standards for the type and quality of building materials used on all public buildings (especially no to cement block, split block, corrugated metal, vinyl siding, and yes to brick, rock, and cut stone)?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>No documentation of such a requirement could be found</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your community enrolled in the Redevelopment Ready Communities Program? (this question relates to the Redevelopment Ready Communities Best Practice Review Process)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>MEDC RRC Communities Listing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total this page:</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total from both pages:</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 4: Public Comments

Benton Harbor PlacePlan Visioning Session—April 15, 2015

Feel free to use space on the back to continue discussion

**What are you proud of about the project site and immediate area?**

- Sitting areas
- Place for kids to go
- Arts district (4)
- The library (2)
- Efforts for renovation and development
- User-friendly
- Open to all
- Open air concerts (free) (8)
  - “Coming Home Coming Together” concert (17)
  - Concerts during SPGA
- Brings community together (9)
  - Brings in neighboring communities (2)
- Farmer’s market (14)
  - Offers fresh produce closer to citizens of the city who otherwise may not be able to get rides to Meijer or Walmart
- Versatility
  - Multi-dimensional uses of the space (3)
- Location (14)
  - Proximity to library (7)
  - Proximity to City hall (7)
  - Proximity to Arts district (2)
  - Centrally located (10)
  - Business district (2)
  - It’s in Benton Harbor
- Cultural things in great variety go on there
- It is up and coming and is becoming a real hot spot
- High visibility to I-94 business loop
- Some established activities
- Current upkeep of site (6)
- It’s green (4)
- It’s inviting (2)
- Chess games (2)
- Benches around fountain
• Diverse community (6)
• Martin Luther King, Jr. March
• Lighting of the Christmas tree (7)
• It’s in the heart of the city (4)
  o Main artery of Benton Harbor
• Brunson Hill Art House (free art for children)
• The semi-circle by main street (2)
• The way it looks
• Events/activities (11)
  o Vision Fest (6)
  o Artoberfest
  o Health Fair (3)
  o Blossomtime
  o Children’s Art Fair
• The site’s potential (7)
  o Vast space of vacancy, providing the potential for something legendary and everlasting to built (2)
  o Possible “go-to” location
  o Symbolizes the city
  o Great place for festivals/events (5)
• Energy that is created by events
• The relationship of the area to the seat of government
• Accessible (4)
  o Its ease of ingress and egress
• The serenity of the site
• Memories (2)
  o A site where memories can be captured
  o Stores that were there and how it later was converted to space for festivals
• A backdrop for experience
• Can capture beauty, image, sculpture of what the world virtually means
• Words of hope and pence built into the structure
• Positive entertainment space for community
• The density of park
• A place for congregation
• “A person I met who was proud of Benton Harbor said it was his ‘most favorite city in Michigan’ – he was a professor of speech and history from several colleges and he always wanted to retire in Benton Harbor”
• Restaurants and events that activate the downtown outside of 9-5 hours (2)
• Being used (2)
• Parking (3)
• Residents engaged in parks
• Very spacious
• Open arena
• Local businesses (2)
• New businesses
• Space for new businesses
• Programming w/ library
• Public art
• Nearby buildings being improved
• Quiet space
• Focal point of city
• Wheel chair accessible
• Park is on a complete street
• Still exists and preserved for use
• Agriculture history connection
• Door step of all city's key points/businesses
• In the immediate “growth” areas/businesses
• Children’s art fair
• Community ownership
• Buildings of architectural significance
• Main street scape
• Landscaping efforts from “Do Something” group
• One sculpture in the park (5)
• A few trees that offer shade
• 100 Women Strong
• Updated landscaping
• Nothing
• Ice skating (2)
• Landscaping (2)
• Streets are not too busy
• Gateway into city
• Downtown
• Epic center
• Walkability
• Open space
• Access to Main Street
• Renovations/improvements
• Celebration of BH’s achievements (2)
High visibility (2)
Trees
Seating area
Occasionally seeing young people hanging out
Positive attitude
Opportunity to serve/share values
The people who won’t respect it
People who want to see the heart beat behind the project
Often goes unnoticed
Multi-generational hub
Family-oriented (2)
Community input
Purpose/personality of area
Historical (2)
That it can expand beyond this park
Community growth
Team work
Extensive views of downtown
Opportunity to bring both sides of main street together
Collaboration (2)
City-wide clean up
Town commons
Not familiar with area
Connects both sides of downtown

What are you sorry about for the project site and immediate area?

