

THE PROCESS: SUSTAINABLE SMALL HARBORS PROJECT

CORE QUESTION

What are the key barriers to small harbor economic, social and environmental sustainability and what tools would help small harbor managers create more stability?

PROJECT IMPETUS

- Funding priorities are shifting. Federal assistance for small recreational harbors is decreasing. Though the State of Michigan provided Emergency Dredging Funding in 2013, communities are now encouraged to identify sustainable, local sources of funding for dredging and maintenance.
- Small harbors are vital cultural and economic resources. Michigan is home to more than 80 public harbors and marinas run by the state, county or local government. Through direct and secondary spending, Great Lakes boating infuses nearly \$2.4 billion into the Michigan economy each year. Fluctuating water levels across the Great Lakes, combined with a recent economic downturn, have taken their toll on local waterfront communities.
- Planning is required. Beginning in 2015, public harbors must develop five-year master plans to be eligible for financial support from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Waterways Program.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

This project assists communities in creating a plan for managing and financially sustaining their public harbors. The project team works collaboratively with harbor communities, agency partners and industry experts to develop a toolkit that helps public harbors develop realistic long-term visions. Special emphasis is placed on

WHAT DOES A SUSTAINABLE WATERFRONT LOOK LIKE?

The project team will identify strategies to improve economic, social and environmental sustainability of Michigan's harbor communities. To prepare community members for the scope of the discussion, Michigan Sea Grant developed a graphic to illustrate the key characteristics of a sustainable recreational harbor waterfront.



Figure 3. Visitor attractions graphic developed by MSG in support of the project team.

incorporating concepts from Michigan's "Placemaking" programs led by Michigan State Housing Development Authority. The placemaking approach focuses on developing a unique sense of place by highlighting and developing a community's distinctive and desirable aspects.

Project plans also seek to align with economic development initiatives such as the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Redevelopment Ready Program, which promotes redevelopment strategies through implementation of a set of best practices, including approaches specific to waterfronts. Project outcomes will include a needs-based sustainability toolkit featuring four case studies, economic assessment tools, and planning and marketing resources.

This resource will provide a model sustainable small harbor management strategy that aligns with new funding requirements and provides communities a pathway for developing and maintaining these important resources.

APPROACH

The project leadership team and advisory board selected four representative small harbor communities in Michigan for case studies. Selection was based on five criteria: type of harbor (e.g., shallow draft, harbor of refuge), harbor location relative to the community type (e.g., suburban, city, downtown), population size, current economic condition and chance of successful implementation. Harbors were selected from across the state and include multiple Great Lakes.

Over the course of six months, the research team conducts charrettes — multiple day visioning meetings — in selected communities. This facilitated community visioning process provides recommendations from community members that help facilitate environmental, social and economic sustainability of the community waterfront.

Researchers follow the NCI Charrette System™, a three-phase, holistic, collaborative planning process during which a multiple-day charrette is held as the central transformative event. Single day visits at the beginning and end of the project introduce the process and share project outcomes.



Figure 1. Case study communities include New Baltimore, Au Gres, Ontonagon and Pentwater.

**Research, Education,
Charrette Preparation**

Charrette

**Plan
Implementation**



Figure 2. Phases of the National Charrette Institute planning process. Source: National Charrette Institute

SUSTAINABLE HARBORS DESIGN CHARRETTE

THREE VISITS TO THE COMMUNITY



Figure 4. Iterative process balancing community input and expert design work.

CO-FUNDING MODEL

In 2014, Michigan Sea Grant funded a project proposal submitted by Don Carpenter at Lawrence Technological University. The project was subsequently expanded due to a new co-funding partnership between Michigan Sea Grant and the State of Michigan.

The project is currently co-funded by:

- Michigan Sea Grant (via NOAA),
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources – Waterways Program,
- Michigan Department of Environmental Quality – Office of the Great Lakes, and
- Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

www.miseagrant.umich.edu/smallharborsustainability



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