

CHAPTER THREE

Stakeholder Needs Assessment



Overview

This Chapter of the report documents specific input received by the Village of Mount Pleasant community.

INTRODUCTION

During the Needs Assessment phase of the project the team set to identify strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats in and around the corridor by engaging a variety of stakeholders to identify specific community needs.

Following an initial kickoff meeting with the Project Task Force, which included a selected team of professionals and Village Staff, the team reviewed and analyzed existing plans, demographics, existing planning documents and current land uses to evaluate the existing conditions within the study area. The team also conducted stakeholder interviews and facilitated a public workshop at Mount Pleasant Village Hall to review existing resources and stakeholder characteristics and to brainstorm ideas on how to improve the corridor. The participants represented a broad cross section and included business and property owners, residents, and elected officials. Stakeholders were asked to share their thoughts, concerns and ideas regarding the corridor, current state of the areas strength and weaknesses, and future of the study area.

In the next phase, Plan Development, the consultant team reviewed goals, established vision and developed the framework for the corridor. In conclusion, the team completed the Final Maintenance Plan including step by step implementation actions to guide the Village over the next several years.

ENGAGEMENT METHOD



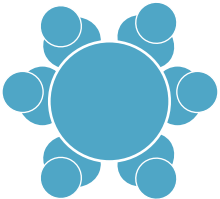
PREVIOUS PLAN SUMMARY



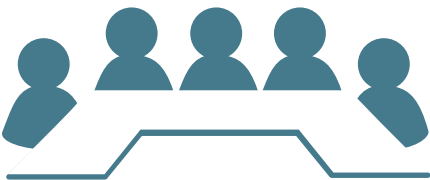
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS



FOCUS GROUPS



PUBLIC WORKSHOP



BOARD WORKSHOP



The following pages summarize existing planning efforts that may impact or overlap with the study area.

EXISTING PLAN SUMMARY

A Park and Open Space Plan for the Village of Mount Pleasant was completed in November of 2014 by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC). SEWRPC recommends further developing the Pike River Pathway into a local system of bicycle and pedestrian trails. Chapter IV of the report carefully summarizes existing planning documents and identifies overlapping goals and objectives. The plans included:

- Village of Mount Pleasant Bicycle Plan 2030
- Village of Mount Pleasant Comprehensive Land Use Plan
- Racine County Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan
- Root River Watershed Restoration Plan
- Root River Revitalization Plan
- Des Plains River Watershed Plan
- Racine County Farmland Preservation Plan
- Public Facilities Needs Assessment and Impact Fee Ordinance
- Regional and County Park and Open Space Plans
- Regional Natural Areas Plan

These planning documents describe relevant regional, County and Village based recommendations, defined goals and objectives summarized, principles and standards used in guiding the update of the plan. The RootWorks – Revitalizing Racine’s Urban River Corridor plan was not summarized in the SEWRPC plan but establishes a vision that links Root River access and innovative stormwater management and fits in with regional watershed planning efforts. Relevant recreational based goals and objectives are further summarized and highlight below. (For a full list, see the SEWRPC plan.)

PREVIOUS PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Village Master and Racine County Multi-Jurisdictional Plan

Goals

- Preserve open space to enhance the total quality of the environment, maximize essential natural resource availability, give form and structure to urban development, and provide opportunities for a full range of outdoor

recreation activities.

- Maintain the environmental assets of the community and develop methods to protect and preserve valuable natural features, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces, ground water resources and flood plains.

Objectives

- Provide a comprehensive system of parks and outdoor recreation sites and facilities to allow County residents adequate opportunities to participate in resource and non-resource-oriented outdoor recreation activities, including water-based outdoor recreation activities.
- Provide an integrated and accessible system of trails that will provide County residents with a transportation alternative to motor vehicles.
- Foster social, educational, recreational and leisure-time opportunities for residents.

Pike River Watershed Plan

Goal

- Identify, enhance and protect important natural areas and provide open space for appropriate recreational benefits.

