



The Allen Creek Greenway ~

Findings and Recommendations



Allen Creek outlet to the Huron River

Allen Creek Greenway Task Force
Ann Arbor, Michigan

16 March 2007

Findings and Recommendations

**A
Report
by**

**Allen Creek Greenway
Task Force**



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Section 1. Introduction



Help shape the Allen Creek Greenway

A Lecture Series

Joan Nassauer
Professor, School of Natural Resources and Environment

Ecological and Community Benefits of Greenways

Tuesday, **April 11, 7pm**
Detroit Edison Center Ground Floor Community Room (southeast corner of Main and William)
Prof. Nassauer specializes in landscape ecology, landscape perception, design and planning, watershed planning and management.

Tom Woiwode
Director, The Greenways Initiative
Community Foundation for Southwestern Michigan

Successful Greenways in Southeastern Michigan

Tuesday, **April 25, 7pm**
Location TBA

The Greenways Initiative is a five-year project that has helped communities create and expand greenways in seven counties in Southeastern Michigan.

Public Workshops

1A Saturday, April 22; 8:30 am to Noon
1B Saturday, April 29; 8:30 am to Noon
2nd Floor Ballroom, Courthouse Square
100 S. 4th Ave. at E. Huron



This advertisement was paid for by the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority in demonstration of their support for alternative transportation and an Allen Creek Greenway

Help shape the Allen Creek Greenway

Community Events

Public Workshop 1A

The Big Picture: Allen Creek Greenway in Context

Saturday, **April 22, 8:30 am to Noon**
2nd Floor Ballroom, Courthouse Square
100 S. 4th Ave. at E. Huron

Tom Woiwode
Director, The Greenways Initiative
Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan

Successful Greenways in Southeastern Michigan

Tuesday, **April 25, 7pm**
Cobblestone Farm Barn, 2nd Floor
2781 Packard St.

The Greenways Initiative is a five-year project that has helped communities create and expand greenways in seven counties in Southeastern Michigan.

Public Workshop 1B

A Closer Look: Site Specific Proposals for the City's Parcels

Saturday, **April 29, 8:30 am to Noon**
2nd Floor Ballroom, Courthouse Square
100 S. 4th Ave. at E. Huron



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**Public Workshop 1B
A Closer Look:
Site Specific
Potentials for the
City's Parcels**

Saturday, April 29, 2006

AGENDA

- 8:30 a.m. Registration and information displays
- 9 a.m. Presentation
- 10 a.m. Break
- 10:15 a.m. Facilitated brainstorming and discussion of three city-owned sites
- 11:55 a.m. Adjournment

OBJECTIVE: To consult the public on the potential of the Greenway and specifically on how to incorporate the city-owned properties that are a part of its path.

This workshop was funded by the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority in demonstration of its support for alternative transportation and an Allen Creek Greenway



Help shape the Allen Creek Greenway

**Presentation and Public Comment
The Greenway to Date ~
City Sites and Connections**

6:30 pm
Wednesday
August 2
2nd Floor Ballroom, Courthouse Square
100 S. 4th Ave. at E. Huron

Agenda

- 6:30 pm Registration and information displays
- 6:45 pm Presentation
- 7:45 pm Q & A
- 8:00 pm Public comment
- 9:30 pm Adjournment

OBJECTIVE: To hear reactions from the public on the evolution of the Greenway to date. More specifically, to discuss preliminary proposals for the treatment of city-owned properties in the Allen Creek valley and the connections between them.

For more information:
www.a2gov.org/greenway
and
ACGreenway@ci.ann-arbor.mi.us



This advertisement was paid for by the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority in demonstration of its support for alternative transportation and an Allen Creek Greenway

Section 1: Introduction

This report and its supporting documentation are products of an effort, guided by the Allen Creek Greenway Task Force (ACGTF), to substantiate the potential for an Allen Creek Greenway. The idea of an open space and pathway generally following the Allen Creek storm drain has been discussed for decades. The topic's presence in the City's planning documents can be traced back to the 1981 *Plan for Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces*.

The pattern of community events and City studies over the last few years involving urban development in general, and potential impacts on the downtown in particular, include the Downtown Residential Density Task Force (citizen volunteers, Sept. 2004) and the Recommended Policy Framework for Downtown Ann Arbor (Calthorpe Associates, Dec. 2005). These studies and supportive citizen advocacy helped lead to City Council action establishing this task force to consider the Allen Creek valley as a greenway. Council's enabling Resolution, R-285-6-05, can be found on page 6 of this Introduction.

Work of the Task Force

Since its beginnings in September of 2005, the ACGTF has been gathering data in the attempt to define and frame key factors to consider; evolve options for the three City-owned sites and the connections between them; seek comment from the Ann Arbor community; and pursue consensus within the Task Force so as to present recommendations consistent with Council's enabling resolution. This report summarizes these activities and the process leading to the Task Force's findings.

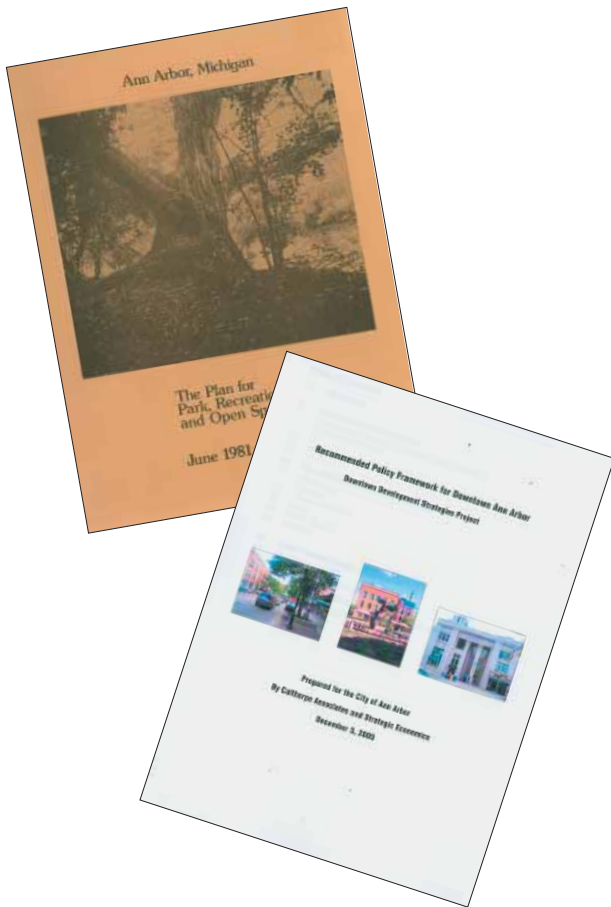
As a final report to Council and the community, it is intended to accomplish two primary purposes:

1. **objectively present key considerations, and,**
2. **offer recommendations and options based on clearly defined priorities.**

The Task Force reached consensus on several aspects of establishing a greenway in the Allen Creek valley.

First, and most significant, is agreement that there can and should be an Allen Creek Greenway, and that, at a minimum, it should occupy the floodway portion of the City's sites in the Creek's floodplain.

Second, the Task Force authored a Vision, Definition and 12 Planning Principles to help guide community discussion.



Three City sites

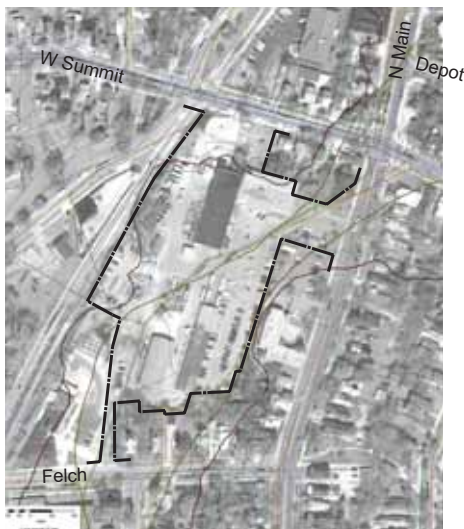




Site #1 First and William



Site #2 415 W. Washington



Site #3 721 N. Main

Third, the community should take a long term view toward continuing to refine the vision along with short term actions to begin implementation.

The Task Force also reached consensus about how to treat one of the three sites listed below that the City owns along the route of the Greenway. The three sites are:

- **First and William Streets** parking lot, a Greenway garden recommendation
- **415 West Washington** City maintenance yard, with alternatives A, B & C
- **721 North Main** City maintenance yard, with alternatives A & B

Findings and Recommendations

This report is presented in six sections to facilitate use of its content:

1. **Introduction** ~ the background and approach to this study
2. **Context** ~ a discussion of both area-wide and site specific considerations
3. **Recommendations** ~ a description of possibilities
4. **Implementation** ~ next steps and conclusions
5. **Appendix** ~ information related to the findings
6. **Supplemental appendix** ~ additional background and general information.

As suggested above, the Task Force has attempted to collect, consider and communicate findings in 2 categories: key factors, which tend to be objective by their nature; and, recommendations, which are based on the interpretation of facts and tend toward opinion.

A note of appreciation is offered to City staff who kept ACGTF members informed as our discussions proceeded to evaluate and prioritize data. We wish to thank Council for giving us the opportunity to work together, and to thank the citizenry who attended regular meetings, lectures and the 3 workshops, who sent email, and who care so deeply about this community.

Lastly, as a City Task Force, the focus by necessity has been on existing City or other publicly owned property, including streets, sidewalks and easements. While we are aware of the implications of this study on adjacent privately owned land, that specific discussion must be left for others as part of next steps.

City Council Resolution, 15 August 2005

R-258-6-05

D-8

RESOLUTION CREATING A TASK FORCE TO PLAN A NEW GREENWAY

Whereas, The City of Ann Arbor has expended considerable resources over a period of years in the creation of a beautiful and scenic Greenway along the Huron River that is used yearly by thousands of walkers and cyclists;

Whereas, The Huron River Greenway will extend "border to border" across the City along the river and link up to riverfront parks and other greenways that will stretch out beyond the City limits connecting to still more greenways;

Whereas, This great Huron River Greenway is nearing completion and will require further staff work and investment and must remain a priority even as plans are developed for the new Greenway addition;

Whereas, The opportunity and desire exists to create yet another Greenway along the Ann Arbor Railroad tracks that will connect to and complement the Huron River Greenway and allow still more City residents to enjoy the benefits of walking and cycling on green pathways;

Whereas, This new Greenway could place a pathway along the western edge of Downtown and beyond to the South and to the North to the Huron River Greenway;

Whereas, If this new addition to the Greenway system of Ann Arbor is to become a reality, work needs to begin soon, the Ann Arbor Railroad needs to be further engaged in conversation with the goal of obtaining an easement or easements, and grant funds need to be pursued;

Whereas, The path of this new Greenway could intersect with three City owned parcels: the current City Garages at 415 W. Washington and 721 N. Main, and the City owned surface parking lot at First and William;

Whereas, Any Greenway path shall include the possibility for future rail transit use;

Whereas, The City is building a new maintenance facility and plans to vacate all or some of the City owned land at 415 W. Washington and 721 N. Main when garage operations are moved to the new site;

Whereas, The First and William site will be needed for parking for at least three years as new parking is developed;

Whereas, A task force made up of City residents, residents who serve on City boards, and City Council, will be needed to work with City Staff to develop a recommendation to City Council for the development of the new Greenway that will complement and connect to the existing Huron River Greenway;

D-8

Whereas, A planning effort for the downtown area is underway and the City has engaged Calthorpe Associates to work with residents, City Staff, the Downtown Planning Steering Committee, the Planning Commission, the Downtown Development Association and City Council; and

RESOLVED, The City Administrator shall begin substantive discussions with the Ann Arbor Railway to gain their cooperation in the creation of a Greenway along the Railroad Right of Way;

RESOLVED, That City Council will, no later than September 6, 2005, appoint a nine member task force that will serve until September 30, 2006, to work with City Staff and others involved in the Downtown planning process to develop a recommendation for a new Greenway that will follow roughly along the Ann Arbor Railroad Right of Way to the west of Downtown and connect with the existing Huron River Greenway;

RESOLVED, The New Greenway Task Force will include one member of the Parks Advisory Commission, one member of the Planning Commission, one member of the Downtown Development Association, one member of City Council and other City Residents.

RESOLVED, The New Greenway Task Force will develop a preliminary recommendation to be delivered to the Downtown Planning Steering Committee no later than November 1, 2005, and a final recommendation to be delivered to the Planning Commission, The Parks Advisory Commission and City Council no later than October 1, 2006. To assist the Task Force in making its recommendations, it shall conduct a series of public workshops, and consult with independent design, parks, and watershed professionals, in addition to its work with City Parks and Planning Staff and Commissions;

RESOLVED, That the area of the City properties at 415 W. Washington and 721 N. Main within the floodway will be included in the new Greenway. The remaining portion of these sites will be reserved for mixed use, which could include additional park or Greenway area, space for non profit organizations, art, housing, and/or commercial entities; and

RESOLVED, The New Greenway Task Force will include in its final report a recommendation for the eventual use of the City owned property at First and William that is currently used as a surface parking lot.

Sponsored by: Mayor Hieftje and Council Members Johnson, Easthope, Woods, Greden, Teall, Lowenstein and Carlberg

As Amended August 15, 2005

APPROVED BY ANN ARBOR CITY COUNCIL

August 15, 2005

CITY CLERK ANN ARBOR, MI

Section 2. **Context**



721 N. Main

The three City sites seen from the Southwest



415 W. Washington

First and William

Section 2. **Context**

The process of collecting, understanding, evaluating and using data was key to reaching closure for the Task Force's report. Determining what was available was the initial step; judging its relevance was the next step. Data that was out of date, incomplete or unavailable soon surfaced. Contemplating the role and significance of missing information was an exercise in moving forward with care; resolving how to use mixed levels of data was critical to issuing this report with clarity and transparency.

The time frame given the Task Force to provide recommendations required use of currently available specific data and of the conceptual level implications of data not yet available. Uneven information could not be treated as an inhibitor to decision-making; it was but another factor to evaluate.

Considerations

The information that follows has been gathered into categories to objectively present key factors both individually and as one item might influence the others. Findings are a synopsis of each subject covered. More complete documentation of data can be found in the attached Appendix and Supplemental Appendix.

Categories used to consider and frame recommendations for the Greenway in the Allen Creek valley include:

- City setting
- A brief history of Allen Creek
- On-going policy efforts
- The valley as City landscape
- The valley as Greenway
- The floodplain and water management
- Open space and recreation
- Safety
- Economic impacts
- Changes in time

City Setting

The role of a downtown today is different from that of the past. Downtown was the place for a community's economic, social, cultural, educational and recreational activities. Post World War II's automobile use and new development patterns changed the very nature of urban life in the United States by spreading and diversifying the locations where people could live, and where goods and services could be found. Today, use of the "electronic highway" (the internet) is changing social, cultural and economic patterns once again.



Activity along Huron Street, c. 1908



A summer's eve on Main Street, c. 1990



Allen Creek's industrial past, c. 1895

Ann Arbor's center has evolved, too, and remains a place where people work, go to school, play and, to a lesser degree, live and shop. Efforts are underway to increase Central Business District (CBD) activity by changing zoning to encourage a more residential downtown. Adjacent residential neighborhoods, several with historic district designations, also contribute to the numbers of people living within easy walking/biking distance of downtown.

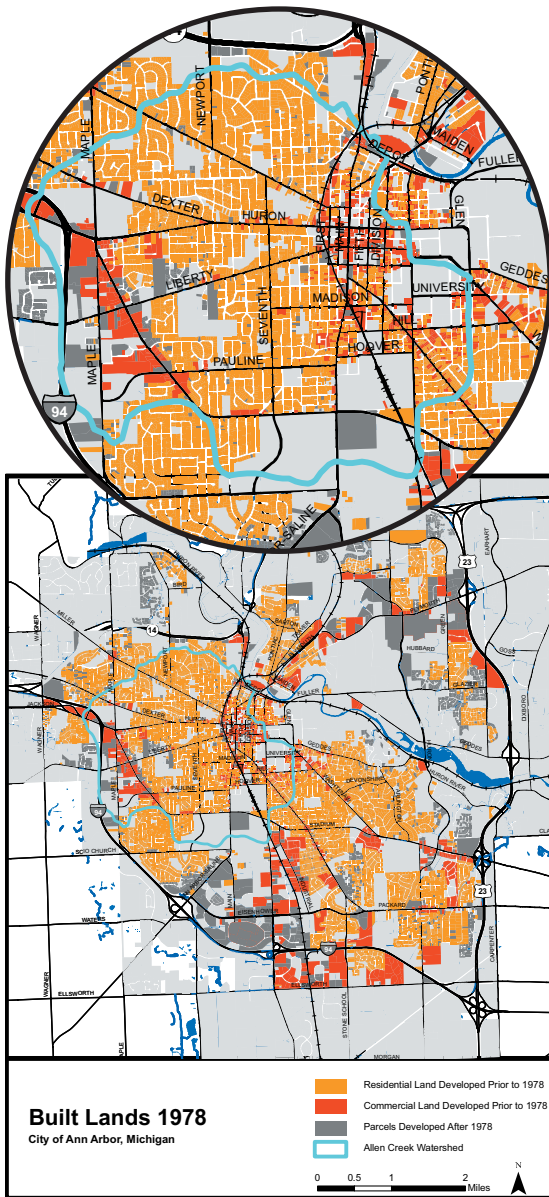
The experiences one has in and adjacent to our downtown are derived from the sum total of its interior and exterior spaces, and its various venues for events and activities. Downtown is also the product of human actions over time. Its character evolves from the combination of daytime and nighttime, weekday and weekend, academic season (grades K-12 and The University's calendar), the natural cycle of spring-summer-fall-winter seasons, and the cultural calendar including University Musical Society, Ann Arbor Symphony, Summer Festival, the Art Fairs, parades, etc. Audiences for this rich and eclectic menu vary as much as the events themselves.

At the same time, urban and built amenities are incomplete without a complementary natural infrastructure that includes, but can go beyond, a typical suburban park. The Huron River, while not distant in miles, is outside the typical perception of Ann Arbor's downtown. The Allen Creek Greenway can help to change that current reality.

A Brief History of Allen Creek

Named in 1824 after one of Ann Arbor's founders, John Allen, Allen Creek helped form the City's identity. Settlements were built along the creek to take advantage of a ready source of water. As the 19th century progressed, industries that required water located there, too: a flour mill, tanneries, a foundry, and breweries, among others. The flat, floodplain topography of the valley, and the industries within it, led the Ann Arbor Railroad in 1878 to lay its tracks parallel to the creek. By century's end, the pastoral nature of the lower Allen Creek valley had changed to an industrial one, and the water quality and ecosystem of the creek diminished.

Residential development in the late 19th century immediately to the west of the main branch resulted in the continuing increase of impervious surface in the creek's catchment area. That area is now the historic neighborhood known as the Old West Side. By the early 1920's, the creek's water quality was such that property owners demanded the City put the creek into a storm sewer.



The main stretch of the creek was piped in 1926, and the lower segments of the main branches shortly thereafter. As development continued, so did the amount and rate of runoff entering the drain and, subsequently, the Huron River. Major flooding events occurred in 1947 and 1968.

