



## SECTION VIII: MAJOR PARK AND RECREATION SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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This purpose of this section is to provide a comprehensive listing of the park system incorporating public and staff input that was gathered through the survey, focus groups, public meetings, email, letters and comments described in the Public Process section. This overview reflects both improvements that will help preserve the life of amenities, such as resurfacing a game court, to providing space and structure for new programming opportunities.

The assessments considered the public input that was gathered, including the major categories summarized in the Planning Process Chapter. These included maintenance, especially mowing and athletic fields, taking care of what we have, planning for the future of existing facilities, accessibility and connectivity, including non-motorized trails and greenways, community outreach/programming and public involvement, more leadership in volunteerism, and affordability and fees. There is far more to do than can be accomplished in this PROS Plan cycle, but there are issues that can be addressed arising from what was heard during the public process.

### A. Facilities Needs Assessment

Although several of the existing recreation facilities have had renovations in recent years, much remains to be accomplished at most facilities in the system. The intensive maintenance required at these facilities includes repair of aging structures and mechanical systems, compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and restoration of historic structures.

#### 1. Recreation Facilities General Infrastructure Needs

- Compliance with ADA – The City of Ann Arbor is committed to building facilities that are in full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act standards. All new facilities are built to meet or exceed ADA standards. Older facilities are brought into ADA compliance as they are renovated. The City will continue to renovate

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facilities so that all park and recreation facilities are fully accessible.

- Mechanical, heating and cooling, and energy efficiency are ongoing infrastructure needs.
- Programmatic – additions and upgrades at several facilities to accommodate innovative programming.

### 2. Recreation Facilities General Programming

- Important to stay abreast of trends to stay competitive and offer diverse programs.
- Expand use of social media to advertise programs and activities.
- Collaborate with other recreation providers, such as the YMCA, Rec & Ed, NAP, to offer innovative programs that complement rather than duplicate.
- Increase weekday lessons and after-hours programming.
- Increase volunteer opportunities for recreation facilities.

### 3. Recreation Facilities Infrastructure and Programming Needs

#### a. Ann Arbor Senior Center

- The top floor at the facility lacks ADA accessibility and limits how the space can be used.
- Additional space for programming is desired.
- New roof and improved insulation is needed in the upcoming years.
- Cold temperatures during the winter remain an issue for the users of the Center; an entry vestibule could help eliminate the cold draft problems.
- The linoleum floor throughout needs to be replaced.
- Kitchen needs upgrades, including new cabinets, industrial dishwasher, safe serving area for food warmer, sink to meet health code with three sink areas, renovate flooring.
- Additional storage space is needed.
- Additional space for parking is desired.
- New energy efficient and effective lighting throughout the building is desired.
- The wood floors throughout need to be refinished.
- Restrooms need to be renovated to be ADA compliant.

#### b. Argo Canoe Livery

- Replace gravel parking lot with pervious parking at livery lot to facilitate drainage and control dust.
- Additional parking is needed. Reconstruction of the existing lots would help to better organize parking and alleviate drainage issues.
- Modifications (removal of trailer launching) at the existing boat launch might occur if a new trailer boat launch can be developed on the Argo Pond/Huron River waterway. An alternative location might include somewhere in Bandemer Park.
- Provide boat storage for public.
- Eliminate portage.

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- Construct kayak storage racks.
- Construct deck, pervious surface, and awning outside staff door on south side of building to accommodate staff needs.
- Seal concrete floor in livery building for longer life.
- Develop trail and signage through woods to connect to neighborhood.
- Explore additional parking opportunities through collaboration with neighboring uses.

### **c. Bryant Community Center**

- The site is constrained and there is no room for physical expansion to provide for program growth. The one large activity room in the existing building can only accommodate a single program at a time. The need exists to run multiple programs for separate kids according to age and activities during peak use times.
- Landscape improvements are desired for aesthetics and drainage.
- Kitchen and bathroom renovation and/or replacement is desired.

### **d. Buhr Park Pool and Ice Arena**

- Replace pool gutter grating.
- Paint steel structure of ice arena to preserve life of building.
- Replace plaza area concrete to eliminate trip hazards.
- Construct water slide at pool to attract more families and children.

### **e. Cobblestone Farm Historic Site**

- Replace roof on barn
- Replace cedar siding on barn
- Improve landscaping.
- Tuckpoint brick of the historic house
- Replace chinking at historic log cabin.