Objectives

- Increase appropriate water and land-based recreational opportunities to the Pike River.
- Identify and protect open space that provides important green infrastructure, preserves corridor connections and can provide appropriate recreational opportunities.
- Develop recommendations for adoption of conservation and/or low impact design standards for all new development or redevelopment.
- Increase environmental and recreational stewardship with volunteers and instructors.
- Create environmental interpretive signage on trails explaining watershed and water quality.

RootWorks – Revitalizing Racine’s Urban River Corridor

Goals

- Maintaining a high quality of life, and maximizing a competitive edge to attract new businesses and residents while supporting existing businesses and benefiting community members.
- Advancing local and regional transit connections and amenities, including the use of the Racine Metro Transit Center for all modes of public transportation to align the City with funding opportunities.

Strategies

- Create a sense of place
- Stimulate economic growth
- Allow public access and interaction
- Improve water quality

Ramcke Parcel Park Concept Alternative 2

In 2001, the Village Of Mount Pleasant hired a consultant to develop schematic design alternatives to create a preliminary concept plan for Biex-Ramcke Park. The preferred concept was Alternative 2 and includes (4) ball diamonds with bleachers, restroom and concession facility, parking for approximately 204 vehicles, open air shelter and playground, Pike River Trailhead located within the Park, Pike River project excess fill soils use to create sculpted hills, a sledding area, habitat restoration (including a prairie/savannah and woodland areas) and internal trails that connect features of the park with the future Phase 8 and 9 Pike River Trail segments. (See Appendix for Concept Plan)

PREVIOUS PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Planning in the Pike River Corridor should be rooted in the goals, objectives and strategies established by these other related and overlapping planning efforts. Recreational strategies and recommendations should serve to meet the visions of these efforts and incorporate work already completed.



Stakeholder Needs

Public Open House held November 6, 2014

In 2014, the Consultant team completed a Needs Assessment that consisted of individual stakeholder interviews, focus groups, a public workshop and Village board meeting.

INTRODUCTION

Pike River Corridor stakeholders include Mount Pleasant government officials, property and business owners and residents. To gain insight from a variety of viewpoints the consultant team conducted a series of stakeholder meetings, interviews, focus group discussions and a public forum to gather critical knowledge and discuss improvements to the Pike River Corridor.

FOCUS GROUPS AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Community members representing a variety of local interests were asked to participate in one of five focus groups. Focus group meetings were held with various stakeholders and Village staff members. Focus group sessions and individual interviews were held on October 28th and 29th, 2014 and consisted of participants representing interests of the following groups:

Educational and Recreational Organizations

- UW Extension
- Racine Family YMCA
- West Ridge Elementary School
- Case High School
- Racine Unified School District
- Hike it Baby-Racine
- Racine Cyclery

Environmental Organizations and Agencies

- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Hoy Audubon Society
- River Bend Nature Center
- Sierra Club Southeast Gateway Group
- Racine County Land Conservation District
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife
- Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