The City enacted its first rainwater management ordinance in 1978. Even though the creekshed was largely developed by then, the high rate of runoff from pre-ordinance, undetained areas continued to damage the creek’s stream-channels, which occasioned further piping such as the Liberty-Glendale project in 1997. City records indicate that, of the National Flood Insurance Program claims (NFIP) filed City-wide between 1988 and 2001, 100% were in the Allen Creek watershed and within a quarter mile of its floodplain. A total of 18 public claims were processed in those 21 years, with a value/payout of \$104,000, or \$5,778 per claim. There is not a corresponding public record of private insurance claims or other unreported damages.

While more recent City projects such as Liberty Street and Stadium Boulevard reconstructions have included rainwater management components, much remains to be accomplished.

On-Going Policy Efforts

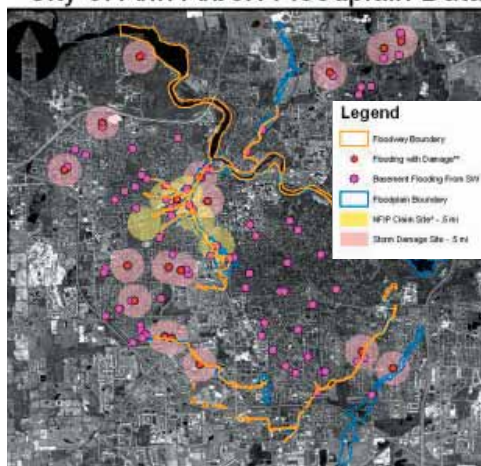
Two policy areas that affect the health and disposition of the Allen Creek watershed are:

1. rainwater, floodplain and hazard mitigation policies, and
2. planning, zoning and development policies.

The City has been grappling with the issue of rainwater and flood hazard management for many years. An annotated history of the past ten years’ efforts, some of which are specific to Allen Creek, is included in the Appendix. Recent activity will soon result in the release of new Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplain maps and the drafting of a Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan. A new Request for Services, issued by the Office of the Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner (Allen Creek storm sewer is a County drain), will begin the process of dynamic modeling in the Allen Creek drain. Planning Commission is working on a new comprehensive floodplain policy as the City continues to contemplate increased density in the downtown.

The City has been engaged in conversations about increasing downtown density through development as a way to foster a lively and stimulating city center and increase the tax base.

City of Ann Arbor: Floodplain Data



Created by: M. Paul Lippert
Incremental Collaborative Services
for The City of Ann Arbor, March, 2005.



Allen Creek's industrial past

The balance between increasing development and open space was an issue raised often in the campaign for the greenbelt millage and the Calthorpe study's public workshops.

The opportunity exists for the City and County (the latter with its authority over the storm drain) to consider policy on floodplain and rainwater management, and for the City to address policies guiding development in the downtown and close-in neighborhoods at the same time. Within this context, the Allen Creek Greenway should be viewed as the linchpin between considerations of increased core density and floodplain planning policy.

The Valley as City Landscape

Allen Creek was infrastructure for 19th century Ann Arbor. Even with the creek underground for decades, the valley's significance remains.

The bottom of the valley, at this moment in time, is largely a "keep out" or "pass by" zone. Its personality is witness to the Ann Arbor Railroad's safety and no trespass rules; other adjacent private mixed use property; and limited access at the 415 W. Washington and 721 N. Main municipal yards, Fingerle Lumber storage yards and U-M's property. Some of the area's appearance can be judged unsightly and unfriendly.

The valley also links a variety of distinctive neighborhoods, districts and features. Its south end is rooted in the University's golf course and athletic campus, and running successively North through the Lower Burns Park and Pioneer High/Allmendinger neighborhoods, the Downtown, the Old West Side (OWS), the North Central Property Owners Association (NCPOA), and the Spring-Brooks-Fountain neighborhood where it connects to the City's Huron River Greenway and the County's Border-to-Border Trail. The floodplain runs alongside or near the commercial areas at South State and South Industrial, the Downtown, Kerrytown, and the North and South Main mixed-use corridors.

The Valley as Greenway

Communities across the country are working to develop greenways with multi-use trails serving both recreation and commuter needs. Trails can play a vital role in improving communities offering an innovative means of revitalizing urban areas, reusing degraded lands, and balancing density with



AARR tracks crossing city streets

multi-purpose open space. The concept of greenways evolved as a form of adaptive environmental re-use and is becoming a key component of urban infrastructure. As a growing body of literature demonstrates, urban greenways respond to a number of community values and can fulfill a variety of objectives ranging from rainwater management, improved water quality, aquifer protection, and habitat preservation to non-motorized transportation, open space, and economic development.

In Ann Arbor, the idea of a greenway following Allen Creek goes back to the 1981 Plans for Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces (PROS), and again had a prominent place in the 1988 Downtown Plan. Each successive PROS Plan has included the goal of an Allen Creek Greenway. In March 2005, the Ann Arbor Park Advisory Commission passed a resolution recommending that City Council dedicate the floodway portions of the three publicly owned parcels in the Allen Creek valley as anchor parks in the Greenway. The resolution also called for active public input into determining appropriate community uses for the flood fringe portions of the parcels.

Later in 2005, several hundred citizens participated in three public workshops conducted by Peter Calthorp & Associates to solicit public input in planning the future of downtown. At these workshops, citizens expressed a strong desire for a Greenway along the Allen Creek valley at the western edge of downtown. This, along with continued citizen-initiated efforts, became part of the impetus for Council to establish the Allen Creek Greenway Task Force to study the possibilities for an Allen Creek Greenway.

The Task Force's consensus recommendation is in support of the floodway portion of the floodplain on the three City-owned sites becoming the Greenway. The question remaining for Council and the community to consider is the extent to which the Greenway's open spaces might utilize additional portions of the soon-to-be-vacated City-owned maintenance yards. Discussion of this aspect of the recommended Allen Creek Greenway, and its longer term future, will need to include the emerging presence of the Allen Creek Greenway Conservancy, and the constraints and opportunities of City government.



City-owned parcels in the Allen Creek valley

Our Watershed

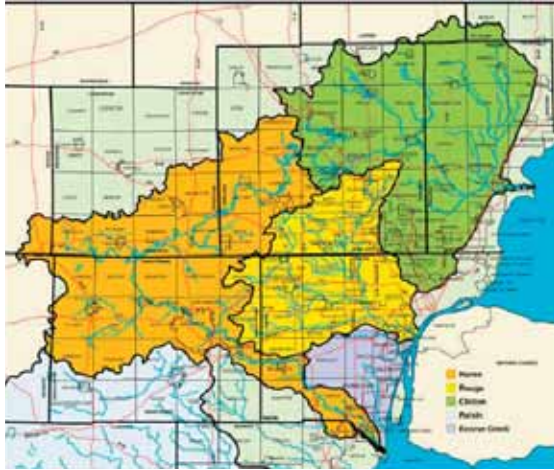


Image Credit: City of Ann Arbor

Our Sub-Watershed



Image Credit: City of Ann Arbor

Floodplain Land Use, 2005

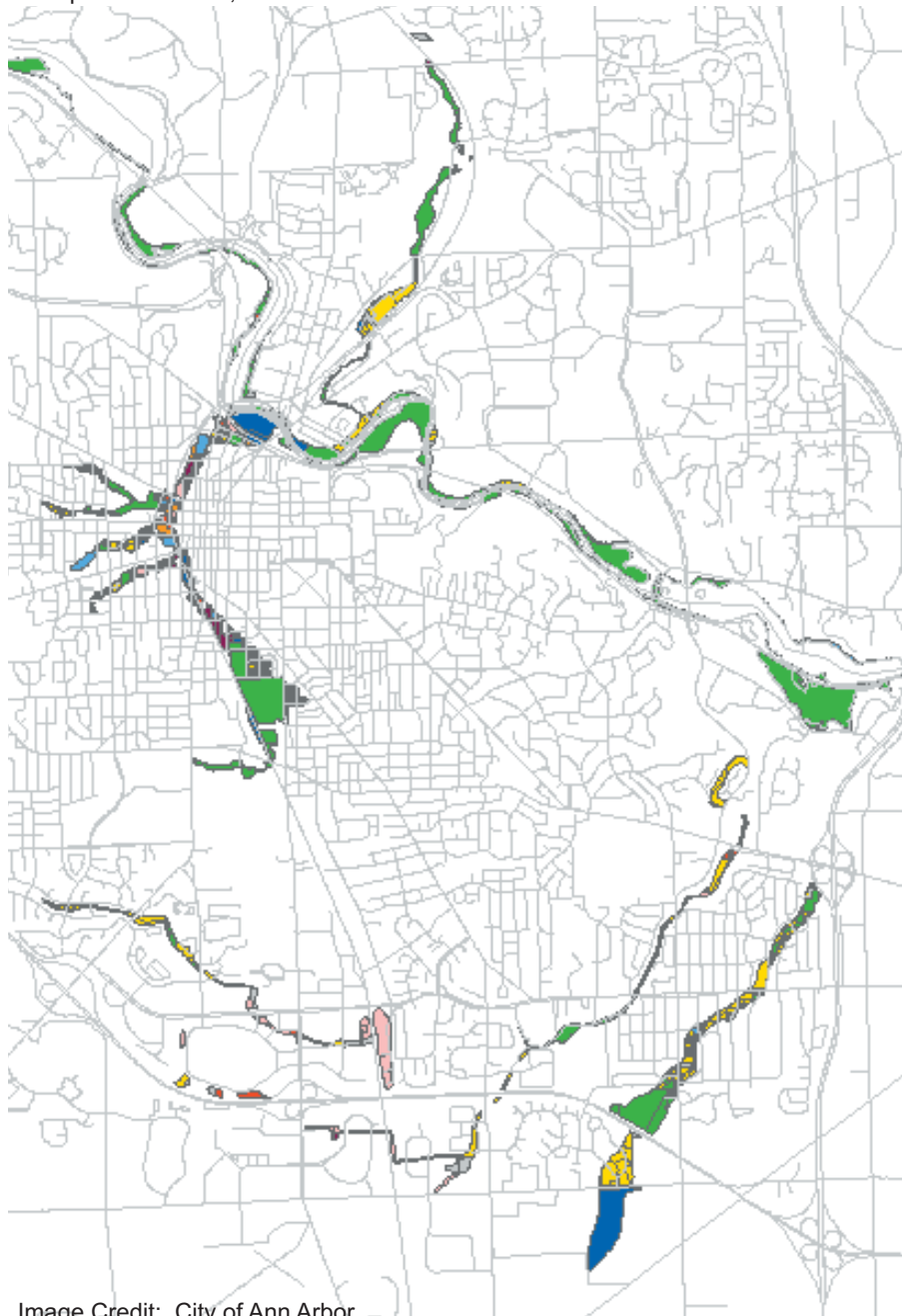
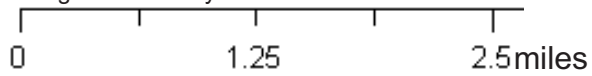
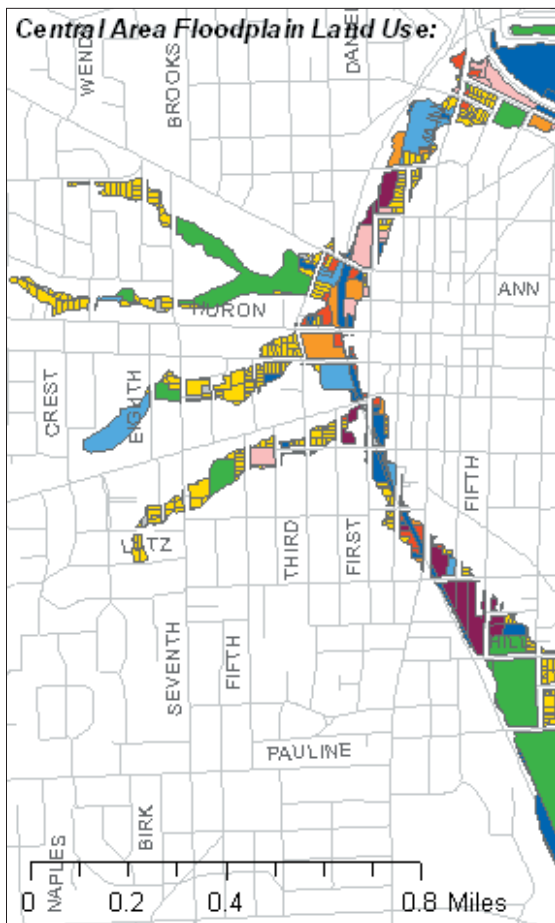


Image Credit: City of Ann Arbor



By Parcels:	1409 total
	879 are residential
By Area:	1195 acres
	165 acres of residential



Legend

Floodplain Land Use

	Residential
	Office
	Commercial
	Industrial
	Trans-Com-Utility
	Public - Semi Pub
	Recreational
	Vacant
	Mixed Use
	Roads

The Floodplain and Water Management

The combination of rainwater and runoff are what many in the community believe to be a major consideration in determining the form and substance of the Greenway. The topic is also one with uneven levels of existing information.

The Task Force engaged this discussion in two ways:

- a conceptual, big picture approach to the role and use of a floodplain; and,
- a more specific consideration of rules and regulations governing how one is permitted to use a floodplain.

In other words, community acceptance of existing laws enabling an owner to either develop new buildings or to rehab and re-use existing buildings in a floodplain is a different policy from no longer allowing such development to occur. The community needs to engage in this discussion and determine its floodplain policy consistent with core values, both public and private.

Existing laws and requirements governing development within FEMA floodplain boundaries are:

1. General Criteria

- Construction projects within the Allen Creek Drain's 60' wide easement require a permit from the Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner. Architectural construction within the easement is typically not allowed.
- Construction projects within the floodplain require a permit from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ).
- Federal, State, County and City all require no net loss of flood storage capacity, i.e., no fill without compensatory dredging.
- Flood flow may not be obstructed in a manner that causes a rise in flood elevations at the property line.

2. Criteria within a Floodway

- State law prohibits new or expanded residential uses within a floodway.
- The lowest floor of any new non-residential must be one foot above the 100-year flood elevation.

3. Criteria within a Flood Fringe

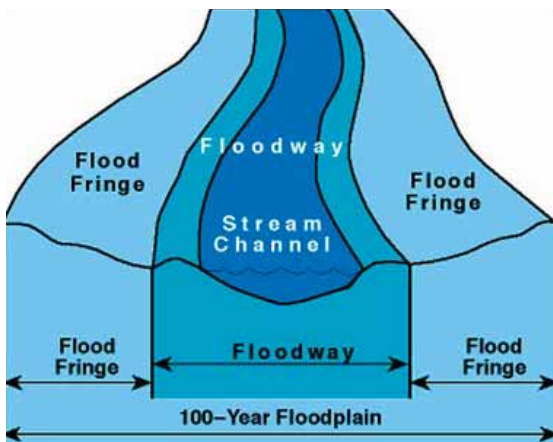
- The lowest floor of any new residential or non-residential must be one foot above the 100-year flood elevation.

4. Criteria for Rehabbing Existing Buildings

- If renovation of a residential building within a floodplain exceeds 50% of the value of the structure, the first floor of the building must be elevated to one foot above the 100 year elevation.
- If the building will be non-residential, and renovation exceeds 50% of the value, it can either be elevated to one foot above the 100 year flood elevation or flood proofed.
- If the building footprint is not going to be increased, and the added value will be less than 50% of the value of the building, no floodplain requirement exists.

5. Criteria for Historic Properties

- Modifications to historic properties that do not increase the building footprint are exempt from floodplain requirements in the state building code.



A floodplain is the horizontal dimension equal to the floodway plus the flood fringe, and the vertical dimension, or topographic elevation, of the 100 year storm event.

The floodway is the land area adjacent to a channel that carries and discharges the base flood flow of a stream or river.

The flood fringe is the dimension between the floodway limit and the 100 year floodplain line. This location, when under consideration by the Task Force, is where alternate, City-owned site-specific recommendations emerge in response to different interpretations and priorities. A discussion beyond the direct role of the Task Force, the status of all 6 creeks' floodplains within the City is a central component of the community's continuing floodplain policy conversations.

The Allen Creek **floodplain maps** are outdated, and new draft maps will soon be available. It's likely that the location of the floodway and 100 year floodplain lines will change. The concept and principles stating that, at a minimum, the Greenway will occupy the floodway portion of the floodplain remains valid regardless of the actual location of that line.

The topic of **rainwater management** and treatment of runoff is directly related to the floodplain. The three City sites are located in the lower third of the Allen Creek watershed. The middle and upper reaches of a watershed are where the most benefit is gained by detaining runoff; lower reach runoff should enter the receiving water body (in this case, the Huron River) sooner



7/23/99 Depot Street

than later thereby spreading the impact of concentrated runoff at lower flow rates and over a longer period of time. In effect, detaining large amounts of runoff on these three City sites as part of a greenway is not recommended for reasons of location in the watershed, and such storage could negatively impact the location of floodplain limit lines and impede the flow of flood water through these sites.

Surface flooding begins along the Allen Creek storm drain at approximately a 1.5 year storm event, which is equal to the “bankfull storm event” as defined by the Office of the Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner, or approximately 2.3 inches of rain in a 24-hour period. Storing volumes of water beyond the bankfull event on the three City sites could interfere with flooding patterns and is not recommended by City staff. Controlling the bankfull storm event for the runoff from each site would provide water quality benefits without significantly exacerbating flooding.

In all instances, and in any location within a watershed, rainwater management goals, in order, are:

1. **reduction in runoff**
2. **water quality best management practices**
3. **detention/retention.**

The three City sites are appropriate locations to implement measures to decrease runoff and improve water quality onsite and, if possible, from the adjacent landscape.

Recreation ~ Public Open Space

Allen Creek runs along the western edge of the approximately 270 acre Central Business District (CBD). The CBD is roughly contiguous with the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) district. Of the total DDA area, 80 acres are public rights-of-way. The area of the two City-owned parcels in the CBD is 3.5 acres, or about 0.2% of the non-right-of-way land area of the DDA district. The 5.1 acre N. Main site is outside the DDA boundary.

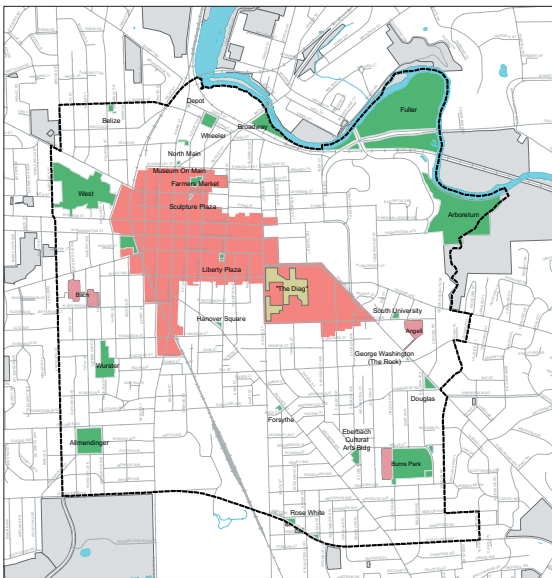
The CBD contains various types of open space. The University of Michigan Central Campus “diag” and its adjoining lawns, courtyards, gardens and plazas is one example. Another is in the heart of the downtown: the Dean Promenade on Main Street, which, with its broad sidewalks, streetscape, and restaurants, provides a delightful urban experience. These dining and socializing sidewalk activities occur in other locations including Liberty, Washington and State, and on private property where building setbacks allow.