### **f. Farmers Market**

- Repave deteriorated parking lot.
- Picnic shelter to accommodate vendors in open area as well as events.
- Reconfiguration of parking lot, including paving space on Fourth Avenue where house was demolished.

### **g. Fuller Park Pool**

- Renovate parking lots, including paving dirt portion of parking lot.
- Design and construct splash pad to attract families and children.
- Replace pool liner.
- Second water slide.
- Upgrade pool light poles, possibly with solar.

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### **h. Gallup Park Canoe Livery**

- Additional storage space needed.
- Modification and repairs to the existing dock system to accommodate increased use and barrier free access.
- Additional boardwalks, docks, improved water access around livery facility.
- Canoe livery building needs repair, including replacement of rotting boards on the exterior, replace the brick pavers which have become loose and are creating a trip hazard, update mechanical systems, modifications to make building, doors, restrooms compliant with ADA, sliding door to patio, increase patio space for events and for cafe.
- Park service vehicles operating along the trail/driveway and space adjacent to the livery frequently conflicts with park users. Alternative design options should be investigated to separate vehicles from pedestrians.
- Renovations to the meeting room and restroom building should be reviewed to address ongoing issues with the heating and cooling systems.
- ADA improvements at restrooms.
- Private boat storage.
- Wayfinding signage to canoe livery.

### **i. Huron Hills Golf Course**

- Renovate club house to accommodate a meeting room, teaching room.
- Shelter/pavilion for rentals, programs, events.

### **j. Kempf House**

- Brick tuck pointing at foundation to maintain structural integrity of building.
- Complete renovations as recommended in Smith Group Condition Assessment Report of 2005.

### **k. Leslie Park Golf Course**

- Cart storage building to protect carts.
- Pavilion/patio/banquet hall to accommodate events, programs, and rentals, as well as deck for food and beverages overlooking third green.
- Refueling station as well as electric hook up for electric carts.

### **l. Leslie Science and Nature Center**

- Caretaker cottage needs renovations for energy efficiency, to keep out critters, repair windows, etc.
- Office and storage space needed for staff and program materials.
- Renovate Critter House to update exhibits and improve teaching opportunities.
- LED lighting in parking lot for energy efficiency.
- Parking lot renovations to address drainage and erosion issues.
- Barrier free path to raptor enclosures.

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- Landscape improvements west of Nature House.
- Signage for raptors.
- Additional space for programming including an outdoor classroom.
- Renovate basement of Leslie House.
- Wayfinding and interpretive signage.

### **m. Mack Pool**

- A more attractive outside area on the deck or an enclosed sunroom area would be an amenity for the site.
- Renovate locker rooms – new lockers.
- Upgrade party room.
- Reconfigure office and entrance to move both to the pool deck to separate public from school kids.

### **n. Northside Community Center**

- The facility needs minor interior maintenance.
- Exterior will require painting in a few years.
- Modifications or updates to the interior of the adjacent shelter building would increase its potential for rental revenues.
- Improvements to the restrooms/shelter are needed.

### **o. Veterans Memorial Park Pool and Ice Arena**

- Arena flooring is worn and outdated and needs replacement.
- I-beams and purlins need to be repainted due to condensation problem causing rust.
- Arena lights should be replaced with florescent, high efficiency lighting.
- Shade structures on pool deck, including solar panels.
- Renovate pool locker rooms.

## **B. Community-wide Parks**

### **a. Buhr Park**

- Inter-connecting pathway system to provide pedestrian access from the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Lighting of the tennis courts.
- New picnic pavilion with added picnic opportunities.
- New wayfinding signage.
- Continue implementation of the goals and elements as identified in the Buhr Park Stormwater Management Plan.
- Entry road and parking lots need major renovation.

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### **b. Fuller Park**

- Non-motorized path around the park along the Huron River connecting to Island Park would provide a link to the more natural features of the park and provide a pathway from the parking lot to the fields, as well as the missing link along the Huron River Greenway.
- Enhance entry to park and plaza area outside of facility.
- Signage for the park trails to improve wayfinding.
- Map of soccer field locations would assist with wayfinding.
- Renovate parking lots.
- If Fuller Station is built, park amenities should be included, including pathway connections and improvements to parking areas.
- Shelter/pavilion would provide rental opportunities.