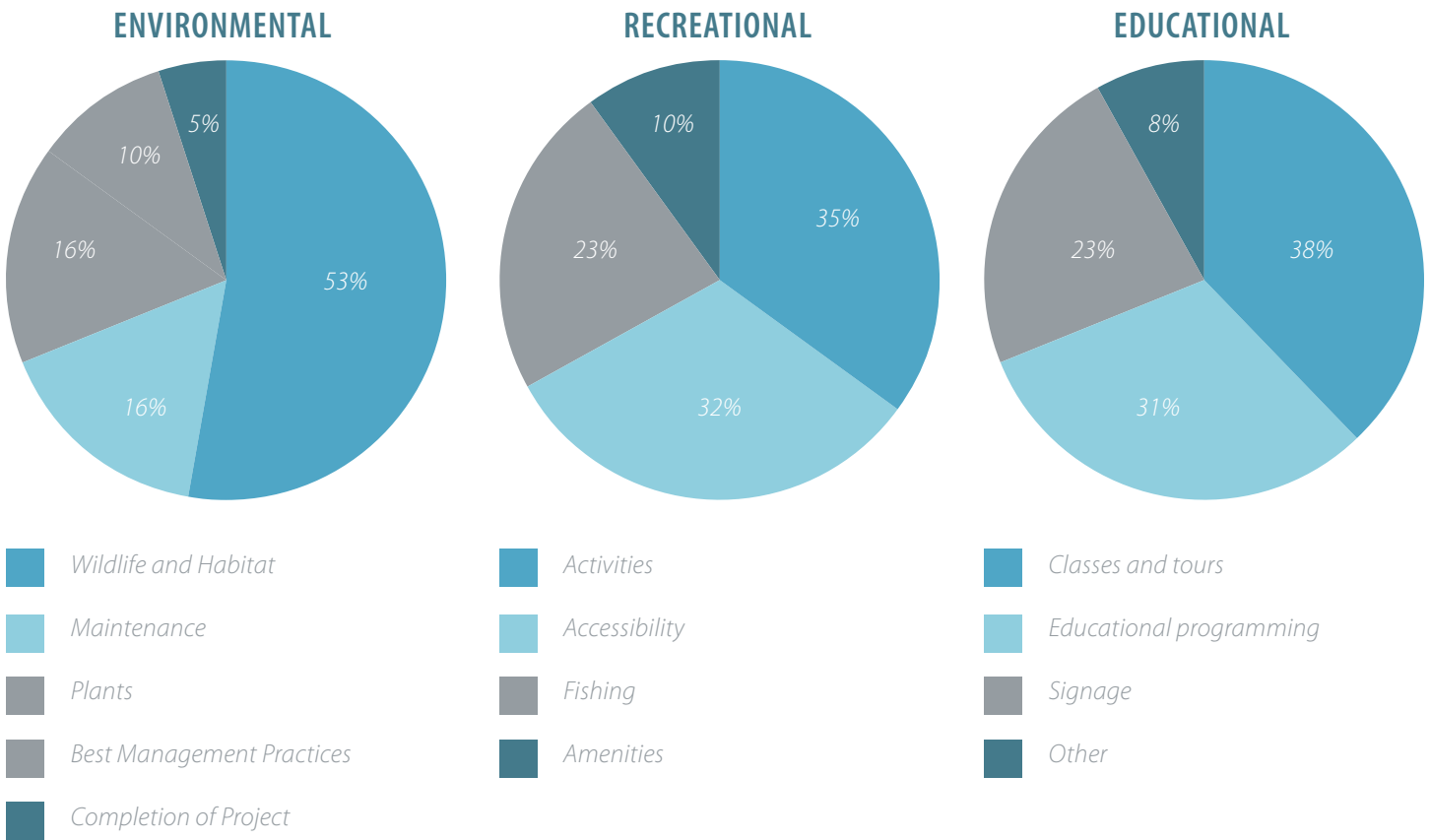
Attendees were asked “Based on what you know and have learned, what changes would most improve the Pike River Corridor?” Stakeholders were asked to respond to question for each of the following categories:

- i. Environmental
- ii. Recreational
- iii. Educational
- iv. Other

Ideas and comments for the Environment fell under five overarching themes including: Wildlife and Habitat, Maintenance, Plants, Best Management Practices and Completion of the project, with respondents saying things like “save the wildlife,” “natural vs. blacktop,” “fish and bird habitats,” “enhance vegetation,” “schedule maintenance,” “poop,” and “control invasive species.”

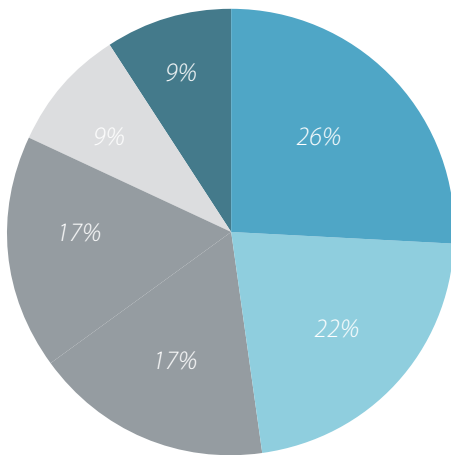
Ideas and comments for Recreation fell under one of four themes; Activities, Accessibility, Fishing or Amenities with respondents stating they would like to see more planned marathon runs of varying lengths, better signage, biking trails, bridges spanning Highways 20 and 11, deepening the ponds for fishing, increased accessibility, provide mile markers and picnic areas.

