

# **Twin Cities Sustainable Harbor Initiative**

## **Preferred Plan Outreach and Refinement**

January 9, 2019

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### **Project Goal:**

The goal of the Twin Cities Sustainable Harbor Initiative is to facilitate the development of long-term, sustainable strategies that enable Michigan's Great Lakes coastal communities to maximize the benefits of their harbors and waterfront.

### **Partner Organizations:**

- Twin Cities Harbor Conservancy
- Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
- Michigan Office of the Great Lakes
- Michigan Sea Grant
- Michigan State University Extension
- Drummond Carpenter, PLLC

### **Background:**

The Twin Cities Sustainable Harbor Design Charrette was held at Kinexus in Benton Harbor from October 9 to 11. During those three days, 100s of community members participated in exercises and a preferred plan for Twin Cities 2040 was generated. The preferred plan was presented twice (4pm and 6pm) on Oct 11 to approximately 90 members of the community. Overall, community feedback on the process and on the preferred plan was positive but the Project Leadership Team acknowledges some limitations of the process that developed the preferred plan. Those limitations were based on lack of sufficient time for design team to process community input, a design team assembled from multiple agencies, and lack of sufficient diversity from the community. These limitations are further articulated in the list below:

1. There was inadequate time to process the community feedback from October 9<sup>th</sup> and generate three well-articulated plans for the Open House on October 10<sup>th</sup>. The study area included four zones (Outer Harbor, Inner Harbor, Riverview Drive and Marina Island/Fisherman's Wharf) and three alternatives for each. As such, the design team was trying to create 12 unique plans in approximately 8 hours of design time. Unfortunately that was not enough time to get consistent quality designs on the walls for community voting. The alternatives were described to community members during the voting process but it was clear based on the community feedback that evening that not every design option was completely understood. This was not an issue during previous design charrettes because the design area was smaller (two zones instead of four) and the community feedback easier to process (one community/jurisdiction instead of three).

2. In previous Small Harbor Design charrettes, a four person professional design team was used. The four person professional design team had similar background and experiences. Because of the larger area, it was decided to increase the size of the design team by supplementing the professional team with additional student designers from Michigan State University and Andrews University. Unfortunately, this led to inconsistent work products (different production media) displayed to the public and significant effort was expended by the professional design team to blend student work into the process further hampering the ability to process community input.
3. Despite outreach efforts, African-American participation in the community forums was limited and estimated at less than 10% of the total participants. In addition, while several members of the Benton Harbor City Commission attended, they remarked at how few of their constituents were engaged. As such, the “preferred alternative” does not adequately represent a “shared vision” for the future of the harbor/waterfront.

Because of these self-identified limitations, the leadership team proposes the following action items to further validate and/or refine the preferred plan.

**Action Steps:**

- A. Continue to conduct meetings to present preferred alternative, solicit additional feedback, develop ownership of and local champions for the vision to reach broader consistencies and seek input on effective implementation strategies from the following groups:
  - Planning Commission Technical Group
  - DDA/Chamber of Commerce Technical Group.
  - Key Constituents of the City of St. Joseph
  - Key Constituents of the City of Benton Harbor
  - Key Constituents of St. Joseph Township and Berrien County.
- B. Determine invitation list for faith-based organizations and conduct a focus group for value sort activity, to solicit feedback on preferred plan, develop ownership of and local champions for the vision to reach broader consistencies, and seek input on effective implementation strategies
- C. Determine invitation list for local fraternal and sorority organizations and conduct a focus group for value sort activity, to solicit feedback on preferred plan, develop ownership of and local champions for the vision to reach broader consistencies, and seek input on effective implementation strategies
- D. Work with Cornerstone, Whirlpool, Leadership Accelerator Program, and Strategic Leadership Council to identify a list of young professionals – conduct a focus group for value sort activity, to solicit feedback on preferred plan, develop ownership of and local champions for the vision to reach broader consistencies, and seek input on effective implementation strategies
- E. Host individual conversations with key community leadership to solicit feedback on engagement approach to ensure community voices are represented and reflected in the vision.
- F. Provide a brief update to City and Township Commissions on status of the project

- G. Meet with Harbor Conservancy and local leadership to establish timeline for governance discussions
- H. Establish economic influence of preferred alternative

<b>Task</b>	<b>Schedule/Organize</b>	<b>Conduct</b>
A – Technical and Constituent Meetings	Dec-Jan	Jan-Feb
B – Faith Based	Dec-Jan	Feb-March
C – “Greek” Organizations	Dec-Jan	Feb-March
D – Young Professionals	Dec-Jan	Jan
E – Individual Community Leadership	Jan	Jan-March
F – Commission Updates	Jan	Feb-March
G- Governance Plan	Jan	Jan-April
H – Economic Analysis	Dec-Jan	Jan-April

**Topline Messages:**

- Project partners will honor the essence of Benton Harbor, St. Joseph, and St. Joseph Charter Township, in their distinct and shared identities.
- Land use, economic development, community wellbeing, natural systems, and connectivity are topics that will be explored in the community charrette visioning process.
- It is important that community members are engaged in the process and that the vision reflects the perspectives and voices from the communities and is not a top-down approach. Project partners help facilitate discussion of community vision but do not establish the vision.
- The vision provides opportunities for residents from each community and for visitors from outside of the communities.

**Existing Outreach Tools:**

- Project PowerPoint presentation
- Fact sheet and 1-page project profile/flyer
- Media advisories and press releases as needed
- Social media platforms