### **c. Gallup Park**

- Trail systems throughout Gallup Park need renovation.
- Wayfinding signage and historic interpretive signage improvements.
- Improve boat launch and parking area. The shoreline is eroded in this area of the park and could use improvements, including riprap and native plantings.
- Private boat storage.
- Water trail or canoe trail with interpretation stopping areas/resting areas for canoers.
- Entry road and parking lots need renovation.
- Upgrade lighting system for improved efficiency and performance.

### **d. Island Park**

- Renovate historic Greek Revival Shelter to preserve structural integrity.

### **e. Olson Park**

- Enhancements to the mountain bike trail network ongoing. A core group of local mountain bike riders volunteers to develop and maintain much of the trail network, and this relationship should be encouraged.
- Continuation of the trail east and then south along the railroad right-of-way can be accommodated with an existing easement through the property east of the park.
- Continuation of vegetation management.

### **f. Riverside Park**

- Path and drive entry repave to create separation between path and road, pave parking lot, create rain garden.

### **g. Southeast Area Park**

- Existing gravel parking lot and driveways should be paved to help control dust, allow for marking of parking spaces, and comply with ordinance requirements.
- Installation of speed bumps along the driveway could also be introduced at crosswalks and as necessary to control traffic speed.

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- Gated drive at Platt Road could be opened to provide additional access, however, a right-turn only exit should be enforced for safety.
- Master plan includes a pathway connection in a northwest direction from the park.
- The feasibility of extending a trail connect along the northern boundary of the University Townhouses residential property and I-94 toward the existing pedestrian overpass bridge at I-94 to Brown Park should be considered.
- Open space along Platt may accommodate additional basketball courts or an in-line hockey court.

### **h. Veterans Memorial Park**

- Ball Diamond Complex – renovations should include automated/computerized irrigation system and amenities necessary to maintain a well-manicured facility.
- Construct basketball courts.
- The parking at the east and west ends of the ice arena building could be reconfigured to provide additional needed parking spaces.
- Renovation of the parking lots serving the baseball fields may include asphalt paving, reconfiguration, and storm water management components. Consider pervious paving.
- Concession space in the shelter could be refurbished to generate additional revenue.
- The lighting should be evaluated.
- The slag path in the park is eroding and weeds are prolific. It should be paved to make it barrier free and to require less maintenance.
- Renovate existing paved paths.
- The storage building near the batting cage should be demolished.
- Improve entry area and provide pedestrian walk to pool and ice arena.

### **i. West Park**

- Complete master plan started in 2009.
- Paint and repair band shell.
- Construct restrooms.
- Renovate tennis courts including rebuilding retaining wall.
- Renovate/add shuffleboard courts.
- Add park benches and picnic tables.
- Design/implement interpretive signage for storm water features and park history.
- Enhance old Native American Trail.
- Construct creative play area to reflect storm water theme.
- Renovate pergola.
- Renovate baseball field.

## **C. Natural Areas**

- Identify resources and start ecological stewardship activities in newly acquired natural areas where appropriate.
- Extend ecological stewardship activities to previously unmanaged, City-owned natural areas.

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- Identify areas appropriate for construction or alteration of trail systems to facilitate greater connections to a system-wide trail network.
- Establish and enhance wildlife corridors.
- Establish and enhance Huron River and tributary native vegetation buffers.

### **D. Parkland Acquisitions**

- Purchase of property along the Huron River is a high priority.
- Purchase of property to make greenway connections along natural areas and creeks as well as to create a downtown greenway.
- Any parkland acquisitions should consider the additional burden on park system maintenance.
- Purchase of property to increase both visual and physical access to existing parks.

### **E. The Huron River**

- Recommendations from the Huron River Impoundment Management Plan should be part of planning for improvements for Huron River parks.

### **F. Neighborhood Parks and Urban Plazas**

- Existing play areas should be replaced if they are out of compliance with safety regulations, do not adequately meet ADA, or exhibit unsafe conditions.
- Gaps in neighborhood park service (for residents that do not have a neighborhood park within one-quarter mile or where they need to cross a busy street) should be considered, taking schools in to consideration, including demographics (study done by PAC) when developments may include land dedication or when vacant parcels that are appropriate become available.
- Creative play areas should be designed imaginatively to create variety in play structures and experiences.
- Discussion concerning downtown open space should continue, especially as the underground parking structure at the library lot is constructed, as well as to plan for developer contributions and small pocket parks.
- Work with the Downtown Development Authority to plan for renovation and acquisition of downtown open space.