Ideas and comments for Education fell under one of four themes; Classes and tours, Educational programming, Signage and Other. Attendees felt strongly about the potential of the corridor to be used as an education tool stating they would like to see “natural center at the northeast corner of Biex-Ramcke Property, community awareness, participation and volunteerism, to use the corridor to teach about water resources, structured tours, photo walks , promotion of use by schools, education signage. (See Public Engagement Summary in Appendix).



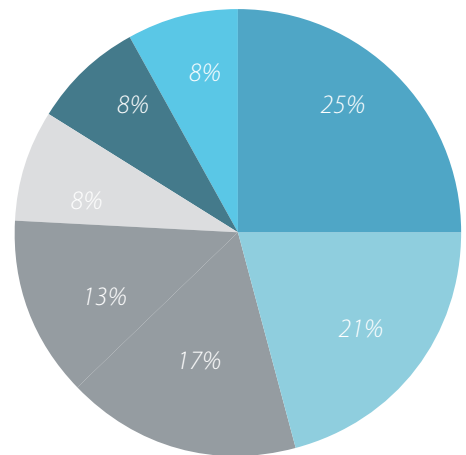
When asked to provide ideas unrelated to a specific topic resident responses fell under six different categories: Parking and motorized vehicular access, Amenities, Maintenance, Stewardship programs, Dog access and Events. Residents felt that the biggest problem facing the Pike River Corridor in Mount Pleasant was support, socially, economically and environmentally). Additional responses fell into the following categories: regulations and enforcement, maintenance and water quality and habitats, with individual responses stating "maintenance," "flash flooding," "runoff," "keep motorized vehicles out," "trash not picked up," "dog owners need to pick up their poop," "abuse by public" etc.

OTHER



- Parking and motorized vehicular access
- Amenities
- Maintenance
- Stewardship programs
- Dog Access
- Events

BIGGEST PROBLEM



- Support
- Regulations and enforcement
- Maintenance
- Water quality and habitats
- Access
- Invasives
- Other



Recreation Goals and Objectives

Recreational goal and objectives emerged out of the Inventory and Analysis and Needs Assessment phases of the project. This section summarizes the strengths and opportunities, threats and weaknesses for recreation in the Pike River Corridor.

RECREATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Based on the analysis of the Pike River Corridor recreational resources the consultant team recommends the focusing on the following goals and objectives for recreation in the corridor. (See Chapter 2 beginning on page 93).

Goal

Establish the Pike River Corridor as a recreational destination and regional pathway for its residents and visitors.

Objectives

By 2020, visitors and residents will:

- Easily find, access and navigate the corridor trails by car, bicycle and on foot.
- Experience a series of passive recreational activities.
- Learn about the Pike River Corridor.