Campus at South State & North University



Magic Carpet Mornings at Liberty Plaza



Legend

- Planning Area Boundary
- +— Railroads
- Highway
- Surface Street
- Central Business District
- Rivers, Lakes & Streams
- Ann Arbor City Parks
- Ann Arbor Public Schools
- Ann Arbor Township
- Pittsfield Township
- University of Michigan
- Wash County Drain Commission
- Washtenaw County

Park System Properties in and near the CBD

There are four properties within the CBD that are urban City parks. These include Liberty Plaza (0.26 acre), Sculpture Plaza (0.09 acre), the Farmers Market (1.06 acres), and the historic Kempf House (0.13 acre).

Several neighborhood parks lie in areas adjacent to the CBD: North Main Park (0.47 acre), Wheeler Park (1.93 acres) and West Park (22.93 acres), which function as neighborhood parks with play areas.

The Parks Advisory Commission and staff, in planning parks, recreational amenities, and open spaces to be incorporated in the City’s public park system, considers the CBD and the central neighborhoods surrounding it as the Central Planning Area. Its boundaries are Stadium Boulevard, Seventh Street and Summit Street and the Huron River. According to the 2006 PROS Plan, this 1552 acre area contains the highest density and lowest per capita amount of public park and open space in the City.

Planning Area	% Park Acres	Park Acreage/ 1000 persons	% Neighborhood Park Acres	Neighborhood Parkland/ 1000 persons
Central	7.90	4.62	18.75	1.66
Northeast	43.00	26.16	27.08	2.60
South	17.00	11.91	32.64	2.60
West	32.10	21.78	21.53	2.89
CBD	1.54	0.57		

Within the 270 acre CBD, the ratio of park and open space to people is lowest at 0.57. The addition of new residential units within the CBD will decrease this ratio further. Whether or not one adopts the view that standards for the amount of park and open space in the CBD should differ from those for residential neighborhoods, the data is part of the information to consider as possibly influencing the Greenway’s final form.

Other recreational opportunities

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 60% of our population is not getting enough physical activity. The City of Ann Arbor Non-Motorized Transportation Plan recommends bike routes in the downtown and throughout the City, which would provide good access to the Allen Creek Greenway from different parts of the City. There is great interest in increasing walking and biking opportunities; the Greenway would provide both a destination and a path for those activities.

Safety

In the public space of urban parks and greenways, personal security, both actual and perceived, is critical to users. Women, the elderly, children, and people with disabilities often feel particularly vulnerable in public spaces that evince any degree of risk or perceived risk.

While tension can exist between public use and what is best for environment, the two goals – environmental integrity and public use – can coexist. The relevant literature indicates that the spatial design of parks, levels of use, programming, lighting, maintenance, and enforcement contribute to the safety of urban parks. There is a growing body of environment-behavior research that provides useful principles for planning and designing greenways that are both “green” and safe. These principles include: visibility of others, visibility by others, choice and control, solitude without isolation, and environmental awareness and legibility. Design and management considerations include lighting, signs and maps, vegetation management strategies to allow clear sightlines along trails and into adjacent destinations, pathway options and a variety of entrances and exits, policing by City and neighborhood groups, and the location of activity generators.



The mixing of track, street and sidewalk

It is well documented that use of public space tends to lead to more use. A recurring theme in the literature on safety is that increased levels of use contribute to enhanced perceptions of safety in parks. Opportunities to encourage use should be fostered, since activities that draw people are perhaps more important than physical design in enhancing real and perceived safety. The perception of risk must be avoided, since a perceived lack of safety results in decreased use, which in turn can lead to actual risk.

Economic Impacts ~ Pressures on General Fund

Ann Arbor, like most Michigan cities, is experiencing financial pressures. The State of Michigan has reduced revenue sharing to all Michigan cities and the impact of Proposal A and the Headlee amendment results in decreasing property tax revenues. At the same time, healthcare costs for city employees and retirees are rising and the cost of meeting the city’s pension obligations is substantial.

In addition to these pressures on the General Fund, the City is facing several unique challenges. The City is required by state law to provide a home for the 15th District Court when it loses

its current lease at the end of 2009, the police are operating out of a substandard facility, and the current City hall is in a deteriorating condition and not ADA compliant. The need for affordable housing continues to grow and its provision remains a community priority.



721 N. Main Street from the air

The City's land has value; property in or adjacent to the downtown is typically of higher dollar value. Sale of these City sites for cash or as part of a public-private venture is a potential source of funds to partially meet the just mentioned financial challenges, including implementing a Greenway's initial improvements.

The combination of rising costs for standard expenditures and the imminent convergence of several critical needs will make the City's General Fund dollars an unlikely source for developing the Greenway. There are, however, potential resources on which the City can draw to fund development of the Greenway. These are outlined in Section 4 and the Appendix.

Financial Benefits of the Greenway

Edge properties to the Allen Creek Greenway could experience a rise in value if the Greenway is viewed as an amenity. Greater density on these fringe properties could result in higher property values, and TIF and property tax revenues.



415 W. Washington and First and William sites

In April 2005, students at the Stephen M. Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan completed a preliminary feasibility study of the Allen Creek Greenway that included a comprehensive financial model (see Supplemental Appendix). They concluded:

“Our preliminary analysis and financial model suggests that the potential upside of the Greenway exceeds its development cost.... Much of the economic benefit of the Greenway comes from the edge development that occurs over the 30-year period, which results in significant property tax gains for the city.”

They also suggested that “if the Greenway [with development of its fringe properties] is not undertaken in a comprehensive fashion, then the realized cash flows may differ greatly from those that are modeled.”

Both the National Park Service and the National Recreation and Park Association provide extensive documentation on the economic benefits that parks and open space bring to communities through their impact on residential property values and the property tax base and in their role in attracting new



AARR ROW and Fingerle Lumber yard

residents and businesses, as well as new tourist dollars. A recent New York Times article cited a study by the national Association of Home Builders that found that “Trails are the No. 1 amenity potential homeowners cite when asked what they would like to see in a new community.”

Rising property values and the stimulus to business are not the only potential financial impacts of the Greenway. If changes are designed appropriately to reduce runoff, the community as a whole could benefit by the lower environmental and financial risk of flooding. A study of flood, hurricane, tornado and earthquake natural hazard mitigation activities over the period 1993-2003, undertaken by the independent Multihazard Mitigation Council, found savings of \$4 per each dollar invested in mitigation activities, although the study did not isolate either flood mitigation or a watershed equivalent to Allen Creek.

Depending on the recreational opportunities and programming along the length of the Allen Creek Greenway, its use may also generate revenue directly through concessions, and program or event fees. There may even be an opportunity with the sale of branded products.

A key consideration in the decision-making process will be weighing short term versus long term costs and benefits.

Impacts of Growth and Development on the Community

The 2000 U.S. Census listed approximately 2,800 people living within the boundaries of the DDA district in 1,599 housing units. Residential growth is beginning to occur in the CBD; since 2000, 608 new housing units have been constructed, with others recently approved or in the approval process. It is estimated that current development could require about four years to be absorbed.

Development fronting onto the Greenway is possible if and when owners of those parcels determine the economic feasibility of improving their sites and move forward with new or enhanced buildings that provide more retail, office and/or residential spaces. There are potential development sites along much of the Greenway. They exist throughout the downtown and along N. Main to the Huron River. There are also pockets of small commercial and light industrial uses along the edge of the railroad. In other areas adjacent to the Greenway lie older established residential neighborhoods, some with historic designations and some with homes located in the floodplain. Any redevelopment of these various sites’ potentials should consider their location in relation to existing neighborhoods.

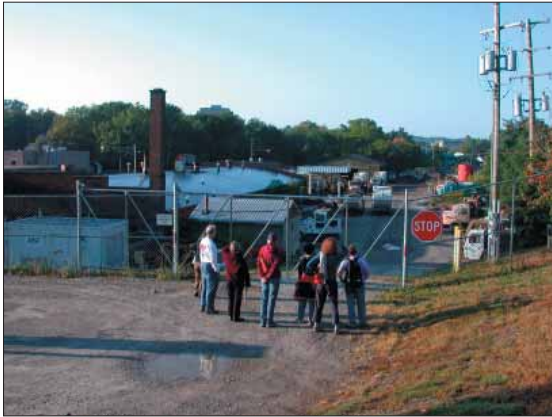


New and rehabbed buildings



Changes in Time

The role Allen Creek played in the growth of the City is similar to the roles of most urban streams and rivers. These waters were a source of needed natural resources; a location for transportation; infrastructure for waste disposal; and today, a rainwater utility with problems. As a result of human activity, the creek is a transformed shadow of its former natural self. Subjugation of the creek began over a century and a half ago. Today's discussion about this Greenway is a step in reversing Allen Creek's past, as is occurring for two others in the City, Mallets and Millers Creeks.



721 N. Main, looking in . . .

A community commitment to changing the face and purpose of the Allen Creek valley could be accomplished without eliminating all signs and symbols of its past. Documenting and interpreting the process and direction of change over time presents an opportunity to amend past actions, point to a different direction and, through deliberate steps, implement environmental improvements.

The Greenway can provide both water quality and open space benefits to in-town neighborhoods and a more dense, residentially enriched downtown. The opportunity exists to transform what is currently a place largely without people between the downtown and its adjacent residential neighborhoods into an open space asset. Implementation of the Allen Creek Greenway can help alter the look and feel of Ann Arbor's urban core.

Any development of the Greenway, with the flood fringe as either open space, existing buildings remaining or new buildings constructed, should use and exhibit "green" technology. Criteria for change should also include the charge to communicate, by design, what it means to be a new physical feature in the Allen Creek valley. The design expression of all future improvements should reflect their unique location in this part of our City. The Greenway's program of uses and activities, along with its design form, can combine to help shape the experiences people will enjoy by being there.



Section 3. Recommendations



Allen Creek Greenway ~ Initial and Preliminary Findings
for inclusion in
A2 Downtown Development Strategy
Page 2

Preliminary Principles

1. Physical elements within the Greenway

The Greenway will...

- a. emphasize and follow the Allen Creek floodplain
- b. provide a continuous and barrier-free pathway that integrates with adjacent City sidewalk, street and transportation patterns and public spaces
- c. incorporate the floodway portions of the City owned parcels at First and William, 415 W. Washington and 721 N. Main as destination public spaces within the Greenway
- d. consider the best uses of the floodplain portions of 415 W. Washington and 721 N. Main in the context of complementing and enhancing the Greenway
- e. express the presence of water by incorporating progressive practices to manage rainwater as an asset
- f. incorporate innovative and environmentally friendly runoff water management, and improve water quality and public safety while recognizing its location within the larger Allen Creek watershed
- g. contain year round uses and amenities that will actively populate the Greenway during day and evening hours

2. Relationship of surrounding neighborhoods and community to the Greenway:

The Greenway will...

- a. be a distinct place with a sense of coherence that unites its entirety and provides a fluid sequence of experiences, each considerate of the changing edge conditions
- b. promote partnerships to use public and private land to establish and develop the Greenway and its edges
- c. spur appropriate adjacent economic development including residential, retail, institutional and community-use opportunities that are mutually beneficial to each other and the Greenway
- d. create a safe environment through diverse edge development which fronts onto and places "eyes" on the Greenway
- e. provide connections to other public spaces and community facilities, and to destinations such as downtown, the Huron River Greenway, and the County's Border to Border Trail

The **Allen Creek Greenway** will take its place alongside the best and most progressive urban spaces.

27 October 2005, authored by the **Allen Creek Greenway Task Force**: Linda Berauer, Jean Carlberg, James D'Amour, Larissa Larsen, Barbara Murphy, Peter Osler, Peter Pollack, Sandi Smith, Margaret Wong

Section 3. Recommendations

The basis for a recommendation is its use of information. To frame a proposal, objective facts can be interpreted and prioritized to evolve, and then validate, a specific outcome. In this instance, a Task Force recommendation becomes an opinion with the potential to physically change our surroundings.

The Task Force reached consensus early in the process by working to recommend a preliminary Vision, Definition and Principles for the Greenway. Excerpts from the Vision statement speak to and about Ann Arbor.

- “Its one-of-a-kind name conjures an image of a delicate intervention within an Arcadian landscape. Eons ago, the glaciers receded and left behind a topography that determined the flow of our rivers and streams. In turn, this physical context influenced its patterns of settlement—the location of its commerce, industry, institutions, neighborhoods, and open spaces.
- As downtown Ann Arbor approaches a denser and taller future, we must strengthen the presence of the natural resources that have played such a critical role in Ann Arbor’s history.
- The physical divide that is currently the Allen Creek valley will become a place of destination, circulation, civic gathering, physical activity and repose.”

The Task Force’s Definition of a future Greenway is

- “a community-wide asset consisting of a sequence of environmentally sensitive open spaces in a City setting; and,
- largely following and relating to the Allen Creek floodplain and its watershed.”

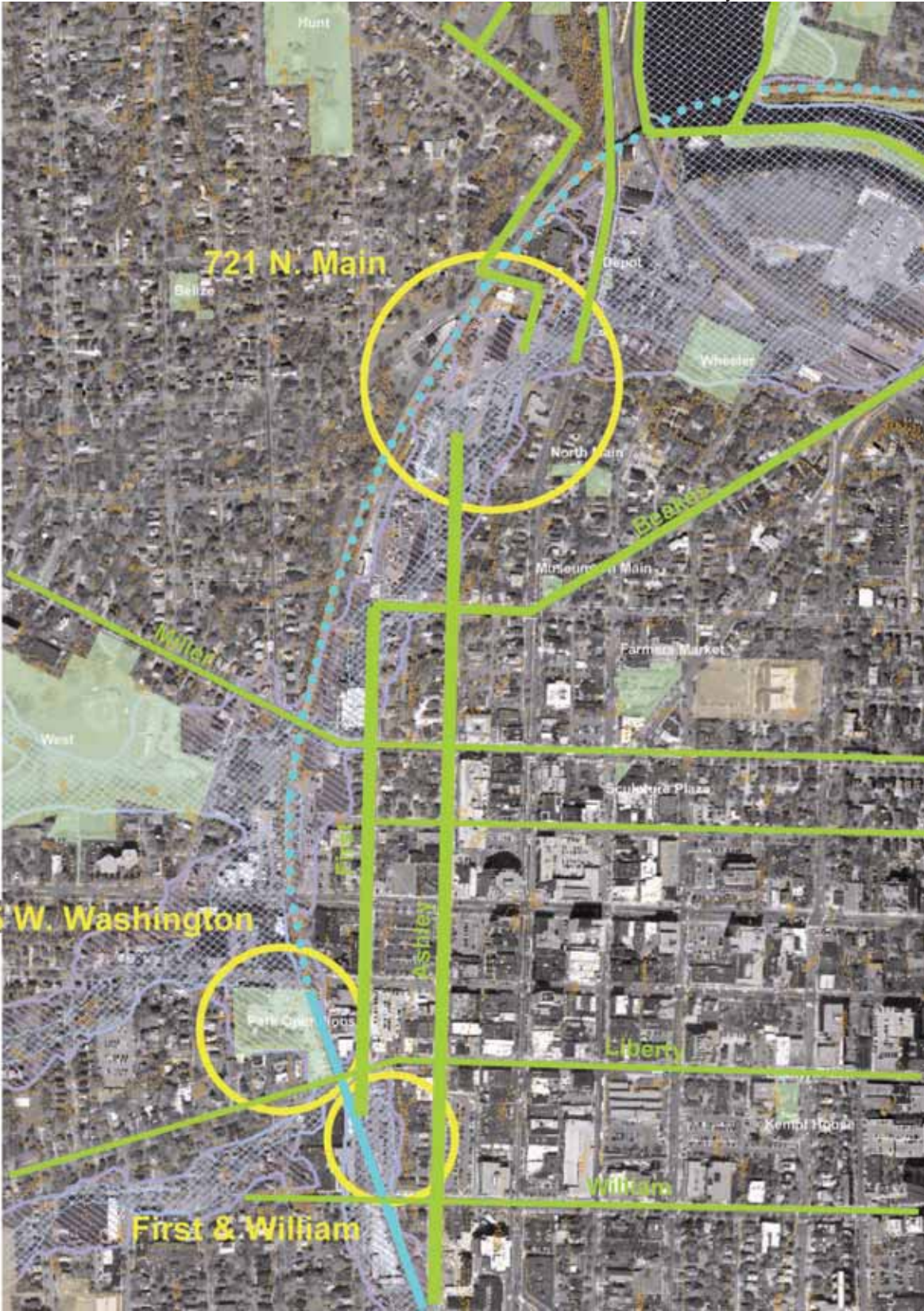
Lastly, Planning Principles address the three City-owned parcels included in this study as well as the “relationship of surrounding neighborhoods and community to the Greenway”. Both general and site-specific principles are included to guide discussion and decision-making.

The central recommendation of the Task Force builds on City Council’s Resolution, and is expressed in the Greenway’s Planning Principles. The Task Force recommends that, at a minimum, the Greenway incorporate the floodway portions of the three City-owned parcels at First and William,



Allen Creek’s industrial past

City sites and connections



415 W. Washington and 721 N. Main as destination spaces within the Greenway. This primary recommendation leads to a discussion about connectivity, of the linkages between and beyond these three properties.

Connectivity

Incorporating the floodway portion of the three City-owned sites as components of the Allen Creek Greenway is the first step in creating a non-motorized path along the edge of the downtown. The path will connect to the Huron River Greenway and to the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission’s Border-to-Border Trail. Several segments of the Huron River Greenway trail system have been completed; only a few gaps remain within the city. Additional segments between Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti are under construction. Other segments of the Border-to-Border Trail being planned are west of the City along the Huron River. Neighboring municipalities, such as Ypsilanti Township and Pittsfield Township, are developing bike and pedestrian paths connecting with their parks, and linkages from the City to those destinations can be established. The larger network is in the process of becoming a county-wide trail system.



The vision for the Allen Creek Greenway is a path in a continuous, green open space following the floor of the Allen Creek valley along its length and joining the Huron River Greenway. There, pedestrians and bike riders can enjoy a natural setting and cultural amenities and have comfortable travel with the use of the path. In this beginning phase of the development of the Allen Creek Greenway, the floodway of the three City sites could be a destination for nearby neighborhood and downtown residents, workers and visitors.

