

2016 Tri- Community Master Plan

City of Saugatuck, Saugatuck Township, and the City of the Village of Douglas

Tri-Community Master Plan *(newly updated)*

http://saugatucktownship.org/planning_zoning/masterplan2016.pdf

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Table 7-3 Planned Improvements in Tri-Community Parks

CITY OF SAUGATUCK

Bicycle/Walking Path Develop walking/bike path from downtown to the Peterson Nature Preserve, through preserve, on Interurban Trail to North Street, to Maple Street and back to downtown.

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RECREATION Goal: Enhance the well-being of area residents by providing a variety of opportunities for relaxation, rest, activity, and education through a well-balanced system of private and public park and recreational facilities and activities located to serve identified needs of the area. Policy: Identify and explore opportunities to cooperate with other jurisdictions and agencies, including Allegan County and the Department of Natural Resources Recreation and Camping Division, on recreation projects which would benefit area residents and strengthen the tourism industry. Policy: Examine the feasibility of, and establish if feasible, a jointly owned and operated community center to serve residents of all ages in the Tri-Communities. Policy: Examine the feasibility of expanding low cost opportunities for public beach and campground facilities for area citizens with boat launching sites, bike paths, cross country ski trails, and docks for shore fishing.

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- TRANSPORTATION Goal: Maintain a safe, effective, and efficient road and street network and improve roads and streets to promote growth in a way that is consistent with land use goals and policies of this Plan. Policy: Implement traffic controls and design features that will increase the efficiency and safety of major arterials, including but not limited to: traffic signals, deceleration lanes, limiting driveways, minimum standards for driveway spacing, uniform sign regulations, shared or alternate access, left and right turn lanes, and speed limit adjustments. Policy: Prepare a joint governmental capital improvements program to schedule and prioritize transportation improvements and maintenance. Tri-Community Master Plan Update 2016 1-15 Policy: Redesign Blue Star Highway as a boulevard between freeway exits #36 and #41 to control access, improve traffic safety and flow, and improve the visual appearance of this highly traveled corridor which provides the principal means of access to each of the three jurisdictions. Photo 1-11 Maintain a Safe and Effective Transportation System Source: Felicia Fairchild, Saugatuck Douglas Convention and Visitors Bureau Goal: Encourage a wide variety of transportation means, such as walking, biking, and public transportation, to meet the diverse needs of area residents. Policy: Promote pedestrian and bike travel through a coordinated network of bike paths, trails, sidewalks and non-motorized trails. Policy: Promote regularly scheduled, affordable, and dependable public transportation to increase the quality of life for those who live in and visit the Tri-Communities thus helping to reduce parking and traffic congestion Policy: Encourage expansion of the interurban system consistent with municipal means to finance the increased service and identified public need.

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Blue Star Highway Blue Star Highway serves as a primary arterial. It is important to the Tri-Community area, not only because it is a gateway to visitors entering the community but also for local travel between communities. Several issues are important. First, there is a lack of aesthetic on the corridor. Over 74

% of people responding to the public opinion survey in 2005 noted that the appearance of the highway was of high or extremely high importance. Setbacks vary on developments; there are few sidewalks, and no uniform landscaping. Weak regulation of strip commercial development in the past has allowed haphazard placement of signs and driveways. Second, access to commercial and industrial establishments along arterial roads should be better controlled on Blue Star Highway. Wide driveways and open shoulders lead to an elevated risk of crashes. There are few designated pedestrian traffic areas or bike paths, causing pedestrians to use the shoulder, unsafely. The Township has paid to pave the shoulders, and these are often mistaken for actual lanes, thus posing a safety hazard. A boulevard could improve appearance, safety and traffic control and should be one of the alternatives examined if capacity improvements are considered. Specifically, right turn arrows should be painted on the pavement in the turn lane at Blue Star and Holland Street in the north Township. There is no cooperative maintenance arrangement between Saugatuck and the City of the Village of Douglas for Blue Star Highway and the County Road Commission.