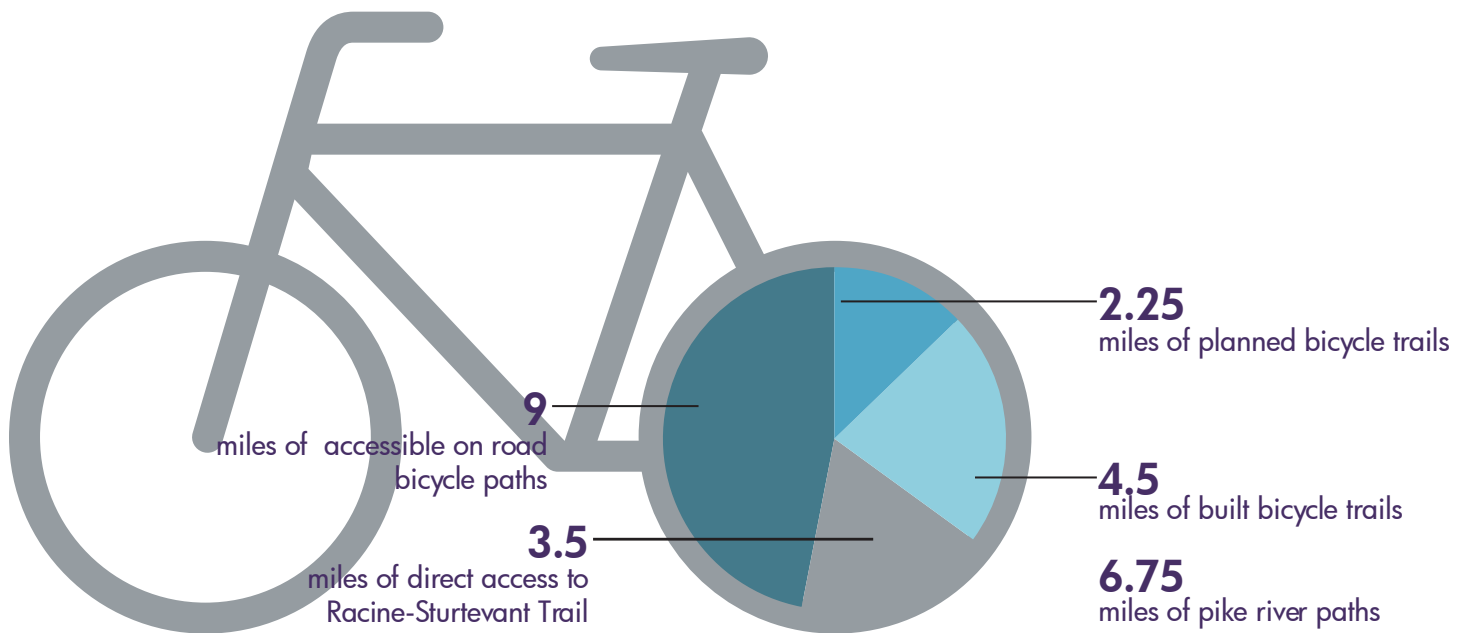
STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Strengths

Based on the analysis of the Pike River Corridor recreational resources the consultant team has identified strengths and promising opportunities.

Natural Resources and Recreational Opportunities

Pike River Corridor natural resources tucked into a variety of development types create a unique opportunity for recreation and education. Users currently benefit from the variety of adjacent uses, natural amenities, and wildlife sightings as they stroll, ride or glide along the trail. Others seek out opportunities to fish one of the newly constructed ponds. The existing built and planned trails indicate that the Village is committed and invested in corridor improvements. The corridor is ripe with potential to teach visitors and residents about the natural systems hard at work. The trail system has the potential to connect to existing regional trails to cater to growing alternative transportation desires and recreational riding.



Village of Mount Pleasant Community

The Pike River Corridor has a variety of neighbors ranging from residents to property and businesses owners that are support of the project and appreciate the value of the corridor. Several schools are within a mile of the corridor and stand to benefit from the educational potential of the area as well as from recreational and athletics use. Active organizations and groups use the trail currently for exercise, birding, track team workouts, dog walking and nature observation.

Opportunities

Active Use and Healthy Living

Residents have an affinity for the Pike River Corridor and improvements that have been constructed to date. The Corridor is lined with potential users: community organizations and local groups, residents and their families, businesses and their employees, schools and their students. The corridor is already being used by residents but further development sensitive to the ecological functions, additional passive and active recreational offerings would further activate the area.

Regional Connectivity

The location in the center of the municipal boundaries allows for

a unique opportunity to connect to other Mount Pleasant parks and open space. It further provides the potential to connect to local initiatives in nearby communities with similar goals for regional recreation, preservation and economic development.

Education

The Corridors natural and engineered characteristics make it a labyrinth of learning opportunities filled with potential outdoor laboratories, monitoring stations and classrooms. At every turn there are educational opportunities; systems like hydrology and lifecycles, habitats, wildlife, native plants, invasive species, agricultural practices, wind energy, history, health and wellness that can foster stewardship, ownership and pride amongst residents and visitors.

Stormwater, Habitat and Beautification

The Pike River provides the community with a unique natural asset that carries with it opportunities for habitat, wildlife and beauty for its residents and visitors. The improvements throughout the corridor provide not only a practical solution to periodic flooding but the system establishes important wildlife habitat while beautifying the area. These natural amenities provide opportunities for passive recreation and nature observation.

WEAKNESSES AND THREATS

Based on the analysis of the Pike River Corridor recreational resources the consultant team has identified weaknesses and potential threats.