### **G. General Infrastructure Needs**

#### **a. Athletic Fields/Ball Fields**

- Plan for major renovation of athletic fields as part of a capital project plan.
- Overused fields need to be rested on a regular schedule. This is a challenge as fields at Olson and Fuller are booked to capacity. Ability to restrict usage is vital to sustainability of quality turf.
- Irrigation systems should be installed in City fields that are heavily programmed.
- More fields are desired for sports such as ultimate frisbee, rugby, and lacrosse.
- A number of elementary and middle school baseball and softball fields need refurbishing by schools.



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### **b. Game Courts**

- Maintain quality and safety of existing courts, especially those with more community wide use, such as West, Veterans and Buhr Parks.
- Evaluate number of courts in existence. Evaluate need for replacement by usage and suitability of location.
- Evaluate and prioritize for repairs all game courts.

### **c. Park Security**

- With the absence of park rangers, continue to work closely with Police Department to make sure that parks are kept safe.

### **d. Picnic Shelters**

- Incorporate LED lights at shelters to help save energy.
- Historic Greek Revival shelter at Island Park needs restoration work to maintain structural integrity and stop deterioration.
- Upgrades at Northside shelter might make it more viable for rentals.
- Shelters are desired at Bandemer and Buhr Parks for programming and public rentals, especially a few larger shelters for larger groups.
- Perform necessary upgrades/restoration of picnic shelters.

### **e. Play Areas**

- Play areas need to be replaced when they no longer comply with safety standards and become outdated.
- Staff needs to perform regular inspections to stay ahead of safety issues.
- Additional staff should be trained to perform regular safety inspections.
- More interesting/diverse playgrounds should be included.

### **f. Restrooms**

- Heavily used restroom facilities need to have more frequent maintenance and cleaning.
- Updating restroom facilities on a rotating/as-needed basis should continue to occur.
- Constructing restrooms in heavily used parks or regional park facilities, such as West, should remain a priority.

### **g. Signage**

- Signs should be utilized where necessary and where it will facilitate interpretation opportunities, but not in excess.
- As interest in and accessibility to natural areas have increased, the need has increased for interpretive signage to explain their features and improve wayfinding.
- The need for consistent signage to explain appropriate uses of parks and natural areas has increased (dogs on leash, prohibit bicycles in sensitive natural areas).

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- Signage systems should be developed in a systematic way that provides consistent content and appearance.
- Replace entry signs to all major facilities to be consistent and easily read from the street.

### **h. Snow Plowing**

- Continue to coordinate with facilities to maintain safe, clear pathways and parking lots.

### **i. Trails and Greenways**

- Walking, hiking, and bicycling were the most popular activities for City residents, and the completion of the Huron River Greenway trail (Border-to-Border) has been one of the highest priorities for the park system. (See map of the Huron River Greenway priorities at end of this section.) Filling gaps and completing sections of the trail along the Huron River to create safer and more aesthetic route along the river is a high priority.
- Maintenance of heavily used non-motorized pathways through parks and along the Border-to-Border trail remains a high priority for safety and usability.
- The Non-motorized Transportation Plan from 2007 details desired trail connections throughout the City. This plan should be consulted when renovating streets and pathways.
- Coordination with other City departments to repair deteriorated path systems should remain a priority.

### **j. Turf Maintenance**

- Appearance of the parks is important, and maintenance of turf is priority for residents.
- Elimination of mowed turf areas due to financial constraints must be accomplished in a manner as not to decrease usable areas or create unsightly vistas.

### **k. Trash Pickup**

- Uniform curbside trash containers has improved appearance and ability to remove trash. This program should be expanded.
- Replace all old style barrels with uniform, attractive trash containers throughout park system. All new barrels should be designed to easily remove liner, but keep container in place and be attractive.
- Placement of barrels should facilitate ease of trash pickup.

## **H. Programming for Volunteerism**

- The need for additional park maintenance received attention from City Council and a Park Maintenance Task Force in 2005. Part of this need has been met by implementing an Adopt-A-Park program. The Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator coordinates volunteers, who commit to certain responsibilities and steward parks throughout the City. The program has

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been highly successful, and another staff person is slated work on this program to increase volunteerism at the recreation facilities.

- Additional community resources must be sought to increase parks programming, educational programming, park maintenance, and recreation facility maintenance to meet community needs. This will be done through two Volunteer and Outreach Coordinators who will seek community partnerships, civic and neighborhood volunteers, and grant opportunities.