- Poor sidewalk conditions (2)
- Poor WiFi signal (2)
- Parking lot (8)
- State Theatre
- African American business community underrepresented in the area
- No public restrooms (9)
- Lacks access to public restrooms
- Underdeveloped (7)
- Small area (4)
  - Too small for staging
  - Limited size (2)
- Not enough shade (4)
- Exposed water pump
- Underutilized (15)
  - Few established activities (2)
  - Not used to full potential
- Inadequate marketing/advertising (4)
  - No website to promote and advertise events
- Hazards, safety, unleveled ground maintenance
- SPGA Tours re-routed away from area
- “I never know what’s going on until I see people in the park.”
- Too many homeless people trying to illegally infiltrate the park for shelter
- Heavy vehicle traffic next to I-94 business loop
- Not an interesting site (3)
- No Signage (2)
  - No identifying flags
  - No marquee
- No permanent stage (3)
- Not enough seating (11)
- No ethnic art sculptures
  - Not enough representation of city residents
- No public/natural shelter (weather) (3)
- Not enough done for Christmas with area
- Ice skating rink
- Lack of upkeep/maintenance (12)
  - Exposed cables
  - Lack of vegetation/plants
- The black top cracks
- Not as many daily visitors as it could be (2)
- Only aesthetically pleasing from one side
- No power/water for events (3)
- Power lines that run through it (4)
- Alley through park (3)
  - Needs repair
- Lacks landscaping (4)
- Lacks cohesive landscaping
- Lack of resources to invest in the site (3)
- Loss of community
- Vacancy (2)
- Value of community has depreciated along with the demise of city sites
- The aesthetics of the space
- The loss of historic buildings (4)
- No vision for space
- It’s full integration as an open space
- That it has taken so long to put together a plan
- That it was not built in the inter Benton harbor
- It’s not serving a broader purpose for broader community
- It looks like it was wiped by a bomb
- More should be done to include children (2)
- Unsafe (2)
- People living downtown
- Inadequate lighting (9)
- Lacks business (5)
  - Grocery (2)
  - Cleaners
  - Boutiques
  - Restaurants
- Salvation Army
  - “Less residents being kicked out of Salvation Army”
- Uninviting (6)
  - Especially to children
- Post to present impact
- Lack of historical emphasis (6)
- Nothing to draw people in daily
- No landmark (3)
- Space around park is inactive
- Not used or viewed as city center
- Lack of support from officials
- No permanent podium
- No stadium
- Lack of density around park
- No downtown housing
- No retail (2)
- No public transportation
- Nothing to keep people downtown
- No walking space for seniors and others (2)
- Poor accessibility (2)
- Not enough parking
  - Parking around perimeter is inefficient
- Farmer’s market in poor location
- Not a vibrant places to invite visitors
- Feels incomplete
- Lacks amenities (2)
- No crosswalks (2)
- People don’t want to come downtown
- Not much space for reading
- No focal point
- Hard to build up
- Not well known by many
- Traffic noise and speed (2)
- Discrete
- Poor irrigation for landscaping (2)
- Buildings around the park have not been reactivated/redeveloped (3)
- Physical condition inconsistent (3)
- Lack permanent structures (4)
- Infrastructure (3)
- No sprinkler system
- Neglect/poor stewardship
- Lack of homogeneity
- Lack of volunteers to run children’s annual art show
- Too many buildings needing to be renovated or torn down
- Everything
- No statues
- Lacks communication
- Lack of pride
- No sustainable investment
- Hard to use
- Children playing in park
- Parking lot not paved
- Lack of character/identity (2)
- No covering
- Layout
• That it has taken this long to develop
• Not attractional
• The view
• No hub for farmer’s market
• Lacks substance
• Space is not ready for new activity
• Poor aesthetics
• Dead trees
• Broken windows
• Partial bike liens
• The highway dividing the Arts District and south side of Main
• Streets are in disrepair
• Loss of the legacy of four generations of investment
• Doesn’t entirely reflect residents of Benton Harbor
• Not appealing to a diverse group
• No traffic calming
• Homeless population

What would you like to see as you float over the site in a hot air balloon 15 years from now?