Weaknesses

Vehicular Conflict and Safety

Several major transportation corridors bisect the corridor and these crossings present safe-crossing issues for bicycles and pedestrians. The span and traffic on Highways 20 and 11 present significant obstacles for users and fragment the environmental and recreational opportunities within the corridor.

Awareness and Access

Stakeholders indicated that they were not aware of the extent of the trails or how to access them. Part of this problem is related directly to the current status of construction, the roadway obstacles and others relate more to a need for marketing and signage. The phased construction has left a fragmented trail that is difficult to navigate. Connectivity is perhaps the most important aspect of developing a comprehensive system of trails that is easily and safely accessible and appealing to all potential users. In addition to the roadways fragmentation, the existing railroad to the west limits connectivity options for residents and prohibits direct access to the corridor.

Industrial Adjacency

One third of the project area resides within or adjacent to industrial land uses and unsightly utility power lines (American Transmission Company) that cause unsightly views and proximity to existing industrial properties (Quarry, School bus facility). The industrial uses, fitting in tradition with many other American communities have turned their back on the river. These adjacent uses also raise some concerns about environmental contamination, safety and security.

Recreational Limitations

While the Pike River is an important natural resource, the depth of the river provides significant challenges in the way of non-motorized boat activity. While portions of the river naturally allow for kayak and canoe access, the road crossings are highly engineered and would require paddlers to portage at major roadways due to culverts. There are also areas of the river that flow through private property making public use less desirable. Once Phases 7, 8 and 9 are constructed issues with slope steepness and erosion will be improved, however current conditions do not warrant access and raise safety concerns. Additionally floodway, floodplain, sensitive habitat, and restoration efforts may limit access opportunities to patrons.

Threats

Human Activity

The increased use of the corridor by residents and area businesses has a series of potential implications, including protection of ecological improvements within the corridor, protection of the agricultural uses adjacent to the corridor and the safety of

patrons. Food security of adjacent organic farms by exclusion of human and domesticated animal access is a Federal concern. The inclusion and expansion of recreational amenities could adversely affect ecological restoration efforts inadvertently. Improvements should be carefully considered to prevent thwarting these efforts.

Health and Safety

Vehicular crossings throughout the corridor pose threats to trail users. The crossings at Highways 20 and 11 are significant issues that must be resolved in order to safely connect people to all portions of the parkway. Once future phases are completed, there could be potential conflicts at existing intersections at Braun Road and County Highway KR. Trail users have expressed concerns about the safety of using the trail system year round, in particular in winter months. According to residents that trail is used in winter but is either not ploughed or is ploughed infrequently, making slipping on winter ice an issue.

Maintenance

Corridor improvements and investments will require ongoing maintenance to ensure the corridor meets quality expectations and reaches both its stormwater and recreational potential. Currently there have been reported issues with trash and unlawful dumping, signs of minor vandalism, weeds encroaching on trails and animal waste.

CHAPTER THREE

Needs Assessment

Key Points

The following list identifies key findings in public engagement and stakeholder input.

STAKEHOLDER IMPLICATIONS

- As evidenced by previous planned efforts, the growing population will demand more parks and open space be provided for residents.
- Most residents appreciate the River Corridor and the improvements being made. They are anxious about maintenance issues and uncertain about project support.
- The biggest environmental changes that would improve the corridor included improvements that specifically created respites and habitats for wildlife.
- Many residents feel that general maintenance and year round safety is an issue.
- Residents are concerns about safely crossing State Highways 20 and 11, as they have proven to be challenging obstacles to pedestrians and cyclists.
- Many residents would like to see an increase of activities and improved corridor access.
- The biggest educational changes that would improve the corridor included creating educational programming, outdoor classes and tours.
- Residents indicated that they had no knowledge of certain phases of the trail or access points. Marketing and advertising of the corridor, signage, wayfinding and access are desirable improvements.
- Residents would benefit from increased accessibility and additional parking opportunities.
- According to the public the largest problems facing the Pike River Corridor are support (socially and economically), regulations and enforcement and maintenance.
- Utilization of the corridor by visiting schools/programs will require special considerations for bus transportation access and parking.

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