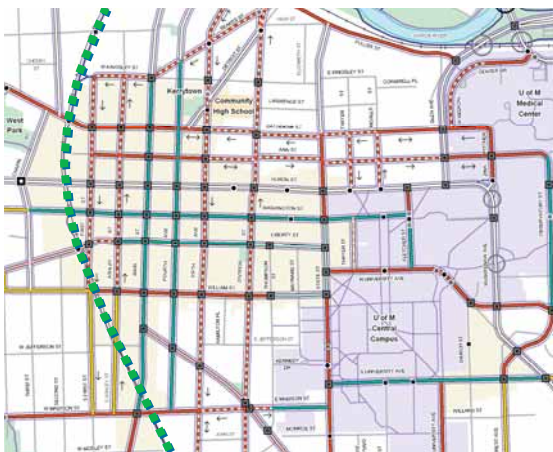
A well-designed method of identifying the existing sidewalk and street connections between these sites will advertise the evolving Greenway, drawing people to these initial locations. Wayfinding banners and signage, permanently displayed maps at frequent intervals, pavement imprinting and/or coloring, street furniture and unique plantings which all represent the Greenway path will enable pedestrians and bike riders to move easily from one of the three sites to another. A Greenway logo should be a prominent part of wayfinding banners and maps. The maps will identify the Greenway route and nearby park and cultural locations including West Park and other important downtown destinations.

The Bigger Picture



City Streets and Sidewalks

In this beginning phase, the core of the connecting routes for the Allen Creek Greenway is along Ashley and First Sts., with a clearly marked path leading to N. Main St. and, although a bit circuitous, to the Huron River Greenway. At this point in time, a single authorized but unimproved railroad crossing exists at Lake Shore Dr., connecting N. Main St. to the Huron River. The adequacy and number of links across the tracks and connecting to the Huron River Greenway remain problems in search of a solution.



From Non-Motorized Plan

East-west streets which intersect the Allen Creek Greenway, such as Felch, Miller, Washington, Liberty and William, would also have maps indicating routes and locations of both Greenways. These sidewalk routes and on-street bike lanes will need to follow existing traffic signal controlled intersections in high traffic areas.

The City of Ann Arbor Non-Motorized Transportation Plan recommends bike routes in the downtown and throughout the City, which would provide good access to the Allen Creek Greenway from different parts of the city. There is great interest in increasing walking and biking opportunities, and this Greenway would provide both a destination and a path for these activities. Should sites be added to the Greenway, through purchase, donation or easement, connecting routes will possibly change to include new amenities and increase the “way” of the Greenway.

Rails-with-Trails

The long term vision of the Greenway includes a path along the railroad going south from William St. using the Rails-with-Trails concept that has been successfully implemented in Bandemer and Gallup Parks. This could provide a long path from Madison St. to beyond Stadium Boulevard, with few streets to cross. In the first phase of development, no use of the railroad right-of-way as a part of the Greenway’s connectivity could be proposed as talks with the AARR are at a beginning stage. An actual path along the tracks will need to respect the AARR’s concern for safety of pedestrians and bicyclists in proximity to trains. As discussions with the AARR and the U-M continue to seek possible Greenway routes south of downtown, there will be opportunities to increase the number of connecting links.



Looking South from William Street

The AARR north of Liberty is primarily on a berm with trestle bridges crossing above City streets. By law, pedestrians can not access Railroad property. Safety and security concerns will have to be addressed in the design of all Greenway



AARR track at the edge of downtown

improvements and in the choice of additional properties for the Greenway. There should also be continuing conversations with the Railroad around the concept of Rails-with-Trails for this portion of the Allen Creek Greenway, and with Norfolk Southern Railroad to link Allen Creek Greenway and other City parks with the Huron River Greenway and the County’s Border-to-Border Trail.

Transportation ~ Commuter Railroad Service

There is great community interest in the possibility of using the north-south AARR rail line for commuters who live outside the City and work here, and to bring visitors into the downtown from other areas. Possible passenger rail stations are suggested for the N. Main and/or the William and First St. City sites in response to this interest.

The north-south rail line is owned by the Ann Arbor Railroad. It is presently used only for shipping freight and does not stop inside City limits. Freight is transferred to Great Lakes Central Railroad which has operating rights for this rail. MDOT owns the track north of Barton Dr. The AARR has not yet expressed interest in allowing passenger service through or into downtown Ann Arbor.

The east-west rail line is owned by Norfolk Southern Railroad, and both freight and Amtrak intercity passenger rail use this line. The Ann Arbor-Detroit Rail Study, with SEMCOG as the planning agency, is examining alternatives for the use of this rail corridor. If a passenger commuter rail option is chosen for this corridor, local transit connections between these two rail lines and employment centers in the City would be needed.



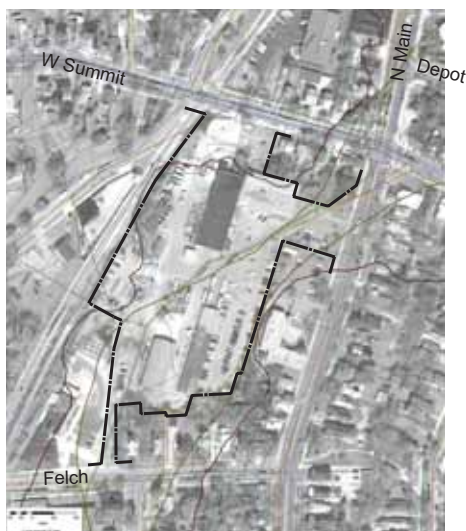
AARR tressle bridge



Site #1 First and William



Site #2 415 W. Washington



Site #3 721 N. Main

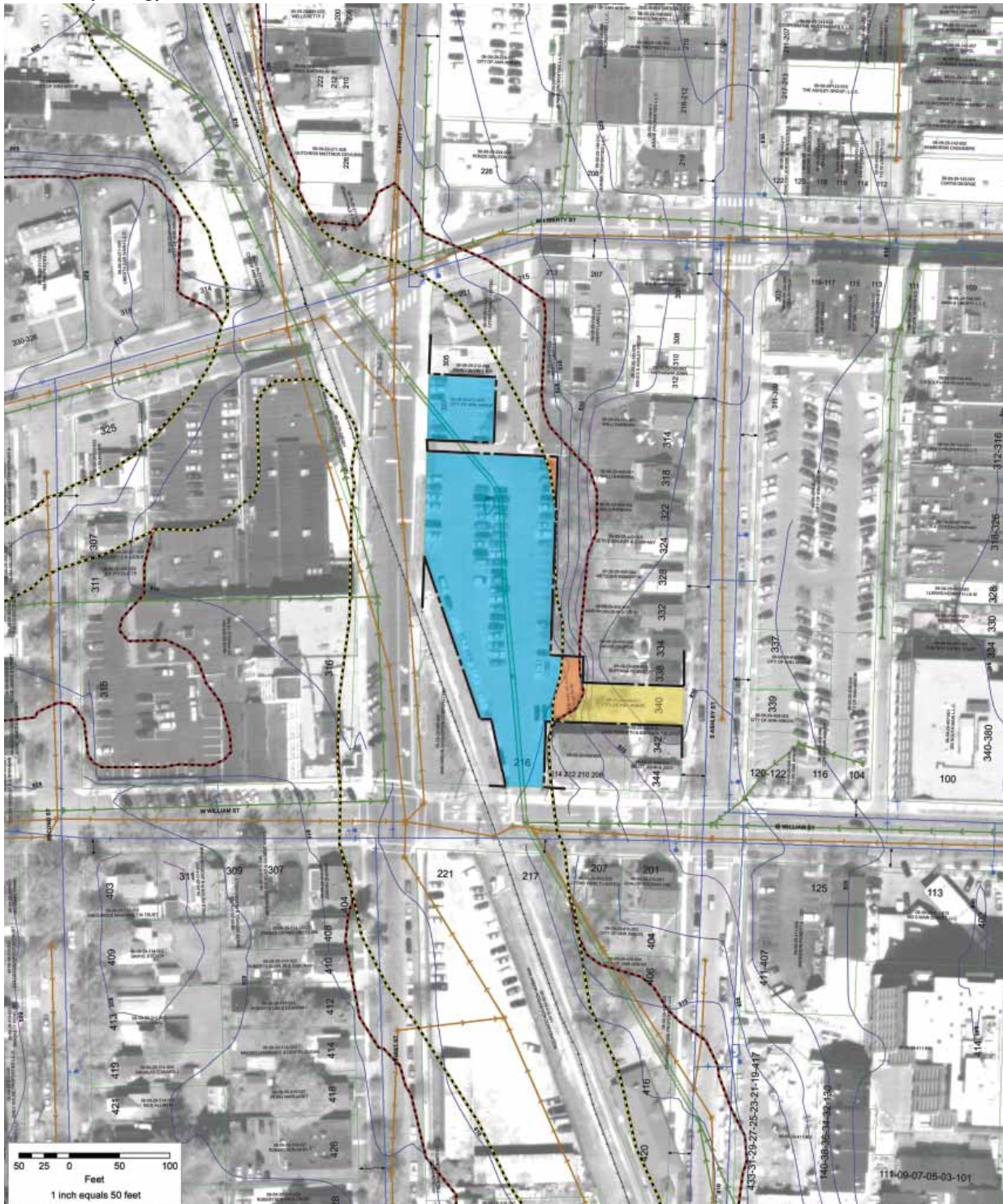
The Three City-Owned Sites and the Allen Creek Greenway

Greenway use of the three City-owned sites is in addition to initial use of streets and sidewalks in the public rights-of-way for connectivity. The minimum recommendation from the Task Force is that the floodway portion of the three sites be included in the Greenway. The land beyond the floodway, when considered by the Task Force, is where alternative recommendations emerge. As expressions of various priorities for how this location might be treated, the language used to describe the attributes of each alternative should be read as advocating for its particular point of view.

1. **First & William, Parking Lot**
The Task Force consensus recommendation for First and William is its conversion from parking lot to “urban garden”, with the possibility of including a passenger rail stop, if north-south passenger service is implemented.
2. **415 W. Washington, City Maintenance Garage**
There are three options for the area beyond the floodway at the City maintenance garage at 415 W. Washington:
 - all open space,
 - re-use of the existing primary building, and
 - new residential buildings and additional open space;
3. **721 N. Main, City Maintenance Garage**
There are two options for the area beyond the floodway at the City maintenance garage at 721 N. Main:
 - all open space, and
 - new mixed use buildings and additional open space.

Recommendations and alternatives for the City-owned sites will be presented individually and in the order listed above. Discussion of existing conditions will be followed by descriptions and illustrations of the various alternatives.

Surface Hydrology on the First and William Site



-  Floodway
-  Flood fringe
-  Upland

**City-Owned Site #1 ~
First and William Streets, Parking Lot**

Existing Conditions

Location: NE corner of First and William Sts., in the DDA/CBD and bordering the OWS historic district. This site is east of the AARR track.

Current Use: A 96 space permit parking lot serving primarily downtown users. After hours (past 6 PM and all day Sunday), the parking lot is available to the general public.

Floodplain and Upland:

The land is divided into:	Acreage	% of total
Floodway	0.85 Ac	85%
Flood Fringe	0.04 Ac	4%
Upland	<u>0.11 Ac</u>	<u>11%</u>
	1.00 Ac	100%

This site is largely in the floodway conveyance zone of the Allen Creek valley’s floodplain. Due to the potential risk and liability associated with new or existing buildings in a floodplain, development is controlled by State and Federal laws and required to meet specific regulations.

Allen Creek Drain: The County drain is a large 7’x9’ box culvert between 1’ and 5’ below grade and sitting within a 60’ easement controlled by the Drain Commissioner. City staff suggests that the small size of the site could result in the opportunity to employ water quality Best Management Practices (BMP) within catch basins and in rain gardens, and to accommodate first flush on-site rainwater runoff estimated at 635 cubic feet, which translates to an area of 21’x21’x1.5’ deep.

Topography: This site has the lowest elevation in vicinity; flat from north to south, and drops 3 feet to a catch basin in the center; approximately 25-foot high hillside on east edge to top of slope of the properties fronting on Ashley. The AARR track is level with First St. and this site.

Vegetation: Adjacent off-site hillside vegetation is largely pioneer and invasive species.

Soils: The site is urban fill, as is the steep slope to the east.

Environmental status: Soil contaminated by arsenic; benzene found in groundwater samples. If asphalt is removed, soil will need remediation.



Parking lot at First and William Streets

Adjacent property: North: private offices on Liberty St., and paved alley from Liberty St.; West: 68-unit Liberty Lofts condominiums (Eaton Building) across First St.; East: a rubble fill slope and older residential architecture with mixed commercial and residential uses, and a narrow parcel providing access to/from from Ashley St.; Southeast: town homes on William St.; South: Fingerle Lumber yard, now leased parking across William St. The AARR right-of-way and First St. form the western edge of the site. Additional new residential and mixed-use development planned south, north and east of the site includes Ashley Mews (56 units), Ashley Terrace (93 units), and former City parking structure site at First & Washington Sts.

Notable features: These include the site's openness on its south and west sides where it faces the OWS Historic District, and its single lot connection to Ashley St. on the east. The AARR track and First Street rights-of-way form the property's western edge. The visibility of this property from adjacent public streets will contribute to its presence as a component of the future Greenway. As stated earlier, the Task Force recommendation is use of this 1.0 acre parcel as public open space with a variety of "urban garden" features and activities. Recognition of railroad maintenance activities within its right-of-way will be required.



Parking lot looking South



- Floodway
- Flood fringe
- Upland

Recommendation ~ An Open Space & Greenway Garden

Key Considerations

1. The site is on the edge of the CBD, between the core of downtown and the OWS, and adjacent to the downtown gateway intersection of First and Liberty. Public open space here will serve as an attractive transition and linkage between them.
2. The location of the site is near the liveliest section of the Main St. business district; it is surrounded by a mix of uses (residential, retail, entertainment, office and others) and will provide a diverse set of potential users.
3. The visibility of this property from adjacent public streets will contribute to its presence in the Greenway.
4. The 170 foot length of the AARR track between crossings at William and First will determine the number of passenger cars if this location is to be a commuter rail station.
5. Estimated cost of complete soil remediation to a depth of 20 feet is \$3.5 million. Remediation might be phased to accommodate re-use of this site.

Design Intent and Rationale

The location of this site in the floodway, in a transition zone between downtown and the OWS historic neighborhood, and on the edge of the CBD’s increasing residential density, led to the Task Force’s recommendation. To accomplish multiple objectives and provide community-wide environmental and social benefits, transforming the site into an open space design will

1. manage rainwater and mitigate flood hazard by allowing flow through the conveyance zone to the Huron River;
2. improve water quality by replacing impervious parking lot surface with rain gardens, bioswales or other appropriate methods to filter and cleanse rain water;
3. transform an unsightly transitional zone into an attractive and potentially lively space that links the adjacent residential neighborhood to downtown and functions as a gateway in both directions;
4. provide needed open and civic space in an area of increasing density in the western downtown that can foster increased civic interaction and enhance downtown living;
5. prevent damage to buildings and their occupants by keeping the floodway free of obstructions; and,
6. stimulate edge development and complementary uses



Pros

- Maximizes floodplain flow benefits
- Provides urban garden/open space amenity
- Accommodates rail transit

Cons

- Maximum soil mitigation costs

along Ashley and First Sts. that could result in financial and other benefits to the City.



Parking entry from First Street

The site’s potential users include downtown residents, workers, shoppers, and visitors; west side residents; pedestrian and bicycle commuters headed to or from downtown. It should be designed to invite a broad range of activities—planned and spontaneous, active and passive, for individuals and groups.

Active programming, facilitated by good design, is critical to promoting use of the site. Walking groups, morning meet-ups, a tai chi class, sessions of an outdoor chess club, a favored outdoor spot for downtown workers, casual interactions among west side residents and pedestrians, and bicyclists on their way downtown will fulfill the site’s potential as a component of the Allen Creek Greenway. The City in addition to neighborhood and community groups can cooperate in this programming.

Program and Design Form

The Open Space design is comprised of four basic elements.

1. **A public open space in the floodway portion of the site.** The primary Greenway path will be incorporated into the overall design, along with lighting, seating, pervious ornamental paving, small and large gathering spaces, temporary and permanent public art installations, signage, and interpretive displays. Ornamental safety fencing will be installed along the railroad right-of-way.

The contaminated soils on this site will impact planning and require the phased removal of impervious paving for the transformation to landscaped open space. Until the degree and nature of soil and ground water contamination is fully understood, remediation options are yet to be determined. The goal will be eventual full remediation.

In the short term, the transition from parking lot to Greenway can begin by reconfiguring the layout of the parking spaces and adding ornamental pavement painting or embossing treatments. The small sub-parcel to the north of the main site could be designed as a miniature “woodlot” and rain garden. Over time, additional areas of paving will be removed to create landscaped areas incorporating attractive rainwater quality improvement measures. To maximize the site’s ability to capture and clean rainwater runoff, catch basins or catch basin filter systems may be required.

2. **A scenic overlook on Ashley St.** This will provide a view of the floodway immediately below as well as to the



Short Term Parking Lot Reconfiguration ~ A

floodway and floodplain at the 415 W. Washington site.

It will contrast strongly with access from the First St. side and will offer an integrated relationship with potential development on the west side of Ashley St. and at the "Kline's" lot. In the very near term, the Ashley St. lot can be developed as a pocket park with educational and informational displays about Allen Creek and the evolving Greenway.

Future development on Ashley St. should be required to provide a friendly face to the Greenway. When development does occur on Ashley St., the pocket park overlook with access to the Greenway below should be retained, either at the present location or at a new location within that block. New development should also accommodate the potential for a rail passenger station at this site by linking the platform with Ashley St.

3. **A pedestrian connection from the overlook on Ashley St. to the Greenway.** Initially this connection could be a simple stairway, to be replaced by a more substantial ornamental stairway and/or elevator as use patterns develop.
4. **Incorporation of the adjacent triangle of land southwest of the railroad track.** This will require an agreement with the AARR to enhance the appearance of this vacant plot to visually tie it to the Greenway open space east of the track. Accommodation of both railroad maintenance activities within its right-of-way and the safe public use of the adjacent Greenway will be required. The City should also complete the sidewalk along First St.



AARR track crossing First Street

If a commuter train service is established along the AARR track, a covered open platform could be located along the track at the southwest corner of the site.

Ownership of the other triangular parcel on the west side of First St. near Liberty St. and adjacent to the new Liberty Lofts retail spaces should be determined. There is potential for this parcel to be visually tied to the Greenway both at First and William and at 415 W. Washington, and this possibility should be pursued.

Implementation Time Line

Phase 1 (immediate and concurrent with parking lot use)

- The site is public property; there is no acquisition cost. Dedicate site to the City park system with a joint operating agreement between Parks and DDA with parking retained



Short Term Parking Lot Reconfiguration ~ B

for seven years or until no longer required, whichever comes first.

- Park Advisory Commission, Recreation Advisory Commission, City staff, neighborhood associations and community groups develop programs to establish the site as a locus of activity (initially on Sundays when permit parking is not enforced).
- Develop Ashley St. pocket park and “scenic overlook.”
- Develop and install interpretive signage and educational displays to raise awareness of the site’s history and its place in the Allen Creek Greenway and broader non-motorized trail network.
- Determine type and degree of soil contamination and develop appropriate remediation plan.
- Develop and implement first step landscaping, parking reconfiguration and soil remediation plan.
- Implement ornamental pavement (painting or embossing) to indicate Allen Creek and the Greenway.
- Continue discussions with AARR including enhanced treatment of railroad right-of-way.