• Art walk
• More diverse events (8)
  o Gatherings
  o Ongoing activities (3)
• Statue of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
• Diversity – legacy (2)
• Historical emphasis (7)
  o Civil War
  o Lincoln Memorial building
  o 1865 – 2015
  o More historical signs, buildings, and gardens
  o Markers
  o Morton House consult?
• Statue up-keep
• Size – Art district
• Public restroom (6)
• Stage area/performance venue (10)
• Event promotion/advertisement
  o Community calendar (a place to hear about events) (2)
  o Even billboard
• Level ground (safety)
• Pavilion (8)
  o With empire style columns, outdoor fire places with cozy seating
  o A beautiful shelter for farmer’s market
• Landscaping (5)
• Bright colorful structure that will distinguish the area/perimeter of park (2)
• People/families using the park (7)
  o Laying, relaxing, enjoying
• Community movie night (3)
• Poetry in the park (2)
• Festivals
• Green space (6)
  o flowers (4)
  o Trees for shaded areas (8)
  o Grass
• Festival tents and flags
• Sculpt site
• People ice skating or roller skating
• Fountain (4)
  o One that lights up
• Amphitheater (8)
  o Multi-use amphitheater
  o Band stand
  o Band shell (2)
• Children using park (2)
• Whole families interacting (3)
• Not just park, but city as whole
• Playground (5)
• Water Park
  o A water feature (2)
• Multi-seasonal (5)
  o Blends usable space as seasons change
• Roller/ice skating rink (5)
• Music
Food vendors/trucks (6)
The existence of the park
No parking lot (2)
A destination
People enjoying/gathering in the park (5)
  - Transform into green space
Shelter (3)
Vibrant community (3)
  - And sustainable
A nice and clean environment
Identifiable sense of place
The skin of diversity can be telescoped with the naked eye without language
The epicenter of the renaissance of the City of Benton Harbor that embodies its diversity, vitality, resurgence, and commitment to self-preservation
Beauty as the piece of a puzzle; tightly snugged in its place
Business (2)
  - Active businesses
A return to the arts and crafts, hands-on things
An authentic Abraham Lincoln-style log cabin
A sesquicentennial (150 year commemoration) (2)
Volleyball court
  - Volleyball tournaments
Connection to river
Features that speak to the importance of learning + significance of library
Global Village utilizing the Dwight P. Mitchell Center Park
Block off 6th street and have the farmers market there
Elimination of 6th street
Signage (3)
  - A marquee (3)
  - Interpretive signage
Public art pieces/sculptures (12)
  - Interactive sculptures
  - Rotating (2)
Places to eat lunch (2)
Picnic areas (2)
Drinking fountains
Bike racks
Biking pathway (2)
Bike lanes
• Garden (4)
• Barrier against traffic on Main Street
• Summer/weekly festivals (2)
• Permanent structures (2)
• Connect to the St. Joseph River and the Charles Yarbrough Park
• Prisoner re-entry
• Salvation Army
• Gathering place
• Water and electricity for events (4)
• Pathways (5)
• Dedicate space for Farmer’s Market
• “Transformer” structures
• Areas/spaces that encourage all Benton Harbor citizens and neighboring residents
• Canopied spaces (2)
• Visually interesting layout (2)
• Walking (2)
• Biking
• More diverse topography
• Multi-modal access (2)
• Retailers surrounding the park
• Reactivating surrounding area
• Dog park area (2)
• Working area
• Upkeep/maintenance (6)
• Appealing to all ages
• More programming/activities
• Lighting (7)
  o Decorative lighting
  o Dancing lights
• Park connection to arts district
  o Public art connecting the two
• Farmer’s market (2)
• Color (2)
• Well-maintained grass
• No asphalt
• More whimsical — something that complements but doesn’t mimic typical urban grid design (2)
• Meijer Gardens in BH
• Art and Music in the park
- Geographic and cultural center
- More cohesive design
- Better connectivity with surrounding area (2)
- Flexible outdoor art exhibit area/pop-up space(s), sculpture pedestals, double as artwork ‘gallery walls’ and/or video screening walls
- Flexible design
- Glass art objects interwoven into design features
- A sprinkler system
- Fitness circuit
- Natural species/ context sensitive
- No trash/litter
- The total absence of the Cornerstone Alliance
- Food (2)
- “Love is the key”
- Smaller streets
- Elimination of vacant areas
- Multi-cultural/multi-religious
- Historical landmarks (2)
- Mass transit
- Full moon gazing
- Cultural diversity showcase
- Textiles
- Visitor Center
- Mix of usability and options for future function
- Few farmers at market
- Housing
- Grills
- No sculpture
- Structure
- Maintained sidewalks
- Park directory/ma[
- Bench area
- Merge properties - pipestone to 5th street
- Bike rental/share (2)
- Bike surrey
- Improved library
- An architectural delight/ destination (2)
- Multi-purpose structures
• Art alley with BHPL
• Reflect people of Benton Harbor
• Participatory city
• Makerspace
• Shipping containers
• PA system
• Workshop
  o Build a birdhouse (savett)/doghouse (humane society)
• Classroom for cooking and language
• Battle of the bands
• Shakespeare
Square 1 Visioning Session  
Boys and Girls Club of Benton Harbor, Teen Center  
June 30, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Running Track</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>Suggested a walking/running track around the park that kids could use to ride bikes with parents as they walked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football Field</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball court</td>
<td>IIII</td>
<td>Regulation rims and small rims for little kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer Field</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pool</td>
<td>IIIII</td>
<td>Not a full pool but a water feature that could be used as a wading pool of some sort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Concession</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Somewhere to get food/snacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bounce House Area</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>A place to set up a screen and projector for outdoor movies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Ground</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Swings, benches, see-saw, other playground equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sledding area</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog Park area</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Dog Park or Dog Run area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wi-Fi</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Smart park, where you could use your ipads and charge phones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skateboarding</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>An area to ride skateboards and do tricks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Fountains</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>The plan to include water fountains is great idea!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Area to do concerts and have events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statue of Famous African Amer.</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>A central area for a Dr. King statue or other prominent local figure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shady area</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Lots of shade areas to have picnics and eat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Feature</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>IIIII</td>
<td>Have more space to do things, play games, have races, play sports, and just play around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc.</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Water Slide, No fighting, dodge ball area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Engagement Session facilitated by Marja Winters and Jerry Price with support from Teen Center Executive Director Jeff Booker and other B&GC staff.
Art Hop Comments