### **I. Potential New Recreational Facilities and Park Amenities**

#### **Centrally Located Dog Park**

- The two off-leash dog parks are currently located in the north and south part of Ann Arbor at Swift Run Park and at Olson Park. Requests have been made for a more centrally located off-leash facility. Locations near the downtown have not yet been identified.

#### **In-Line Skating/Skateboard Facility**

- A permanent, concrete skateboard facility has been desired by residents for many years. Starting in 2005, the Ann Arbor Skate Park Action Committee (AASAC) began their mission of building a free skate park facility in Ann Arbor. In May 2008, the Park Advisory Commission passed a resolution recommending that City Council approve a designated location in Veterans Memorial Park for a future skate park. City staff, the AASAC and the Ann Arbor Community Foundation then developed a Memorandum of Intent (MOI) regarding how the parties would work towards completing a skate park. The MOI states that the City will not pay towards construction or on-going maintenance of the proposed skate park, as the City is focusing on rehabilitating or upgrading existing facilities. In 2009, Washtenaw County Parks Commission agreed to match funds raised by the AASAC up to \$400,000 if the AASAC raised funds. AASAC is in the process of fundraising for this project.

#### **Allen Creek Greenway**

- A greenway running generally along the alignment of the buried Allen Creek has been requested by some residents. The main branch of the Allen Creek runs along the railroad tracks in the transitional area on the western edge of downtown. The 1988 Downtown Plan calls for the development of a highly visible 'greenway' on the valley floor of the Allen Creek to reinforce the visibility of the valley, develop an improved transition between the downtown core and the neighborhoods to the west, to establish a visual and recreational amenity, to create improved pedestrian and bicycle access to downtown, and to enhance downtown's unique identity as a place. This greenway trail would generally follow the alignment of the Allen Creek alongside the Ann Arbor Railroad. It would connect the Huron River south through the City to the U-M golf course with a trail or connected sidewalks crossing the west side of downtown.

In 2005, a task force was created to work on plans for this greenway (Council Resolution R-258-6-05). Although consensus was not reached as to the extent or final

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designs, the report does outline general recommendations for concepts. Parts or entire parcels of three City owned properties, at 721 North Main, 415 West Washington and the corner of William and First Streets, are all being considered for part of this greenway. Connections between are not yet defined. The connection to the Huron River is important for safety and to provide a more visible entry to the Huron River Greenway.

### **Other Trail and Greenway Connections**

- Branch of Allen Creek to West Park with eventual connection to an Allen Creek greenway. This branch of the Allen Creek runs west through many of the existing City parks. A natural/wildlife corridor runs along the ravine in Hannah Park and Maryfield Wildwood Park. This corridor follows a branch of the Allen Creek and should be better connected to West Park and to a downtown greenway.
- South spur along Malletts Creek. A Malletts Creek Restoration Plan was completed in April 2000 and outlines land to be preserved along the length of the creek as well as action items to improve the water quality and erosion issues. The greenway along Malletts Creek includes a spur from Gallup Park through the South Pond Nature Area, Huron Parkway Park, and Malletts Creek Park along Huron Parkway to provide both wildlife and pedestrian corridors. A better connection from Packard at Malletts Creek to Redbud Park and Scheffler Park could be provided through acquisitions and public access easements. A parallel connection through County Farm Park, Buhr Park, and Brown Park would provide alternative trail corridors. Tying in the future Swift Run Park with the corridor would provide connection opportunities further east to the Scarlett Mitchell Nature Area. Exploring opportunities to improve the pedestrian and non-motorized trail between South Park and Lillie Park in Pittsfield Township would provide a connection with the trails to the Pittsfield Preserve and Rolling Hills Park outside the City.
- West spur connecting Bandemer Park to Traver Creek at Leslie Park. This spur would follow the now-abandoned Huron Parkway right-of-way connecting the Huron River at Bandemer Park with Leslie Park. This is already a heavily used corridor by pedestrians and mountain bicyclists and would provide the connection with the Huron River greenway. Land needs to be acquired to complete the trail both to the river as well as continuing north. At Leslie Park there is a three-way split. The north trail would follow Traver Creek to Olson Park through the existing public path easement on the Food Gatherers property. A spur further north is desired to connect the natural areas adjacent to proposed developments along Pontiac Trail. The south trail needs an improved connection between Leslie Park and the trail along Plymouth Road to the Traver Creek trail crossing Broadway to Island Park. This entire section should be formalized as an identifiable park space with signage, wayfinding, and clearly marked trails.
- Northeast spur from Leslie Park along Traver Creek would extend through portions of Foxfire South, Placid Way, and Foxfire East Parks, along and across Nixon Road to the pond east of Nixon, and on to Oakwoods and Sugarbush Parks.
- Dolph Nature Area and Honey Creek. Connecting Third Sister Lake in the University of Michigan's Saginaw Forest to Dolph Nature Area has been a long-term goal.