Phase 2 (when site is no longer used as a parking lot)

- Install initial greenway path.
- Continue remediation.
- Implement landscape elements (appropriate to level of remediation) such as rain gardens and other features.
- Continue programming efforts to develop Greenway uses.

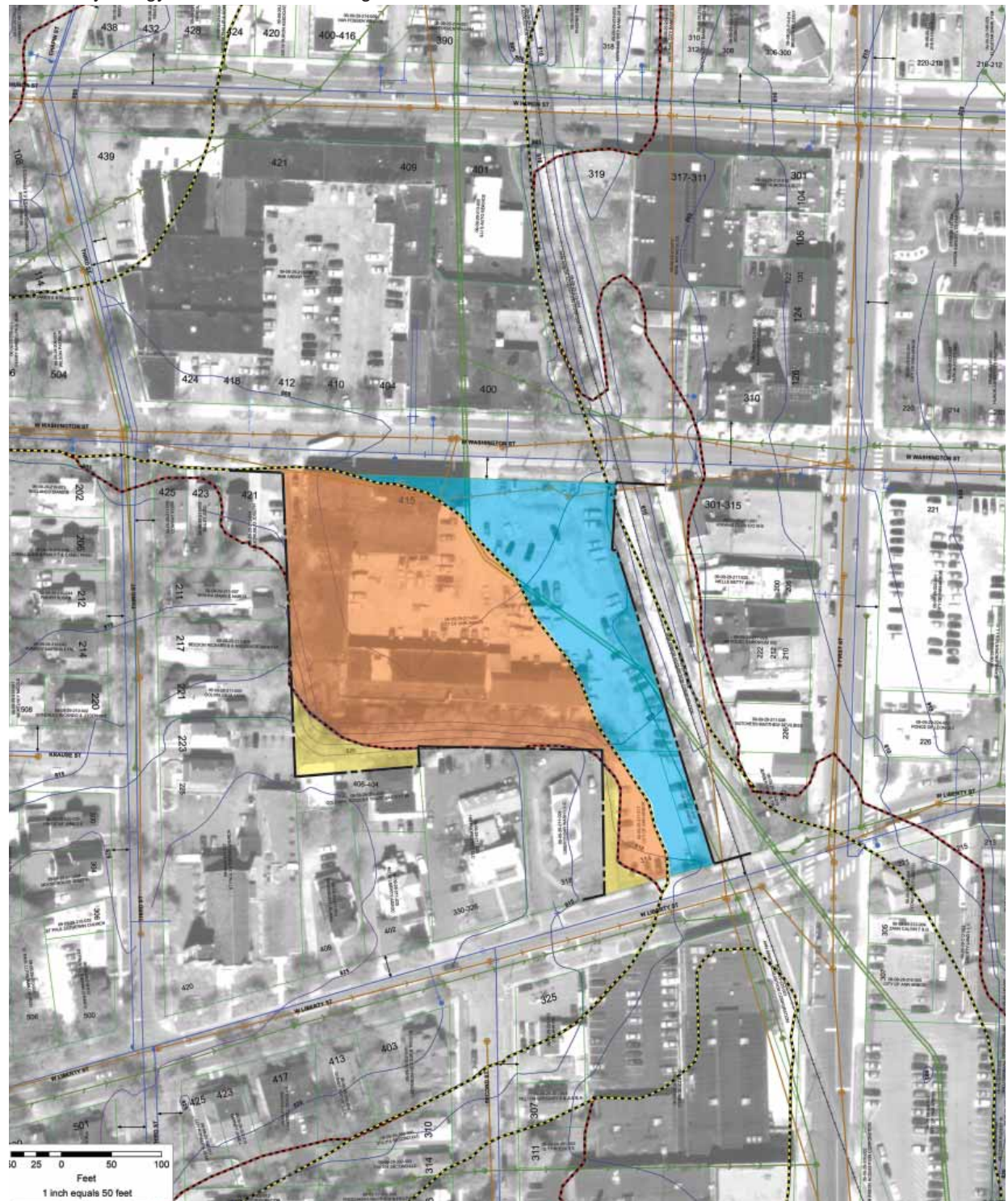
Phase 3 (long term)



- Complete remediation and landscape features.
- Install greenway path(s) and other improvements.
- Continue programming efforts to develop/sustain Greenway uses and site specific uses.

Summary

The Task Force’s recommendation for use of this one acre, largely floodway, parcel is permanent open space and part of the larger Allen Creek Greenway. Reasons include its location, its floodway characteristics, and its potential value as an open space when thinking about the City center holistically. Conversion of this surface lot to Greenway garden is an important early step in creating a visible open space destination, stimulating adjacent private property improvements, and positively altering the character of this part of the City.

Surface Hydrology on the 415 W. Washington Site



-  Floodway
-  Flood fringe
-  Upland

City-Owned Site #2 ~

415 W. Washington, City Maintenance Garage

Existing Conditions

Location: South side of W. Washington St., between First and Third Sts.; in the OWS Historic District and the DDA District; adjacent to the CBD.

Current use: City-owned fleet maintenance and office facility; main building used as office space by City Parks staff. City plans to relocate its functions from the site by fall 2007.

Floodplain and Upland

The land is divided into:	Acreage	% of total
Floodway	0.81 Ac	32.4%
Flood Fringe	1.53 Ac	61.2%
Upland	<u>0.16 Ac</u>	<u>6.4%</u>
	2.50 Ac	100%

This site is in the floodplain conveyance zone of the Allen Creek valley. Due to the potential risk and liability associated with new or existing buildings in a floodplain, development is controlled by State and Federal laws and required to meet specific regulations.

Allen Creek Drain: The drain enters the site at its eastern edge, approximately one-third of the way into the site from the south, and is contained within the floodway zone. The County drain is a large 7'x9' box culvert between 1' and 3' below grade and sitting within a 60' easement controlled by the Drain Commissioner. This site can accommodate rainwater quality BMPs within the flood fringe and, potentially, first flush and runoff storage of 12,255 cubic feet, or 90'x90'x1.5' deep.

Topography: The railroad embankment lies at the eastern boundary, approximately 12-feet high at Washington St. and falling to ground level at Liberty St.; approximately 25-foot high steep slopes at portions of south and west boundaries; grading generally slopes down to a relatively flat central area that is the lowest point with a largely consistent elevation along Washington St. In effect, the site is bounded by sloping edges on the east, south and west. A narrow strip of the parcel fronts onto Liberty St. and provides a continuous link north to Washington St.

Vegetation: Plant material on site is minimal; what does exist are pioneer and invasive species.

Soils: The site is disturbed urban fill soils.



City offices and maintenance lot on Washington

Environmental status: Past contamination by leaking underground gasoline storage tanks has been remediated and tanks removed; contaminate concentrations are significantly reduced but levels are not below residential cleanup standards, site has not reached closure; ongoing contaminate source may be off-site, additional investigation and possible remediation may be needed if site is to be reused.

Existing buildings: The site contains several aged buildings; the Washington St. building is the most substantial; its redevelopment viability and the cost to bring it up to building code compliance are unknown.

Adjacent property uses: North: YMCA across Washington St.; Northeast: Ashley Terrace (93 units proposed) across Huron St. at First St.; East: AARR right-of-way with office/commercial east of the future mixed-use project at First and Washington Sts. including residential units; South: possible commercial properties and 68-unit Liberty Lofts condominiums (Eaton Building) across Liberty St.; West: older residential dwellings and church; the OWS Historic District to the south and west.

Notable features: The site's built conditions, primarily the architecture, by nature of being within the OWS Historic District, require Historic District Commission approval of any proposed building modifications or removals; and, the Liberty St. frontage and elevation, along with the openness of the railroad right-of-way looking south from Liberty St., put 415 W. Washington site in visual contact with the First and William Greenway site. Their proximity to each other and to the Liberty St. corridor could provide for visual and physical connections beyond this site's property lines. Lastly, the success of the adjacent YMCA suggests consideration be given to its activities and this site's redevelopment program.



AARR tracks looking North to the embankment



Looking Northeast to Washington Street



- Floodway
- Flood fringe
- Upland

**Alternative A ~
Greenway Art and Performance Park**

This option accepts that responsible public policy does not allow new building construction in a floodplain. The City of Ann Arbor should set an example for ethical land use on property it controls.

Because of its setting between the heart of downtown and vibrant residential neighborhoods, this site is an ideal location to promote Ann Arbor’s collective social and cultural life. Ann Arbor’s core identity has long sprung from its cultural institutions, ranging from the thoroughly respectable to the wildly alternative. The community abounds with artists, arts advocacy groups, cultural organizations and institutions, patrons of the arts and committed art lovers. They are an important source of our reputation as a home for the uncommon, diverse, world class and cutting edge. Diversified and unusual venues for showcasing the arts enhance this identity. These are the motivations driving this proposal for a Greenway Art and Performance Park at 415 W. Washington.

Key Considerations

1. The current building fronting on Washington St. is a significant obstruction in the floodplain according to City of Ann Arbor staff.
2. There are viable underutilized developable sites that are outside the floodplain within a few blocks of the parcel.
3. The 1988 Ann Arbor Downtown Plan recognized this area as both interface and “natural buffer” between downtown and nearby neighborhoods and noted the “special topographic feature” of the Allen Creek valley for creating “improved entries to downtown” and “[enhancing] downtown’s unique identity as a place”.
4. Near the liveliest section of the Main St. business district, and immediately surrounded by a mix of uses (residential, retail, entertainment, recreational, office and others), this site will attract a diverse set of potential users.
5. The new YMCA has greatly increased activity and traffic in this area throughout the day and into the evening, during the week and on weekends.
6. The site’s Liberty St. frontage and elevation, with the openness of the railroad right-of-way, puts it in visual contact with the First and William site. In turn, the visibility of this property from First and William emphasizes the continuous nature of the Allen Creek Greenway.

**Pros**

- Maximum open space for flexible public use
- Building removal maximizes floodplain flow

Cons

- All public investment; no economic gain

Design Intent and Rationale

This location, almost entirely within the floodplain, in the center of the transition zone between downtown and a historical neighborhood, and at the edge of an area of increasing residential density, drives our recommendation that this site be an open space park and open air art and performance venue. To accomplish multiple objectives and provide significant community-wide environmental, economic and social benefits, an open space design will

1. create unique destination space dedicated to supporting and showcasing the arts community, a key element of Ann Arbor's quality of life and identity as a vital, successful city;
2. manage rainwater and mitigate flood hazard by allowing flow through the conveyance zone to the Huron River;
3. prevent damage to buildings and their occupants by keeping the floodplain free of obstructions;
4. improve water quality by replacing impervious surface with rain gardens, bioswales and other appropriate methods to filter and cleanse rainwater;
5. transform an underused "no access" zone into an attractive and lively destination, designed to create community activity and promote non-motorized transportation;
6. maximize the physical extent and the visual and experiential impact of open space in the heart of the Greenway; and,
7. stimulate new edge development and complementary uses to the north, east and south of the site that will result in financial and other benefits to the City.



View South to Liberty Street

Committed and imaginative programming of regular events and special activities at this location is a crucial component of this proposal. This will require innovative partnerships between the City, non-profit and civic organizations, schools, other community institutions and private sponsors. The diverse and ever changing nature of what will appear in this public open air gallery and performance space will keep residents and visitors interested and prompt return visits. Such an unusual and visible venue for Ann Arbor's art and culture community so close to Downtown will become a key Greenway destination.

Program and Design Form

The Open Space Scheme removes all existing structures from the site, and is comprised of three basic elements.



View North to the YMCA

1. **A Greenway garden in the floodway portion of the site.** This garden will combine pervious ornamental paving with native plant rain garden “basins” to clean rainwater runoff. The east side of the site connects Liberty and Washington Sts. The primary Greenway path will be incorporated into this area, with lighting, seating, public art, signage and interpretive displays. The Liberty St. entrance will be a highly visible gateway. Connection to the First and William site will be emphasized by ornamental pavement treatments such as applied color, contrasting materials, and pavement embossing. Possible residual site contamination, if any, will be coordinated with removal of impervious paving and landscaping installation.
2. **A community Art Park in the main portion of the flood fringe area.** The Art Park will be a flexible venue for a changing schedule of public art work. This can include temporary art installations, performance art, small scale concerts and “low tech” theatrical performances. Landscaped areas, lighting and seating will be combined with an open, pervious surface performance plaza. Instead of any permanent structure, anchor connections can be embedded in the plaza to permit installation of temporary tent covering or light shelter as needed.
3. **A handicapped-accessible path that branches off from the Liberty St. entrance and runs along the south edge of the site.** To provide safe and universal access to and through this site, a ramp is necessary. City staff notes that a few feet of soil could be removed from most of this site, lowering the grade on the southern portion that extends to Liberty St. to improve the flood flow thorough a constricted area. Modification of site grading and rain garden excavation should also be calculated to facilitate the ramp design. The ramp should be designed to function as or incorporate informal seating.

Implementation Time Line

Phase 1 (short term)

- Site is public property and has no acquisition cost.
- Seek Historic District Commission approval to demolish all buildings and structures.
- Develop landscape design, including determination of type and degree of soil contamination, appropriate remediation plan and re-grading scheme.
- Initial phase installation of the floodway garden, Art Plaza and paths.



- Develop programming to establish a regular schedule of Greenway Art Park uses and events. Seek partnerships with the City, non-profit and civic organizations, schools, other community institutions and private sponsors.
- Develop private, public and non-profit funding sources for arts programming.
- Begin discussion with AARR to plan enhanced landscaping of railroad right-of-way, including small triangular plot at southwest corner of Liberty and First intersection.
- Implement ornamental pavement (painting or embossing) to indicate Allen Creek and suggest the Greenway across the Liberty and First intersection to link to the First and William.

Phase 2 (medium term)

- Continue installation of floodway garden, Art Plaza and paths.
- Install ramp.
- Continue to develop programming of Greenway Art Park and private, public and non-profit funding sources for arts programming.

Phase 3 (long term)

- Finish installation of complete design.
- Consider what modifications will be needed to work best with changes in immediate vicinity (completed Liberty Lofts commercial area, changes at “Brown Block”, changes in commercial uses along south boundary, etc.).
- Continue to develop programming and funding sources.

Summary

This site has tremendous potential to strengthen our community’s collective quality of place and quality of life as a public space that enhances everyday experience. A city with an active, varied, innovative and well-supported arts and culture scene is an exciting and competitive city that will draw residents, visitors, businesses and investment. This provides strong support for the viability of the “place making” goals of this design. Selling this publicly-owned floodplain parcel for short term gain would be an irreparable loss. The psychological, social and economic benefits of green “real places” dedicated to community activity in the midst of where people live and work are incalculable.



View to the Southwest

**Pros**

- Architectural history preserved with adaptive reuse
- Known building mass/volume
- Minimum disturbance during construction

Cons

- Viability of existing buildings
- Economics ~ is rehab financially sound?
- Existing floodplain obstructions



- Floodway
- Flood fringe
- Upland

Alternative B ~ Retain Current Structure ~ Community Building

The site at 415 W. Washington is in the OWS Historic District; the primary building may have historic significance. For this reason alone, there may be an argument that the building should remain in place. Another rationale for maintaining the current structure has been provided by a variety of artists, artist organizations and other non-profit entities such as Kiwanis, many of which have expressed a desire to maintain the building for use by their respective organizations. There was significant participation by the arts community at the public comment section of our Task Force meetings, the Public Process meetings held by the Task Force, as well as written communications to the Task Force. The Arts Alliance states that the City of Ann Arbor “provides surprisingly little support for its artists and cultural organizations... A community cultural facility has the potential to positively impact downtown Ann Arbor. Similar facilities (renovated warehouses, factories, etc.) have spurred economic vitality in a number of ways.”

Design Intent and Rationale

With this strong public sentiment that the buildings retain value to the community, the Task Force has included an option that retains the current structure on the site. Only a small corner of the existing Washington St. building is in the currently delineated floodway.

The City should hire a structural engineer to determine the condition of the current building and the cost to rehab it. If the report indicates that the building is structurally sound, the report should be made available to any interested organization.

The City could either lease the property for a nominal fee or sell the property at full market value. In all cases, the property should be bound with a deed restriction that calls for the floodway portion of the site to forever be maintained as a public greenway.

Program and Design Form

Because there are multiple organizations that have shown interest in this site, the City should issue an RFP to non-profit organizations. The following criteria should be used to evaluate the proposals:

1. Must show how the re-use plans and design form for building and site express this location in both the Allen Creek valley and the Greenway, and a design which will



Washington Street historic structure



Second floor corridor



Interior of main garage

- facilitate use of the floodway for paths, sitting areas and appropriate plantings.
2. Must show a development and maintenance plan, including financials, for the floodway as a permanent public greenway which include water quality BMPs such as rain gardens and bioswales, and contains the volume required to control first flush rainfall runoff from within the site.
 3. Must demonstrate and quantify rainwater runoff improvements and benefits with the site re-use.
 4. Must demonstrate activation of the area and how the presence of the organization provides for “eyes on the park.”
 5. Must demonstrate clear community benefit to the greatest extent possible, including quantifiable measures of the number of people using the site, the number of hours a week the site is activated as well as the financial return and economic benefits to the City.
 6. Should demonstrate synergy with the YMCA and the downtown.

Summary

The City can satisfy numerous community goals by electing to allow the current structure to remain in place at this site. The exterior facade can be restored using historic guidelines, maintaining the values of the historic district. The arts community could have a facility that will act as the cultural center for many different organizations. This publicly owned property would remain in the public domain. The western edge of the downtown will be activated, enhancing the area and contributing to a vibrant and exciting urban core. Perhaps most importantly, a segment of the Allen Creek Greenway will be created, maintained and supplied with a ready audience of participants.



View looking Southwest from Washington Street



Alternate C ~ New Housing and Additional Open Space

The inclusion of this site in the DDA District is the result of a view offered in the initial 1982 DDA Plan, that a City maintenance garage at this location was not likely to be the long term and final use of the property.

Key Considerations

This 2½ acre parcel is possible to describe as limited in its presence, direct influence and impact on Ann Arbor's CBD. Located to the west of a railroad embankment, the site is physically, if not placed by one's perception of it, more into the OWS residential neighborhood than within the dynamics of the City's downtown. Reinforcing this mindset is a history of the City's planning documents dating to the early and mid-1970s expressing caution about the tendency to expand downtown's activities into the Central Area's close-in residential neighborhoods.

Committing the site's floodway as a core component of the Allen Creek Greenway, and using approximately 1.30 acres of the available 1.69 acres of flood fringe and upland for building new housing, result in a site that is almost equal in area for new residential architecture and expanded open space. The Greenway allocation grows from the 0.81 acre floodway to 1.2 acres of paths and gardens, or almost half the total site.