Like

- Fountain is nice
- Everything looks great
- Like the stage
- Great space for splash area
- Need the restrooms
- Like the art – needs more
- Landscaping

Don’t like

- Playground
- Fountain – too high maintenance. Will be destroyed
- Do not want children playing here – there are other kid centered parks
- Would like to see more shade for farm market area

Additional comments

- Is there a better way to incorporate/encourage/maximize attraction to/use of the library
- Great library idea
- Like #2 (tally: 5)
- Ballpark not best use of space
- Should be lunchtime attraction, food, places to sit and visit
- Should be more unique
Farmers Market Feedback

Feedback on City Center Park draft concept collected at Benton Harbor Farmers’ Market, 8/19/2015
MML staff had conversations with ~55 market attendees, most of whom had not attended any of the public meetings. Virtually all comments positive on general concept.

Specific likes/dislikes
- Needs a small plot of flowers or a kids garden
- Teens want a small skate park area – doesn’t have to be a full park, just a few things that kids can use (half-pipe, etc)
- Splash park is a must have
- Parking isn’t a problem – local people will walk or ride bikes for smaller events
- Needs bike racks
- Love the sails
- Love splash pad, will bring families
- Love fireplace
- Seating area is good for teens – they’ll hang out here too
- Need the theatre to have a movie screen so we can do movies in the park
- More art on perimeter to help draw people in
- Needs more history worked into the park
- Add strung lights in the seating area to make evening events more fun and safe
- More stuff on perimeter to draw attention
- Love ice rink
- Need movie screen on stage
- Spaces for public art not shown on plans?
- Like the farm market awning/shelter – “will help liven this place up”
- Need good wayfinding and connections to/from the Arts District (and to/from parking in that area)
- Main Street frontage needs a high-visibility announcement board to advertise events in the park
- Like removing parking lot for events lawn
- Like “sails” motif of 6th street shelter
- Think ice rink would get used – no other place for kids to skate in town
- Ice rink good – “we need a place for kids to learn without paying a lot”
- Needs to be maintained and clean to keep people coming back
- Skeptical of permanent market structure. “Market isn’t here every day.” Make sure flexible enough for other uses
- Like fireplace feature, “nice place to sit”
- Good arrangement / division of elements from west to east; especially like shaded informal sitting areas near pipestone. “Like something you’d see in Chicago.”
- Need electrical hookups! All along farmers’ market for vendors and events; near on-street parking spaces for food trucks
- Market awnings good for establishing the site as a place where things happen – referenced the Holland farmers market as example.
- Consider statues or other art in the seating area on the east end – perhaps sports themes as tie to school pride / prominent athlete alumni, or authors to make connection to the library.
- “Where’s the fountain?” – specifically do not think splash pad is adequate water feature.
- Gaming tables are good. “Stone checkers tables”, like on the bluff at St. Joes.
- Farmer: need direct truck->table access for all farmers market vendors; each lug box of produce is 30-50 pounds.
Programming comments
- Need organized activities in the park to keep people coming in
- Health activities like yoga, pilates, boot camp, zoomba
- Do the tree lighting here with the ice rink
- Need the farmers market here more frequently
- Bigger farmers market (like today) is better than normal – attracts a bigger draw
- Kids garden programming
- Movies in the park, residents will organize
- Need lawn games like we have today
- More frequent concerts (weekly)
- A few big concerts a year to get park funding, the rest should be free
- Programmed art and history events – maybe organized by arts district
- Could do light shows on the sails and/or on facades of nearby businesses
- Farmers market needs longer season and to combine produce with artisans more
- Music draws people in: good to have performance space even for events not focused on music
- Like combo of Wednesday farmers market and Friday Harbor Market – usually not enough vendors to create a critical mass

General comments
- Great – will draw more money for local business
- Love the market area
- Looks nice
- People will use it more if it’s like this
- Great concert space
- Will help attract people to the city
- Will help attract development
- Feels like what the community wants and needs
- This seems to encompass all of the comments from previous meetings
- “Looks like a nice place to spend the day.”