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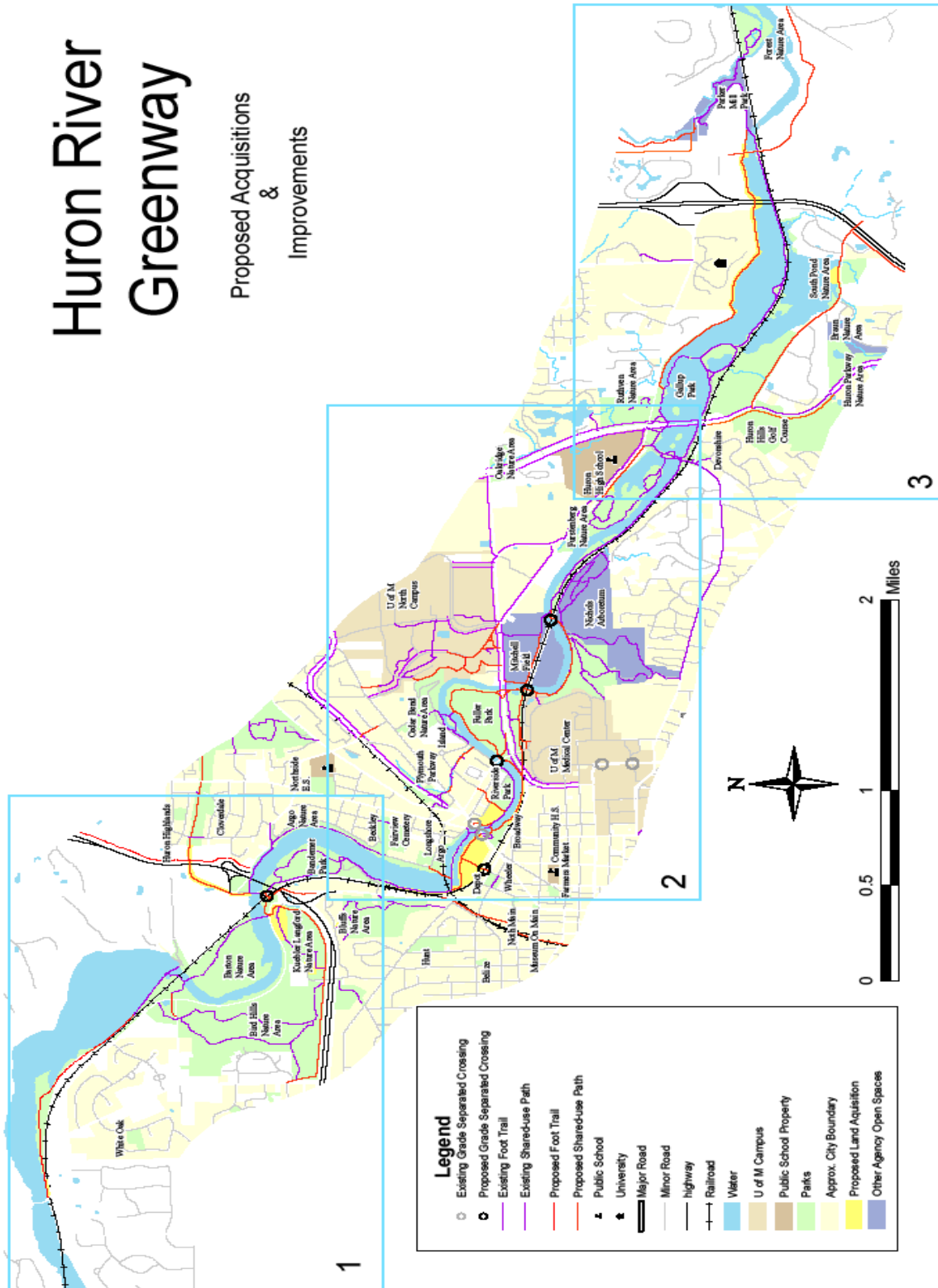
Making this connection would add significantly to the greenway that runs between Dolph Park at Wagner Road to Liberty Road through Lakewood Woods and along the Drain Commissioner's Honey Creek Pond.