Design Intent and Rationale

The addition of both housing and open space at this location should result in

1. adding new residents in close proximity to the downtown while placing them in the desirable OWS residential atmosphere;
2. taking advantage of the Greenway's potential for adjacent property value increase and development opportunities on the City's site resulting in less impact on the dominant and more pure single family character a short distance to the south of Liberty and west of Third St.;
3. introducing housing and open space into the block provides for additional eyes on the Greenway without affecting the YMCA's pattern and timing of activities, since housing typically moves on a different and complementary schedule;
4. stabilizing the mixed use character of adjacent properties



Pros

- Potential for City revenues and use of Brownfield funds
- Affordable housing opportunity
- Provides “eyes”
- Improves floodplain flow

Cons

- Risk of living within/above floodplain boundary
- Parking on the ground floor

fronting on Liberty St., and leading them toward a higher quality outcome more consistent with the architectural and site/landscape characteristics of Liberty Lofts, St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the YMCA; and,

5. using the development value of the property for Brownfield funding, Greenway construction and open space maintenance over time. The possibility exists to improve the area beyond the site's legal boundary, i.e., to use the financial potential of this site to help fund the First and William site's conversion to Greenway.

Program and Design Form

The characteristics of the approximately 1.2 acre open space should be consistent with the intent previously expressed by the Task Force's consensus recommendation for program and design form of First and William: open space uses and activities placed into the land in patterns that invite and then shape experience.

1. Program within Floodway

An urban garden and open space with a network of paths for recreation; rain gardens for water quality improvement; and areas for sitting, gathering and flexible activities and exhibits are among the possibilities.

2. Program beyond the Floodway

The potential is for residential uses above with parking below, on ground level and contained within the building footprint. Also to be considered are common spaces within the housing and outside on-site, the latter being open space on-grade, and with green roof treatments at plaza and rooftop levels.

More specifically, the intent of the design guidelines illustrated by the concept for this alternative includes

1. stream-like, meandering lines of movement as pathways, rain gardens, activity areas and other rainwater BMPs, all using forms mimicking the flow of water;
2. form and layout of buildings and site integrate with and respond to the Allen Creek Greenway's open space on-site, and linked to off-site connections;
3. building and site design that meets or exceeds Federal, State and local floodplain laws and requirements;
4. links between ground level and upper residential plaza levels for circulation/movement as well as light and air flow;
5. references to architectural past, including the possibility of "deconstructing" the Washington St. facade so as to retain



Looking South into the maintenance yard

- its structural elements while placing new architecture to the south, set back from the original building remnant;
6. green building requirements including little to no rain-water runoff;
 7. sequence of spaces from public to semi-public to semi-private to private;
 8. buildings that encourage use of the Greenway and express interaction; and,
 9. design expression that addresses its location yet looks past the site's property lines.

Implementation Time Line

Phase 1 (short term)

- Upon completion of the City move to the new garage in fall of 2007, relocate site perimeter fencing to secure the building complex and open passageway from Liberty to Washington, making modest improvements to the paved surface to facilitate safe travel.
- Discuss and finalize the approach to use of Brownfield funding to remove remaining soil contaminants on this and First and William sites.
- Discuss and finalize the residential program for overall number of units including percentages of affordable, work force and market rate housing.
- Discuss and develop metrics for financing, developer maintenance of the adjacent Greenway, relationship of housing to the Greenway and the general vicinity, and revenue generation.
- Develop an RFP for a public-private partnership to move forward with planning, design and implementation of the Greenway and new housing proposal.

Phase 2 (medium term)

- Issue the RFP, evaluate responses based on accessing Brownfield funds, housing program, Greenway implementation, and other factors identified during the RFP process, and select the most advantageous proposal.
- Developer to proceed with design, seek required City, County and State approvals prior to proceeding with construction.
- Implement Greenway and housing consistent with plan and permits as approved.

Phase 3 (long term)

- Initiate agreement between City and housing association to



monitor, manage and maintain the Greenway and housing’s adjacent open space.

- Jointly monitor rainwater runoff BMPs for any needed changes.
- Jointly monitor and adjust programming of the Greenway’s open spaces if/as needed.

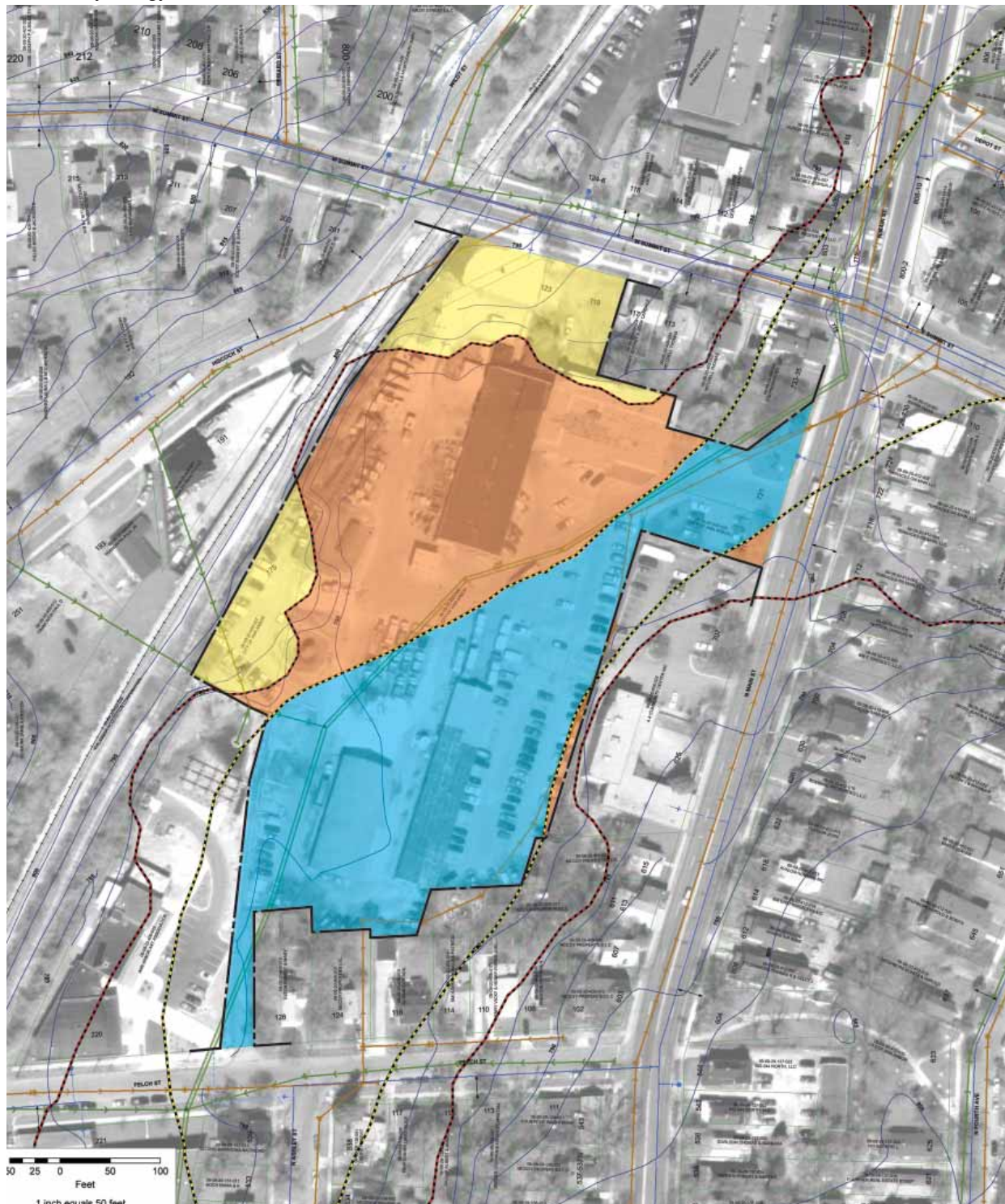
Summary

Selection of this alternative to use 415 W. Washington to both expand the Greenway beyond the floodway and provide a variety of housing types takes advantage of the site’s location, the potential for the City to gain financially, and to possibly rely on a public-private partnership to develop and care for this section of the Allen Creek Greenway. This alternative adds new residents in close proximity to the downtown without pressuring the integrity of the OWS Historic District or conflicting with activities at the YMCA. Financial gains from private development can be integrated into the broader picture of soil contamination and remediation on all three of the City-owned sites as the Greenway is developed. The adjacency of 415 W. Washington to First and William site, being literally across from each other on the north and south sides of Liberty St., suggests concurrent implementation if at all possible. Sharing the W. Washington’s 2.5 acre site for both public open space and private mixed unit housing makes the potential of joint construction more likely.



Looking North across Liberty Street

Surface Hydrology on the 721 N. Main Site



-  Floodway
-  Flood fringe
-  Upland

**City-Owned Site #3 ~
721 N. Main, City Maintenance
Garage**

Existing Conditions

Location: West side of N. Main St., between Felch St. (to the south) and W. Summit St. (to the north).

Current use: City-owned fleet services yard. City plans to relocate its functions from the site by fall 2007.

Floodplain and Upland

The land is divided into:	Acreage	% of total
Floodway	2.44 Ac	47.9%
Flood Fringe	1.96 Ac	38.4%
Upland	<u>0.70 Ac</u>	<u>13.6%</u>
	5.10 Ac	100.0%

This site is in the floodplain conveyance zone of the Allen Creek valley. Due to the potential risk and liability associated with new or existing buildings in a floodplain, development is controlled by State and Federal laws and required to meet specific regulations.

Allen Creek Drain: Drain enters at narrow southern Felch St. frontage and roughly follows west floodway boundary largely within the floodway zone, exits the site at N. Main St.; top of the drain is approximately 2 feet below ground level. The Office of the County Drain Commissioner will not permit building directly over the drain and requires a 60-foot wide easement centered on the drain; any development cannot impede access to or the functioning of the drain.

Topography: Site is partially bounded by the 20-foot high AARR embankment to the west and a 20-foot high slope to the north at W. Summit St.; interior of the site is largely flat, with 2 feet of fall between Felch St. on the south to N. Main St. on the northeast.

Vegetation: Plant material on site is minimal; here, too, what does exist includes pioneer and invasive species.

Soils: The site is disturbed urban fill soils.

Environmental status: Site has been remediated and meets the standard for unrestricted residential use.

Existing buildings: Site contains four primary garage and warehouse-like structures; all are in the floodplain, as are



721 N. Main in context



Ann Arbor Art Center



Ann Arbor Community Center

several other small multi-purpose storage sheds. Existing buildings are in poor condition as judged by City staff; the buildings are assumed to be non-Code compliant; and, the cost to renovate any of these buildings for legal occupancy and Code-compliance is currently unknown. City staff says removing these structures would improve the floodplain management in this location. Pavements are either hard packed gravel or asphalt, and impervious.

Adjacent property uses: AARR's right-of-way to the west, both sides of the track, are used for operations and maintenance purposes and forms the northern portion of the western boundary; the Ann Arbor Art Center offices and classroom building are to the west; the Ann Arbor Community Center building and parking lot is to the east; the Beal Construction offices and studio complex are south across Felch St.; individual residential properties are located to the south, southeast and northeast; the SBF single family neighborhood is to the west; and the NCPOA is east of Main St.

Notable features: The site's size, its location close to the Huron River, and its frontage on Main St. suggests opportunities that are different from the other two City-owned sites. An opportunity exists for coordination with future development and renovation plans of both the Ann Arbor Community Center and the Ann Arbor Art Center. While access north to the Huron River Greenway is currently complex with the only official railroad crossing being at Lake Shore Dr., the Greenway access route south toward City-owned sites 1 & 2 can occur along Ashley and First. This site's connection to W. Summit St. can provide access to property owned by the Elks who have graciously allowed entry onto their land and into Bluffs Park. Such cooperation might be continued more formally as the Elks property is currently undergoing redesign.



Main Street frontage



**Alternative A ~
Open Space Design: Community Green**

Ann Arbor has a reputation for environmental stewardship and a growing commitment to sustainable practices. This site offers the City a unique opportunity to put this commitment into practice by preserving this large floodplain parcel in its entirety as Greenway open space.

“We have reached the point where we need to think about what kind of environmental future we’re going to have. I believe we can live in harmony with our environment; we don’t have to go out there and pave every square inch. But we need a new ethic for living in our world.”

-Chuck Flink, founder of Greenways Incorporated, as quoted in Greenways for America, Charles Little, 1990

Key Considerations

1. Because of its size and location so near the Huron River, it is especially important to optimize the hydrological functioning of this floodplain area. River water quality will benefit directly.
2. New construction in the floodplain is poor public policy. The City, as the steward of the public good, should set an example for ethical land use.
3. The site is adjacent to the intersection of West Summit and N. Main streets, a primary “gateway” to Ann Arbor and Downtown from interstate highways. This is an area long considered in need of substantial improvement to create a distinctive and attractive entry to the city.
4. The site offers the potential of forming a green bridge between the city and the parks and trails along the Huron River.
5. The site is located directly between established single-family neighborhoods and a portion of N. Main St. poised for significant new development, as indicated by parcel consolidation shown on property tax records. Public green open space can serve both areas, and function as an attractive transition and linkage between them, as anticipated in the 1988 Ann Arbor Downtown Plan.
6. The site is surrounded by a mix of uses within a two-block radius: single family residential, non-profit, arts, community, retail, commercial and office, thus providing a diverse set of potential users.



Pros

- Diverse recreation potential
- Building removal/deconstruction improves floodplain flow
- Water quality benefits
- Interprets site history

Cons

- Isolated, lacks “eyes”
- All public investment; no economic gain
- Lacks rail & bus transit facilities

7. The site’s size and relative separation from its larger residential neighborhood surroundings offer opportunities that are different from those possible on the other two City-owned sites.

Design Intent and Rationale

The large size of this site, and its location at a gateway to the city, in a transition zone between established neighborhoods and an area that is moving towards increased development, drives our recommendation for total open space use.

To achieve important objectives and provide a variety of community-wide benefits, an open space design will

1. create a welcoming gateway on a major access route to Ann Arbor and provide connectivity for non-motorized transportation;
2. provide opportunities for active recreation only a few blocks from downtown and lacking elsewhere in the City;
3. manage rainwater and mitigate flood hazard by allowing flow through the conveyance zone to the Huron River;
3. improve water quality by replacing impervious surface with rain gardens and bioswales planted with appropriate vegetation to capture, filter and cleanse rainwater;
4. preserve public safety by not putting work places or residences in a location that is hazardous in the event of a flood;
5. transform a “no access” zone into a lively, green open space dedicated to improving the health and well being of residents and providing a venue for communal public activities; and,
6. stimulate new edge development and complementary uses along Main St. that will result in financial and other benefits.

Incorporating this site commits to the generous vision of the Greenway that Ann Arbor deserves. Its size will permit more creative approaches to water quality management, as well as make it suited to active recreation programming. Its proximity to the Ann Arbor Art Center, the Ann Arbor Community Center and the Dance Gallery Foundation provides an opportunity for coordination of arts and civic programming. The combination of uses and activities will evolve over time if options for future use are not limited.

Program and Design Form

The Open Space design removes existing buildings at the north



Existing buildings in the flood fringe

end of the site and retains the two frame structures at the south half for adaptive re-use. It is comprised of two basic elements:

1. **Interpretive Creekshed Garden.** This garden, incorporating the entire floodway, will combine pervious ornamental paving, soft surface paths and boardwalks with a showcase system of native plant rain gardens and other innovative means to cleanse rainwater runoff. The functional aspects of this garden, as well as the history and importance of the Allen Creek watershed, will be articulated through interpretive displays and signage. Opportunities for water-based recreation should be considered, for example a shallow splash pool that converts to an open-air skating pond in the winter. Two existing buildings could be deconstructed to become pavilions. The primary Greenway path, with coordinated lighting and seating, will connect Felch St. to N. Main St. and will be incorporated along and into this major garden area.

Site entrances at N. Main and Felch St. should be highly visible and ceremonial. Currently the Felch St. access has a narrow frontage, but is adjacent to a parking lot owned by the Ann Arbor Art Center. The City should investigate a cooperative arrangement with AAAC to develop the Felch St. entrance.



Looking North from Felch Street

2. **A Community Green.** A small amphitheater could be incorporated at the high end of the site at W. Summit St. providing a panoramic view. The grade change may also make portions of the parcel ideal for a skateboard park. Community gardens might be planted in raised beds in the flood fringe conditional upon compensatory excavation in the floodway. The flood fringe might also accommodate a fenced dog park. Existing pieces of "industrial archaeology" such as the elevated railroad siding and a tall storage tank can be retained for their unique character and incorporated into a fitness course.

The non-floodplain portion of the site on Summit St., although small, might be appropriate for creatively designed housing or community use that fronts on the Greenway.

Implementation Time Line

Phase 1 (short term)

- Site is public property and has no acquisition cost.
- Demolish buildings and structures per design; retain identified structures and site features.
- Install initial phase of floodway garden and paths.

- Develop programming to establish a regular schedule of Greenway uses and events. Seek partnerships with Ann Arbor Community Center, Ann Arbor Art Center, Dance Gallery, recreational groups, public arts groups, neighborhood associations, civic groups, public schools and local businesses.
- Develop funding sources for activity programming.
- Work with AARR to landscape railroad right-of-way.

Phase 2 (medium term)

- Continue installation of the floodway garden paths.
- Begin installation of active recreation facilities and “community green” areas.
- Continue to develop programming and funding.

Phase 3 (long term)

- Complete final installations.
- Make modifications as needed in response to changes in immediate vicinity (development on N. Main, connections to Bluffs Park, etc.).
- Continue to develop programming and funding sources.

Summary

“Make no small plans. They have no magic to stir humanity’s blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical plan once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistency.”

– Daniel Burnham; American architect and city planner, 19th Century

This site should be meaningful to all Ann Arbor. Positioned at a main entry to the City, it will be the link between the Allen Creek Greenway and the Huron River Greenway and provide connection to the county-wide Border-To-Border Trail network. This important location should be conceived of as a grand and memorable portal that speaks volumes about Ann Arbor’s vision for a sustainable and livable future.

Open space use of 721 N. Main commits to a “big plan” vision of the Greenway and keeps the door open to future possibilities. We must accept the challenge of planning for a future that we would wish to provide for our children’s grandchildren. If fully realized, the Allen Creek Greenway will be an enduring and enriching legacy.





Pros

- Facilitates rail and bus transit
- Potential for City revenues and use of Brownfield Funds
- Provides activity/"eyes" with mixed use development
- Possible stimulant for additional developments

Cons

- Mixes motorized and non-motorized uses
- Adds new building within the floodplain
- Potential neighborhood impacts and opposition



Alternate B ~ New Mixed-Use Neighborhood and Additional Open Space

This site’s notable features of size, location, degree of separation from its surroundings by the railroad embankment and primary streets, and the mixed-use qualities of its immediate neighbors, combine and point to the ability of this property to absorb new mixed-use development and additional open spaces for Greenway use beyond those contained within the floodway.

Key Considerations

With the departure of the City to a consolidated service center elsewhere, this site is land with the potential to be another active “neighborhood”, and a key active and passive open space component of the Allen Creek Greenway. Mixed-use development is illustrated on approximately 2 acres of the 5.1 acre site. This expands the Greenway open space by 0.66 acres, from the 2.44 acre floodway to 3.1 total acres, or 60% of the site.

Location and elevation of the railroad track, and the site’s proximity to Depot St. for cross-town access to the Medical and Central Campuses, make this location a candidate for a primary passenger rail stop coordinated with AATA/U-M bus service.