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Non-motorized Transportation The City of Saugatuck and the City of the Village of Douglas are walkable communities that are suited for pedestrians and bicyclists. This atmosphere should be protected and promoted by expanding dedicated pedestrian and bicycle paths, particularly with the tourist population that utilizes the community in the summer months. However, comprehensive trails between popular destinations have yet to be constructed in the Saugatuck/Douglas area. Minimally a non-motorized path between Saugatuck and the City of the Village of Douglas would give visitors access to each downtown area without getting into their automobile. Currently, the closest regional non-motorized trail is the Tri-Community Master Plan Update 2016 6-15 **South Haven to Kalamazoo bike trail**. Trails from the City of the Village of Douglas to the Oval Beach and from Saugatuck to the Dunes State Park and other points north should also be planned and constructed. Trails should be designed for all-season use so cross country skiing and snow shoeing would also be available.

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Chapter 7

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses recreation facilities and programs and open space in the Tri-Communities. This includes the administration of recreation programs, existing resources and planned-for parks, bike paths and other recreation needs. It also discusses open space as a recreational and amenity asset of the communities. Parks, recreation, and open space are essential to the quality of life of area residents, and are an important component of the local tourist economy. They enhance property values, as well as physical and psychological well-being. Parks and open space define the character of the Tri-Communities, create the scenic atmosphere which stimulates tourism, and provide the basis for popular local leisure activities.

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Planned Recreation Projects and Acquisitions

City of Saugatuck

Ongoing Citywide Bike/Walking Path To be determined (with funding from) City/MDNR/MDOT

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Community Opinion on Recreational Facilities

- Non-Motorized Trails and Bike Paths Residents placed highest priority on additional bike paths, cross country skiing routes, and hiking trails. These needs are currently partially served by non-motorized trails in the Oval Beach/Mt. Baldhead area. The 2014 Joint Parks and Recreation identified bicycle

trails as a high priority, prepared a map of potential locations and listed them in a schedule of capital improvements to achieve this objective. These improvements have not been implemented to date.

The 2004 Tri-Community Opinion Survey also identified expanded bike paths as highly desirable, and about 61% of respondents supported bike lanes or paths even if it meant paying for it with higher taxes. Those who attended a Town Meeting in May of 2004 were asked to identify important destinations they would like included in bike path planning. A wide variety of destinations were identified, especially the Lake Michigan beaches, the downtowns of Saugatuck and the City of the Village of Douglas, Laketown Township and the City of Holland. Residents frequently commented that they didn't want bike lanes added to existing roads if it meant the removal of trees. In 2008, the Saugatuck Township Park and Recreation Commission prepared a map of potential and/or desired bike path locations. Those routes are the same as those in the 1989 Comprehensive Plan, and are shown in black dashed lines on Map 7-2. More recent public input suggests potential additional routes, shown in red on Map 7-2. The regional bike path system would connect with Saugatuck's chain ferry to afford bicyclists east/west access. This connection runs down Holland Street and across Francis Street to the waterfront and will be served by city streets, without the need for additional right-of-way. At this juncture, bicyclists may ride the chain ferry to Saugatuck's Tri-Community Master Plan Update 2016 7-14 eastern border. Once on Saugatuck's eastern side, bicyclists could follow Saugatuck's proposed bike path system down through the City of the Village of Douglas and south out of the Township. Bike path right-of-way would also extend north to Goshorn Lake along Washington Road, thereby connecting with Laketown Township. Another future extension could extend the system east along Old Allegan Road into Manlius Township. This is a scenic route, although somewhat hilly. The Blue Star Trail is a future bicycle trail extending from South Haven to Holland. Bicyclists wishing to pass through Saugatuck and on south through the City of the Village of Douglas would need additional right-of-way from Lake Street to the bridge, thereby connecting with the City of the Village of Douglas bike path network. The City of the Village of Douglas would extend its bike path south on Blue Star Highway to connect with the Township system, as well as along Center Street to the Douglas Beach. Map 7- 2 shows this proposed regional bike path network. The 2004 community opinion survey results indicate that residents would support (60.5% support or strongly support, 19.8% neither support nor oppose and 16.4% oppose or strongly oppose) bike lanes if it meant an increase in general property taxes. A network of trails and bike paths would improve quality of life for existing residents and serve as an attraction to visitors as well. With growing state and national concern over obesity, a network of trails and bike paths would provide more exercise opportunities for citizens close to home. The more variety and opportunity for trails, the greater the likelihood citizens will use them regularly.