- Millers Creek and Swift Run Creek have no trail improvements planned at this point; however, adding to the public corridor along these tributaries will be sought as land is developed in these areas. A Restoration Plan for the Millers Creek watershed was completed in April of 2004. The mission is "to establish and implement socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable watershed management standards and practices that will improve the quality of the Millers Creek Watershed." Goals include improving recreational opportunities in and around the creek.

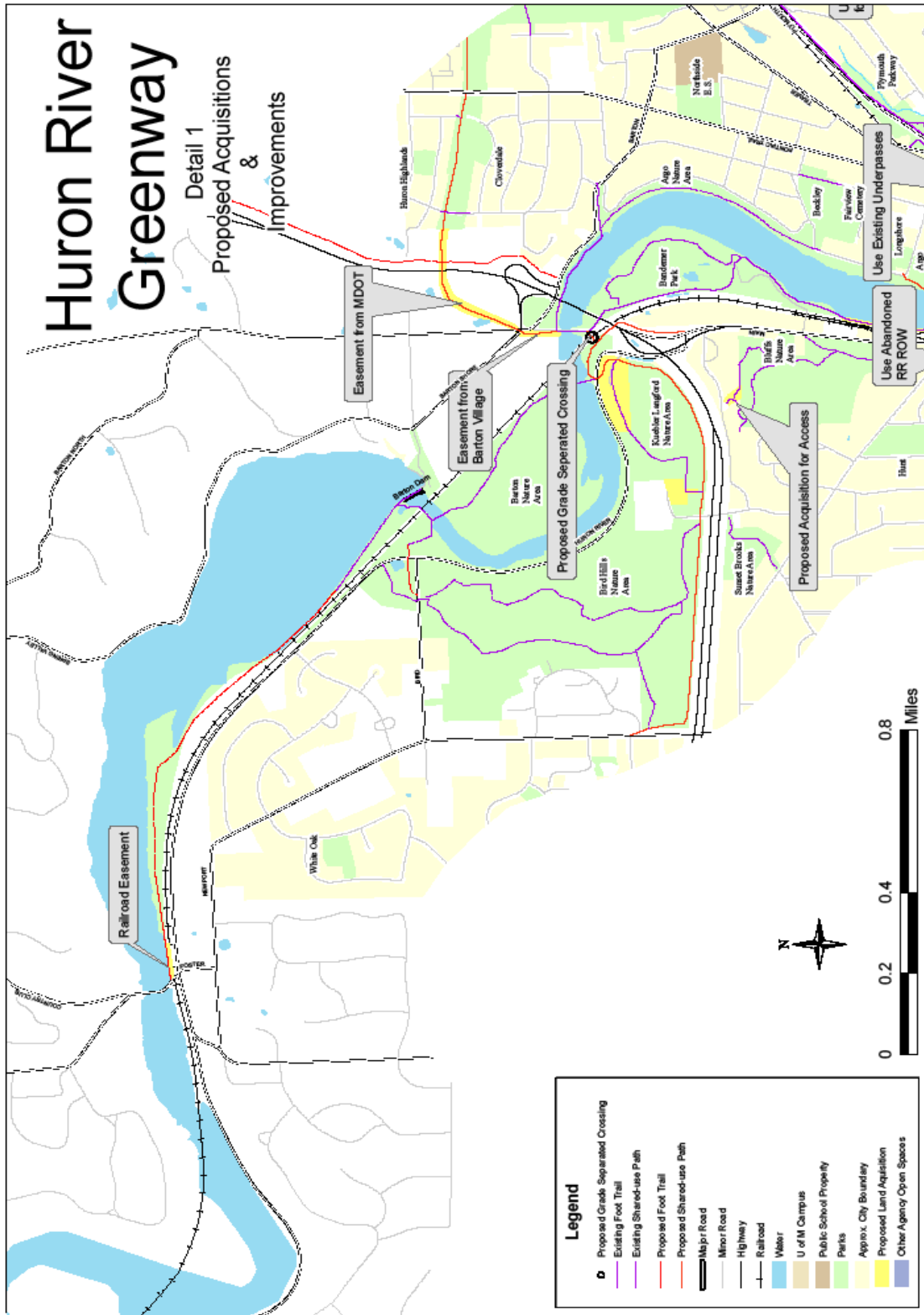
The following maps illustrate the pathway connections that are envisioned to complete the Border to Border Trail, as well as to connect greenways throughout the City.