Design Intent and Rationale

Providing a mix of uses and activities such as office, cultural, modest amount of commercial, residential, and a possible passenger train station with a bus transfer facility, and all fronting onto the Greenway with its expanded open space, will

1. place people directly on and into the Greenway;
2. take public advantage of the potential rise in property value and investment with the open space commitment;
3. demonstrate to owners of adjacent warehouse and industrial property, the possibilities of mixed use and higher density with green building principles proposed for “green” developments within City limits; and,
4. as per the housing proposed for part of the 415 W. Washington site, use the financial potential of the land to access Brownfield funding to help support soil remediation, and private and public property improvements.

Program and Design Form

Improvements to the expanded, approximately 3.1 acre

available open space should be in keeping with the Task Force's consensus design criteria suggested earlier for the floodway portions of First and William and 415 W. Washington sites: open space uses and activities placed into the land in patterns that invite participation, and then shape experience and offer learning. The opportunity exists to keep some of the current structures, although in a modified and deconstructed form of posts or columns and roof for floodway and flood fringe benefits, and use them for recreation and as components in an environmental education/interpretive program of the site's history.

1. **Program within the floodway**

Open space potentials range from a network of paths for access, rain gardens for water quality improvements, and community gardens to passive and active recreation activities, picnic shelters, and areas for sitting, gathering and flexible activities and exhibits.

2. **Program beyond the floodway**

Some additional open space as an extension of the features described above might include a mixed-use complex with parking for cars, buses and bikes on the ground level with an additional one or two floors of parking and a variety of uses from office to cultural/exhibit/performance spaces, support retail and residential above the parking. Common spaces inside and on-site, utilizing green roof principles for design of plaza levels and rooftops, offer another means of adding open space.

In more detail, the intent of Alternative B's design as illustrated includes

1. meandering stream-like lines of movement as pathways, rain gardens, activity areas and rainwater BMPs, all using forms mimicking the flow of water;
2. form and layout of buildings and site that integrate with and respond to the Allen Creek Greenway's open space on-site, and are linked to off-site connections;
3. building and site design that meets or exceeds Federal, State and local floodplain laws and requirements;
4. references to architectural past, including former storage sheds that, with deconstruction, could become shelters and interpretive stations;
5. green building requirements including little to no rain-water runoff;
6. vehicular access to the parking deck from W. Summit, with buses entering the transfer point from W. Summit and departing via Main St. (for eastbound Depot St. or



Looking North to Summit Street



southbound Main St.) and limited ground level vehicular parking access from Main St.;

7. a rail passenger terminal and covered platform trackside, and interior connection to a covered bus transfer point at grade level;
8. improved Greenway frontage, with visual and physical access into the site from Main St. as part of the Greenway's presence on this main artery;
9. sequence of spaces from public to semi-public to semi-private to private; and,
10. buildings that encourage use of the Greenway and express both the open space and their presence in the Allen Creek valley.

Implementation Time Line

Phase 1 (short term)

- Upon completion of the City move to the new garage in fall of 2007, relocate site perimeter fencing to secure the site while allowing space for improvements to the frontage on surrounding streets.
- Discuss and finalize the approach to use of brownfield funding to remove remaining soil contaminants on the three City sites.
- Discuss and finalize the mixed-use program including overall number of residential units, and percentages of affordable, work force and market rate housing.
- Discuss and develop metrics for financing, possible developer maintenance of the adjacent Greenway, relationship of new mixed-uses to the Greenway and the general vicinity, and revenue generation.
- Develop an RFP for a public-private partnership to move forward with planning, design and implementation of the Greenway and new mixed-use proposal.

Phase 2 (medium term)

- Issue the RFP, evaluate responses based on accessing brownfield funds, housing program, Greenway implementation, and other factors identified during the RFP process, and select the most advantageous proposal.
- Developer to proceed with design, seek required City, County and State approvals prior to proceeding with construction.
- Implement Greenway and housing consistent with plan and permits as approved.

Phase 3 (long term)

- Initiate agreement between City and housing association to monitor, manage and maintain the Greenway and housing's adjacent open space.
- Jointly monitor rainwater runoff BMPs for any needed changes.
- Jointly monitor and adjust programming of the Greenway's open spaces if/as needed.

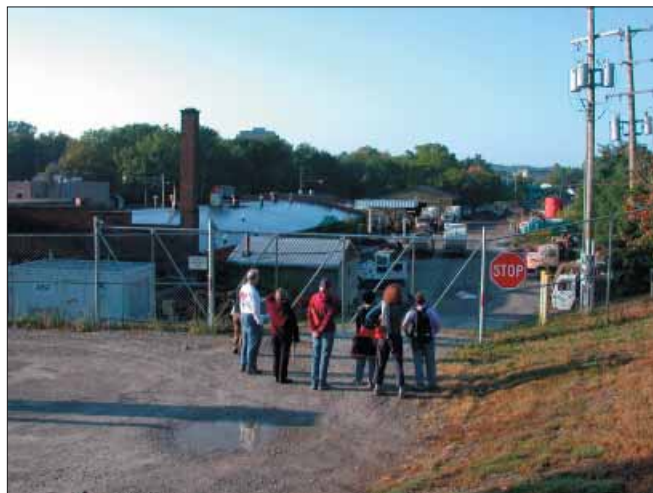
Summary

The soon-to-be vacated N. Main St. City maintenance garage, as a larger property in this location, presents greater open space and mixed-use development possibilities, and a more complex public-private partnership set of relationships and dependencies. A longer time frame to conceive, confirm and implement any proposal is likely. Two benefits can result: an added opportunity to consider the Allen Creek Greenway's connections to the Huron River, which involve MDOT and the Norfolk Southern Railroad, and, the sequential phasing of changes to the three City sites. The 5.1 acre N. Main site can also accommodate and integrate its two institutional neighbors (Art Center and Community Center) into the changes.

The history of this City site can remain to tell one side of an environmental tale as the new buildings' and the site's qualities speak to one another. Alternate B, as presented, has the potential to be integrated into Ann Arbor in both time and place.



View East to Main and Depot Streets



Looking South from Summit Street

Section 4. Implementation





Recommendation
First and William



Alternative A
415 W. Washington



Alternative B
415 W. Washington



Alternative C
415 W. Washington



Alternative A
721 N. Main



Alternative B
721 N. Main

Section 4. Implementation

The Allen Creek Greenway is an idea and an opportunity. The Task Force was charged by City Council to substantiate the Greenway's potentials and, in effect, consider to what degree the three City-owned sites might become initial components of a recreation and transportation corridor in the Allen Creek valley.

In so doing, ideas for the Greenway's activities, amenities and facilities, were collected, discussed and narrowed to the potentials presented in Section 3. Recommendations exist where consensus was reached; alternatives reflect different points of view found for how the three City sites can be used to benefit a Greenway.

The Task Force's recommendations are

1. **First & William, Parking Lot**
The Task Force consensus recommendation for First and William is its conversion from parking lot to "urban garden", with the possibility of including a passenger rail stop, if north-south passenger service is implemented.
2. **415 W. Washington, City Maintenance Garage**
There are three options for the area beyond the floodway at the City maintenance garage at 415 W. Washington:
 - a. all open space,
 - b. re-use of the existing primary building, and
 - c. new residential buildings and additional open space;
3. **721 N. Main, City Maintenance Garage**
There are two options for the area beyond the floodway at the City maintenance garage at 721 N. Main:
 - a. all open space, and
 - b. new mixed use buildings and additional open space.
4. **Connectivity, existing rights-of-way**
There are initial opportunities to link the City's three sites to each other and to the Huron River Greenway, using the City's streets and sidewalks in the public rights-of-way.

Next Steps

The process of implementing the Greenway should begin when the City consolidates maintenance functions to its Pittsfield Township facility in the fall of 2007 and two of the three City sites become vacant property. More specifically, the Task Force recommends the following sequence of actions.





Sites for Fall 2007 improvements

1. **Site improvements** to both First and William and 415 W. Washington should occur very soon after the W. Washington site is vacated, with construction occurring concurrently. Initial landscape and access enhancements will facilitate the public's safe use of the land for visual and physical access.

- **First and William** improvements could include modest parking lot reconfiguration, symbolic water flow imprinting in the remaining pavement as per plan, the Ashley Street pocket overlook park, and Greenway interpretive signage.
- **415 W. Washington** improvements include security fence relocation, pathway surface and seating between Liberty and Washington, new plantings along street frontages, and Greenway interpretive signage.

City Council (aided by Administration, Parks, and DDA) affecting literal physical changes to these two sites can help to collect and direct community thinking about possibilities, and demonstrate Council's willingness to engage in needed decision-making.

2. Planning Commission and City Council should guide dialogue about **floodplain and development policy** so that use of the three City sites beyond the floodway can be decided. The community's collective voice and Council's resolution of the choice between either allowing new buildings to be built (or existing buildings to be rehabbed and reused consistent with applicable laws and requirements) or no longer permitting any architectural development in a floodplain.
 - Review of new and emerging floodplain data for its possible implications and impacts is a necessary part of the decision process.
3. A three-site **assessment of soils and remediation** involved should be conducted by the City, and the potential for use of Brownfield funding investigated.
4. An **existing building analysis** of 415 W. Washington and 721 N. Main including structural condition, HAZMAT issues, and other factors should be undertaken by the City.
5. City Council, with possession of the above findings 2, 3 and 4, and any other information gathered as needed, should engage in a **dialogue about the recommendations and alternatives** for City-owned land, and reach a decision.
6. City Council (aided by Administration, Parks and DDA)

should deliberately **pursue new and continuing discussions** with both railroads, MDOT and The University about a longer term vision of an off-road Greenway in the Allen Creek valley.

7. And, finally, the City should develop **a list of other public and private parties** with an interest and a role to play in the Greenway, and continue to move forward with the process of planning, design, funding and implementation.

The above offers a guideline for implementation of the Allen Creek Greenway, beginning with initial improvements to signify its beginning. Policy determinations, acquisition of additional site information, and consideration of funding alternatives complete the agenda for Council in order to conclude its decision-making for a larger scale and scope implementation of the Greenway.

Funding the Allen Creek Greenway

Development of the Allen Creek Greenway will face funding challenges similar to those of the other parks, trails, and greenways incorporated into the City's parks and open space system, and potential sources of funding are similar. Funding requirements fall into three cost categories:

- **land acquisition and easements**
- **park and trail development**
- **on-going management and maintenance**

Land Acquisition and Easements

Dedication of public lands within the Allen Creek valley and funds from the Open Space and Parkland Preservation Millage (the "Greenbelt millage") are two possible tools available for acquiring land for the Greenway. Other potential funding sources include federal and state grant programs, public and private non-profit organizations, and potential partner institutions.

Dedication of Public Lands

Three variously sized parcels within the Allen Creek valley are already publicly owned. They total 8.60 acres consisting of 7.63 acres of floodplain (4.10 Ac of floodway and 3.53 Ac of flood fringe) and 0.97 Ac of upland potentially available for open spaces along the Allen Creek corridor with no acquisition cost.

Open Space and Parkland Preservation Millage

Funds from the 2004 Open Space and Parkland Preservation millage (a.k.a. the "Greenbelt millage") can be used for the purchase of conservation easements as well as additional

parcels along the Greenway. By resolution, Council guidelines state that 1/3 of the total millage revenues will be spent on land acquisition for the City's park system.

Total anticipated tax revenue from the 30-year millage is approximately \$80 million. With the \$20,250,000 bonded in 2005, the fund balance at the beginning of FY 2006-07 is \$22,000,000.

Selected Federal and State Grants

Promising sources include

- Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
- National Park Service Land and Water Conservation Fund
- Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program

Requirements and funding amounts for these sources can be found in the Appendix.

Other Potential Acquisition Mechanisms and Partners

The City can coordinate with the University of Michigan to determine feasible non-motorized routes through University properties and with the Ann Arbor Railroad for easements along the rail corridor.

The Allen Creek Greenway Conservancy, a new 501(c)(3) non-profit formed to raise funds for the purchase of land for the Allen Creek Greenway, may become a viable source of donated land in the future.

Park and Trail Development

Funding sources for the development of the Greenway parks and trails include the new parks millage, DDA TIF revenues, and various state and federal grants. Funds may also be raised from the sale of city properties which, in turn, could open up the possibility of Brownfield funding. New development within the downtown core or elsewhere in the watershed might be given the option to fulfill rainwater mitigation requirements on the three City properties.

Park Maintenance and Capital Improvements Millage

In November 2006, voters approved a new six-year 1.10 mill Park Maintenance and Capital Improvements Millage that is expected to raise \$4,866,585 in revenue in fiscal year 2007-2008. According to the policy guidelines approved by City Council for the administration of the millage, between 60% and 80% of the revenues are to be used for park maintenance and repairs and between 20% and 40% for capital improvements.

Development of the Allen Creek Greenway trail system would fall into the capital improvement funding category of Pathways, Trails, Boardwalks, Greenways, and Huron River Watershed.

Development of destination open spaces along the Greenway would fall into the capital improvement funding categories of Active Parks, Neighborhood Parks, Urban Plazas, and Recreation Facilities depending on the design of the park.

With limited funds for capital improvements in each of these categories, and competing needs throughout the park system, a strategic plan and timeline will need to be carefully developed.

Downtown Development Authority

The DDA may contribute funds to finance development of portions of the Greenway within its district. The DDA may proactively establish a fund for Greenway development, and/or respond to proposals from the City, non-profit organizations, or neighborhood groups to fund specific Greenway projects. Such use of its funds conforms to its Downtown Development and Tax Increment Financing Plan for 2003-2033 which lists “support of the creation of an Allen Creek Corridor Land Use Master Plan conducted in collaboration with others, including the potential development of a system of linked open spaces and a pedestrian/bicycle path along the rail line and as rainwater runoff mitigation as a current priority.”

Development of the Greenway can help the DDA fulfill some of its objectives stated in its plan:

- Encouraging the development of public land to meet community goals and attract people and businesses to downtown Ann Arbor.
- Mixed land uses that will promote a varied population throughout the day and night.
- Preservation of open space, natural beauty, historic buildings, and critical environmental areas.
- Sustainability as a fundamental tenet of downtown development to ensure requirements of the present are met without compromising the needs of the future.
- Enhancement of downtown’s identity as a unique and special place.
- Fostering distinctive, attractive neighborhoods with a strong and unique sense of place.
- Participation of citizens and stakeholders in development decisions to foster involvement, ownership and pride in community.



415 W. Washington



721 N. Main

Mitigation Fund from New Developments

New development projects within the downtown core might be given the option to fulfill some of their rainwater mitigation requirements by contributing to enhanced mitigation effects on the City properties. This tactic would need to be used very carefully and only in appropriate situations.

Sale of Public Land

The City should carefully consider the costs and benefits of the sale of public land in the floodplain. The portions of the 415 W. Washington and 721 N. Main parcels that lie within the flood fringe but outside the floodway could be sold for redevelopment, with the revenues of those sales used to

- fund the development of Greenway open spaces in the floodway portions of the three City parcels;
- purchase land and/or easements to develop continuous linkages along the Allen Creek Greenway; and,
- fund other municipal projects.

If all or portions of the parcels are sold for development, a deed restriction can be put in place that requires the new owner to develop and maintain those portions of the land purchased as Greenway and requires all subsequent owners to maintain the Greenway as public open space in perpetuity.

When looking at this option, it must be recognized that there is limited opportunity for new land acquisition to provide open space needs within and near the downtown core. The 2003-2033 DDA Plan notes that nearly all of the DDA District is built up, with little property remaining for potential future open space, and that the City could be encouraged to consider the possible acquisition of private property to enable plans for open space to be realized.

Given these facts, sale of these public lands in and near the downtown core for any reason may be controversial. Public reaction will likely vary according to how the proceeds from the sale of these public lands will be used, i.e. whether used for Greenway and open space development or for other municipal projects. There is also some public sentiment that the sale of public lands in the floodplain for new development is especially problematic because of concerns about the impact of increased development within the floodplain on Huron River water quality, rainwater management, and flood hazard mitigation. At the same time, any redevelopment (public or private) of the three City sites results in environmental improvements as new development must meet all applicable codes, laws and regulations, and the existing City sites currently do not.



Consideration of the three City-owned sites as one

Brownfield TIF

The sale of a portion of the city parcels for redevelopment could trigger eligibility for tax increment financing for Brownfield redevelopment. Within the City of Ann Arbor, any property designated as 1) a “facility” or contaminated under state law, 2) obsolete, or 3) blighted may be eligible for Brownfield economic redevelopment incentives including Tax Increment Financing (TIF) or Small Business Tax (SBT) credits. Tax Increment Financing allows the Washtenaw County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority to capture new taxes on projects with an approved Brownfield Plan. Taxes may be captured for up to 30 years and the DDA has first right of refusal on the new taxes for projects within the DDA district. The contamination present at the First and William site could qualify it as a “facility.”

To the extent the Allen Creek Greenway is developed as one large project, contamination in one portion of the “site” may create eligibility for Brownfield funding that can be used anywhere within the project’s boundaries even if the sites are not contiguous, so long as the various sites complement the redevelopment. In other words, one portion of the site may be contaminated and planned for open space use (First and William) with no increase in the taxable value. However, another portion of the site (e.g. the flood fringe portions of 415 W. Washington or 721 N. Main) may include redevelopment that increases the taxable value and generate taxes that may be used for environmental remediation on the First and William site.

Selected Federal and State Grants

Promising sources of funds include

- Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
- National Park Service Land and Water Conservation Fund
- National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (“Rivers & Trails”)
- Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program
- Flood Mitigation Assistance Program
- Transportation Enhancement Program
- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program
- Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) Coastal Management Program
- MDEQ Non-point Source Program
- MDEQ Brownfield Redevelopment Assistance
- Private Foundation Grants

Requirements and funding amounts for these sources can be found in the Appendix.

Resources for Greenway Maintenance

Once developed, ongoing maintenance of the Greenway and its open spaces is appropriately funded by:

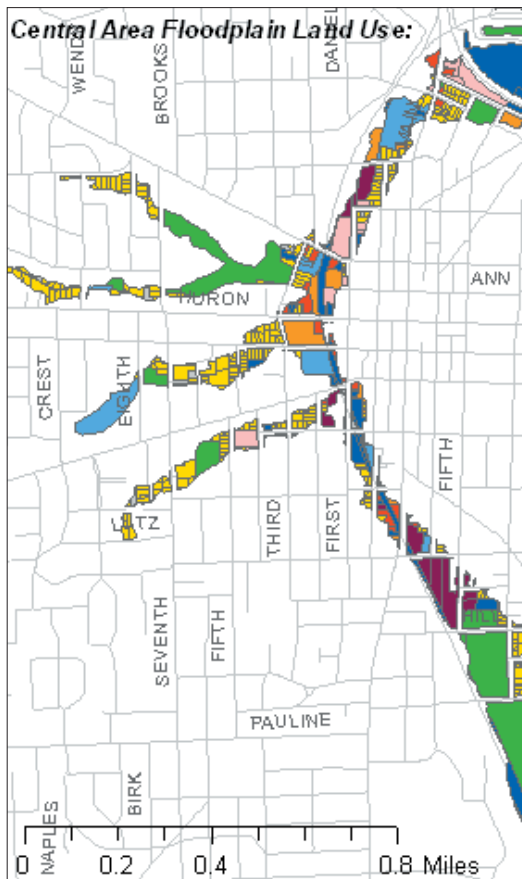
- that portion of the new six-year Park Maintenance and Capital Improvements Millage dedicated to park maintenance and repairs. This 1.10 mill is expected to raise \$4,866,585 in revenue in its first year (FY 2007-2008) and between 60% and 80% of the total millage revenue is to be used for maintenance and repairs over the entire park system.
- that portion of the General Fund allocated yearly to the parks and recreation system. The funding distribution guidelines for the new Park millage specify that maintenance and repairs of pathways, trails, boardwalks and greenways is to be covered by both the General Fund and the millage, and snow and ice control maintenance is to be funded exclusively by the General Fund.
- a “business improvement district” (BID) comprised of private land owners and business corporations formed as an association whose purpose is to maintain the Greenway open space. Typically, BID associations maintain foreground spaces immediately adjacent to their member properties and interests.