# Huron River Greenway

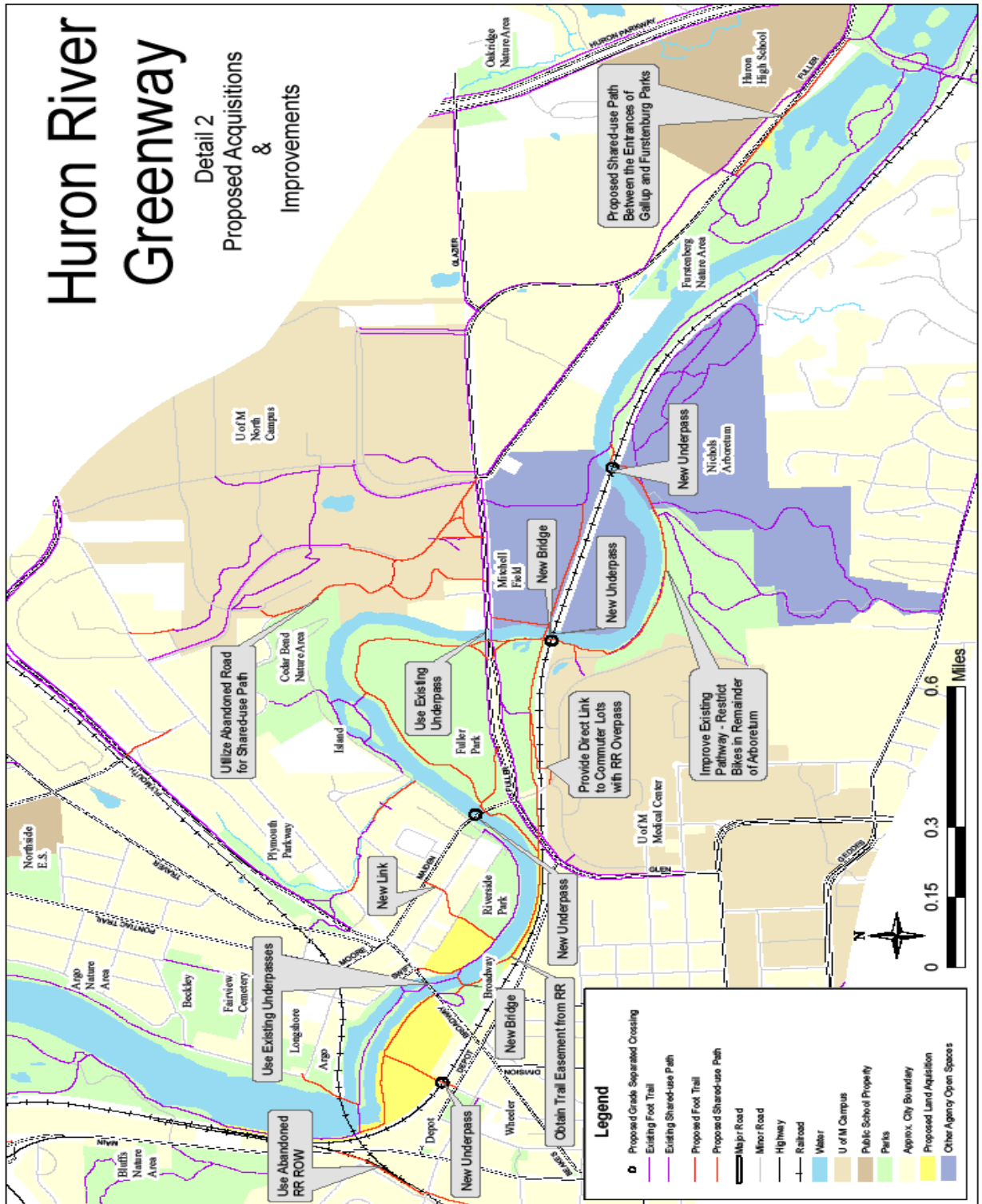
Proposed Acquisitions  
&  
Improvements



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