In addition to existing City resources, the Adopt-A-Park model should be promoted to engage private citizens and community groups to monitor and maintain discrete portions of the Greenway and its parks.

Conclusions

To recap, the following seven items are the more major decision points for resolution by Council and the community.

1. **Mixed-use of the flood fringe** on 415 W. Washington and 721 N. Main involves discussion of floodplain policy, and the results could have impacts well beyond use of the City’s three sites in the Allen Creek valley.
2. **Floodplain policy** and the decision to prohibit or permit future work on new or existing buildings in the floodplain, i.e., to meet or go beyond current local, State and Federal statutes, is but one needed action; the other is realization that the existence of a floodplain hazard is a symptom of upstream conditions, and that the effort work to minimize





flooding and mitigate related hazards also includes implementing solutions to **watershed-wide problems**.

3. The Greenway, to be successful, **requires a commitment** of both the community's human and dollar resources, and determining the method to insure commitment over time.
4. **The University** is an important partner in the Greenway's long term vision, specifically in linking paths to the Stadium Boulevard bridge over AARR track and alternate off-road routing within The University's Athletic Campus.
5. **MDOT and the AARR** must be approached and encouraged to support the Greenway in concept and in place, by sharing its right-of-way for use as a rail-with-trail.
6. Discussions with **Norfolk Southern Rail Road** must also continue so that the Ann Arbor community south of the river can cross its tracks at logical and intuitive locations as a necessary part of the solution to stop currently illegal crossings.
7. The Allen Creek Greenway's **becoming a reality** involves both the leap of faith to deliberately do something now as recognition of the fact that a first step is the beginning of a much longer term implementation process.

To conclude, the Greenway as an urban gathering space, a place of refuge, a green retreat, and a cultural and civic destination is a desirable achievement for these City-owned sites. The floodway portions can begin to be transformed in a short period into the initial phase of a Greenway with landscaping, seating areas and activity spaces. The residents, downtown workers and visitors can begin to use and appreciate the amenities of the Greenway soon after the City vacates the two garage sites.

City Council can decide the direction of the floodway portions of the Greenway within the next six months so that initial implementation can begin once the sites are available. The community is clearly eager to participate in the planning process as Council addresses decision about the use of flood fringe and upland portions of the City's parcels. Both the nearby residential neighborhoods and retail/office associations would welcome the opportunity to assist in the design of this Greenway as a focal point.

Consideration of the floodway portions of the sites is the first step in a much larger community planning effort. As new information about site conditions becomes available, as policy decisions are made, and as other sites become available, next

steps leading to confirming and implementing the longer term vision can be taken.

Funding is a critical component in planning the development of these sites as the Greenway. The initial development may be modest, based on available funding. In addition to existing park funds, there are many opportunities for grants; potential sources were discussed earlier in the report.

Lastly, we conclude the tenure of the Task Force by expressing our appreciation for the opportunity to have examined the many facets of the vision for a Greenway along one edge of downtown Ann Arbor leading to the Huron River. ACGTF members have striven to fully understand the implications of the data we had before us and to consider with great care the different points of view within our group and the wider community. We fully support the idea and the reality of an Allen Creek Greenway and look forward to its evolution with time.



Allen Creek outlet to the Huron River

Section 5. **Appendix**



Acknowledgements

Public Participation Process

Funding Sources

Floodplain Information

Water Quality Sizing Information

Acknowledgements

The Task Force was assisted by many persons in the community. They include

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Public Participation in the Work of the Allen Creek Greenway Task Force

Since the late 1970s, people in Ann Arbor have talked about the potential for a greenway adjacent to the downtown area, within the Allen Creek floodplain. In an effort to explore this idea, the Ann Arbor City Council created the Allen Creek Greenway Task Force in August 2005.

Part of the Task Force's charge was to consult with the public during its planning stages. Effective public participation on any issue, especially one which is in its planning stages and that includes many technical and abstract elements, requires a certain amount of public education. This was approached through many different methods to reach the broadest audience possible. These include: exhibits, with continually updated information, displayed throughout the length of the process in several public locations; an information repository held in the main public library; public lectures discussing the concept of urban greenways held early in the process; Task Force business meetings and public workshops made open to the public and televised on CTN with repeated broadcasts shown throughout the week; and a website containing a plethora of back-ground information, public meeting summaries, meeting minutes and current work products was maintained throughout the Task Force effort and can be found at <http://www.a2gov.org/greenway/>.

The hallmark of the public participation process was three public workshops held on April 22, April 29 and August 2, 2006. Over the course of the three events, more than 130 citizens came out to express their diverse opinions. Each workshop had two main parts – first, an educational presentation concerning the work of the Task Force and the Greenway and second, public participation based on the information presented using different methods of public engagement to collect information.

The first public workshop was designed to engage the public in a discussion of the “Big Picture” of the Allen Creek Greenway. Several questions were posed to attendees covering different aspects of a greenway, such as personal vision, connections between other parks and path-ways, role of the greenway in transportation, and architecture on the three main city-owned sites. Lively discussion in small groups was facilitated by a moderator and recorded. A summary of the discussions, showing the diversity of public views about the Greenway is provided in the Appendix.

The second public workshop focused specifically on the three city-owned sites to be included in the Allen Creek Greenway. The Task Force developed three visions for each site that provided a vision of an “Open Space Emphasis,” “Blended Space Emphasis” and an “Architectural Emphasis” to reflect the amount of architecture that could be included in the three sites. Comments based on the pros and cons of each vision were recorded. The summary of public comment is provided in the Appendix.

The final public workshop, held near the end of the Task Force's work, presented information about the work of the Task Force to that date and how they had incorporated what they heard and what they learned from the public from the first two workshops. New visions for the three city-owned sites were presented and public testimony was taken from the public. A summary of each public comment is provided in the Appendix.

Citizens who could otherwise not attend a public meeting were provided information to respond to on the Internet. Workbooks of information and methods, times and alternative ways to participate were also provided to all workshop attendees and available for downloading from the Internet. Citizens were also given the option of responding and providing comment through mail, fax and e-mail.

Selected Grant Sources

Selected Grants for Acquisition of Land and Easements

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

This State program provides matching grants for local outdoor recreation needs including land acquisition. Acquisitions that create or improve natural resource-based outdoor recreation opportunities and protect natural resources are favored. Improvements to Huron River water quality and the addition of recreational opportunities afforded by the greenway could make the project competitive.

- Approximately \$20-\$25 million is available each year
- No maximum for acquisition projects
- Requires at least a 25% local match

National Park Service Land and Water Conservation Fund

The State Side Grant Program provides matching grants to local governments for the acquisition, as well as the development and planning of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. 75% of the total funds have gone to locally sponsored projects to provide close-to-home recreation opportunities that are readily accessible to youth, adults, and senior citizens.

- FY 2003: \$94,383,000 was available to States and Michigan received \$2,769,402
- Minimum award: \$25,000; Maximum: \$500,000
- 50% local match required
- Availability of funds for acquisition varies by year; no acquisition projects were funded in 2005.

Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program

Once the City finalizes its Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan as a component of its Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan, Ann Arbor will be eligible to compete for federal funds from this program, which includes grants for the acquisition of land for open space that will reduce overall risks to the population and structures.

- Minimum total award for state is \$500,000; Maximum award for state is \$15,000,000 for 2007. All states will receive no less than \$500,000 providing that the state submits grants totaling at least that amount.

Selected Grants for Park and Trail Development

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

In addition to grants for land acquisition (see above), this is a source of matching grants for the development of outdoor recreation facilities and amenities that protect natural resources.

- Maximum for development projects is \$500,000
- Requires at least a 25% local match
- For development projects, applicant must control entire site

National Park Service Land and Water Conservation Fund

In addition to funding land acquisition (see above), the State Side section of this grant program provides grants for the development and planning of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities, favoring projects that provide close-to-home recreation opportunities accessible to youth, adults, and senior citizens.

- FY 2003: \$94,383,000 was available to States and Michigan received \$2,769,402
- 50% local match required

National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (“Rivers & Trails”)

Provides in-kind assistance to locally led efforts to conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways.

- Provides dedicated professional staff to assist with project planning, management and coordination, identification of funding sources, and facilitation and consensus building.
- Project assistance typically one to three years during a project’s infancy.

Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program

In addition to funds for the acquisition of flood-prone properties (see above), this FEMA program provides grants for mitigation projects that could include demolition, creation of ponds, bioswales, water features, etc.

- Minimum total award for state is \$500,000; Maximum award for state is \$15,000,000 for 2007. All states will receive no less than \$500,000 providing that the state submits grants totaling at least that amount

Flood Mitigation Assistance Program

Another FEMA program that provides grants to implement measures that reduce or eliminate the long-term risk of flood damage to structures insurable under the National Flood Insurance Program.

Transportation Enhancement Program

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century Federal (TEA-21) sets aside 10% from the State’s Dept. of Transportation allocation for this program administered by the Michigan Department of Transportation to fund projects that promote non-motorized transportation, support community redevelopment, recognize the diversity of potential users, and ensure accessibility and the safety and security of non-motorized users.

- Michigan funded \$20,468,400 in 2006
- 20% minimum match

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program

Another TEA-21-funded program. Projects must produce a demonstrable, cost-effective reduction in vehicle emissions.

- Michigan distributes funds based on population, with about 2/3 of state funding going to SE Michigan.
- SEMCOG region splits funding 50/50 between transit and other eligible projects.
- Funds pedestrian and bicycle projects providing alternative commuting choices such as non-motorized facilities linking people to work, shopping, or other necessities.
- Requires 20% match

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) Coastal Management Program

A federal coastal program administered by NOAA in partnership with local states. Michigan’s program includes the entire state shoreline along the Great lakes and connecting waters. Planning projects do not have to be located within the coastal boundary but must have a direct benefit to coastal resources by providing storm water protection or cleaning up contaminated properties that affect water property.

- Approximately 40 projects funded each year
- Maximum up to \$50,000
- Most types require a 50% match; State funds may be used as match (e.g. MNRTF)

MDEQ Non-point Source Program

Awards planning and implementation grants through the State's Clean Michigan Initiative and the federal Clean Water Act.

- For planning and implementation of projects on a watershed basis that prevent, eliminate, or reduce polluted runoff and/or erosion.
- Planning grants requires 10% local match
- Implementation grants require 25% local match

MDEQ Brownfield Redevelopment Assistance

Provides grants and loans to help redevelop Brownfield sites with priority given to projects that incorporate other state initiatives such as green building and greenway concepts, walkable city concepts, non-point source controls, cool city neighborhoods, and traditional downtowns.

- Loan rates are 2%, with no payments the first five years of the 15 year term.
- Applicant can be a local unit of government or a brownfield redevelopment authority
- Must demonstrate financial need and local contribution.
- Redevelopment must be identified or likely

Private Foundation Grants

Available from a variety of local and national foundations. In cases where the award amounts are too small to justify time and effort by City staff, non-profit organizations and citizen's groups may apply for small grants to fund discrete elements of the greenway and/or its parks.

Floodplain and Floodway Information

Background

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) created flood maps called Flood Insurance Ratio Maps (FIRMs). These maps generally used topographic information from United States Geological Survey (USGS) maps. USGS maps use a very large scale and are not very precise (10-foot contour intervals). They show the general location of floodways and floodplains. City must use them in order for the City and its residents to be eligible for National Flood Insurance Program (to get flood insurance for homes and businesses in floodplains and floodways). Proposed development projects must FIELD VERIFY [emphasis in original notes] flood elevations since FEMA maps are not precise.

Rule: Can't build new residential in floodway; prohibited by the State. Can build residential in floodplain, as long as the lowest floor elevation is at least 1 foot above the elevation of a 100-year flood and an MDEQ permit is issued. Must show no net loss of flood storage capacity (e.g. new buildings should allow floodwaters to flow under them), AND no increase of flood stage at property line (e.g. can't increase flooding on neighbor's property).

Rule: Can build non-residential in floodplain and floodway as long as an MDEQ permit is obtained and the structure is elevated or flood-proofed to an elevation 1 foot above the 100-year flood.

Rehab Rule: Renovation of a building in the floodplain/floodway cannot exceed 50% of the value of the structure; residential rehabs must elevate the entire structure to 1 foot above the 100 year flood elevation; non-residential can choose to either elevate the structure 1 foot above the 100 year flood level or flood proof. If a petitioner does not propose to add to the building footprint or add more than 50% of value, no flood requirement exists.

Historic Preservation Rule: Modifications to historic properties that do not increase the building footprint are exempt from floodplain requirements in the state building code.

Provided by Jerry Hancock on March 15, 2005. A study is underway to obtain more precise mapping of floodway and floodplain boundaries.

Current Floodplain Regulations

Pertaining to the three city-owned sites in the Allen Creek floodplain

General Criteria

Construction projects within the Allen Creek Drain easement require a permit from the Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner

Construction projects within the floodplain require a permit from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). Flood flow may not be obstructed in a manner that causes a rise in flood elevations at the property line.

State, County, and City all require no net loss of flood storage capacity; i.e. no fill without compensatory dredging.

Floodway Requirements

State law prohibits new or expanded residential uses.

The lowest floor of any new non-residential structure must be elevated or flood-proofed to an elevation 1 foot above the 100-year flood elevation.

Flood Fringe Requirement

In the area of the floodplain outside the floodway, the lowest floor of any new residential structure must be elevated to an elevation 1 foot above the 100-year flood elevation.

The lowest floor of any new non-residential structure must be elevated or flood-proofed to an elevation 1 foot above the 100-year flood elevation.

Other Considerations

Flood Mitigation Plan – The City received a 75/25 grant from the Michigan State Police (MSP) Emergency Management to develop a Flood Mitigation Plan. The purpose of the plan is to develop strategies to reduce flood losses, minimize damage to public and private property and protect public health and safety. The grant ends in September 2005 unless an extension is requested. Public input is being sought to assist in selecting mitigation strategies. City Staff will be working directly with City Planning Commission and City Council to develop the final plan recommendations. The final recommended plan will be submitted to City Council and the MSP for consideration.

Map Modernization - All of the floodplains in Washtenaw County are in the process of being converted to digital format by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality is a Cooperating Technical Partner in that process and has funded a restudy of the Main branch and the West Park-Miller branch of Allen Creek. The consultants are currently in the process of surveying and data analysis. While we currently do not know if the flood elevations and boundaries will be moving up or down, by small or great amounts, we do know they will change. The first draft maps should be available late fall 2005 for review. It is anticipated that revised FEMA maps will be presented to City Council for adoption to become official in late 2006.

Observations

At this point in the Map Modernization/revision process, we know that floodplain boundaries, floodway boundaries, and base flood elevations are all likely to change. For example, a residential building approved at site plan stage adjacent to the floodway, could be in the floodway after the maps are revised and thus not be permitted by the MDEQ. It is advisable that decisions made about specific sites take into consideration the likelihood that floodplain boundaries, floodway boundaries, and base flood elevations will be subject to change during the Map Modernization project.

*Prepared by Jerry Hancock, Certified Floodplain Manager
Land Development Coordinator, Systems Planning Unit, Public Services Area June 2005*

Water Quality Sizing Information for the Allen Creek Greenway Task Force

Surface flooding begins along Allen creek at approximately a 1.5-year storm event. The 1.5-year storm event is equal to the bankfull storm event in Washtenaw County, or approximately 2.3 inches of rain in a 24 hour period. Storing volumes of water beyond the bankfull event could interfere with flooding patterns. Controlling the bankfull storm event for the runoff from each site would provide water quality benefits without significantly exacerbating flooding. Since each of the three City owned sites receives direct surface runoff from adjacent properties controlling two (2) times the bankfull event will also be estimated.

Assumptions for evaluation

Floodway area developed into green space (C=0.30).

Flood fringe developed with 70% impervious area (C=0.75)

Water quality improvements are more effective in shallow water systems. 1.5 foot maximum depth assumed as the average depth of basins for this exercise.

First and William

Size of site = 1.00 acre

89% floodway

Full site runoff coefficient C=0.35

Volume required to control First Flush storm on-site = 635 cubic feet

- At 1.5 feet of depth this would take a 21 x 21 foot area

Volume required to control Bankfull storm on-site = 2,860 cubic feet

- At 1.5 feet of depth this would take a 44 x 44 foot area

2 X Bankfull = 5,720 cubic feet

- At 1.5 feet of depth this would take a 62 x 62 foot area

Comments: Given that the site is only 125 feet wide at the widest point, it may be difficult to fit in a surface treatment BMP facility much larger than the size necessary to treat the first flush without significantly reducing other potential uses. Also since there is known soil contamination, water quality improvements might be better accomplished through the use of water quality catch basins, such as Stormceptor, or catch basin filter systems. Stormceptor Catch Basin units cost approximately \$6,000.00 plus installation. Two or three of these units could improve water quality from the storm water generated from this sites in events smaller that the bankfull event.

415 W. Washington

Size of site = 2.50 acre

32.4% floodway

Full site runoff coefficient C=0.60

Volume required to control First Flush storm on-site = 2,723 cubic feet

- At 1.5 feet of depth this would take a 43 x 43 foot area

Volume required to control Bankfull storm on-site = 12,255 cubic feet

- At 1.5 feet of depth this would take a 90 x 90 foot area

2 X Bankfull = 24,510 cubic feet

- At 1.5 feet of depth this would take a 128 x 128 foot area

Comments: Fitting in a shallow basin with native plant material, sized to control the bankfull storm event from the site, appears to be the most logical size facility that could be accommodated on the east side of the site. Anything larger than that would be difficult to fit in due to the size of the site and utility constraints.

721 N. Main St.

Size of site = 5.20 acre

47.1% floodway

Full site runoff coefficient $C=0.54$

Volume required to control First Flush storm on-site = 5,097 cubic feet

- At 1 foot of depth this would take a 58 x 58 foot area

Volume required to control Bankfull storm on-site = 22,941 cubic feet

- At 1.5 feet of depth this would take a 124 x 124 foot area

2 X Bankfull = 45,882 cubic feet

- At 1.5 feet of depth this would take a 175 x 175 foot area

Comments: There is adequate space on this site to accommodate the largest facility listed above and maybe larger. Treating the bankfull storm event for the site and the adjacent properties could be accomplished. Treating larger events could exacerbate flooding in the area.