Illuminating a Path to the River
Conceptual Design Guidelines for Connecting Riverbank Park & Downtown Flint
The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was established January 1997 as specified in Public Act 197 of 1975. The DDA was formed to provide for the rehabilitation, redevelopment and revitalization of blighted areas in the Downtown.

The DDA's governing board is appointed by the Mayor with approval of the City Council. Board members must have an interest in the activities of the DDA.

The Downtown Development Authority promotes economic growth and development in the heart of the City. While not a City department, the DDA essentially acts as that arm of City Government dedicated solely to the revitalization of Downtown.

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1 The Ruth Mott Foundation established its grantmaking programs in January 2001 with four trustees and two staff members, and just two months later, rolled out its first docket of grants: $1,291,014 was paid to 32 organizations.

At the same time, Applewood—the historic estate of C.S. and Ruth Mott— is operated by the Foundation and is responsible for maintaining the home, grounds and outbuildings, and for coordinating public events on the property.

In the past five years, the Foundation has grown to more than 26 staff and 240 volunteers. Activities are overseen by six trustees who award grants three times a year. Acting as mentor, partner, and catalyst, the Foundation promotes community vitality through support of programs focused on arts, beautification and health promotion. In 2005 its funding commitment for programs was $6.5 million.

Applewood has continued to develop popular public events such as the Fall Harvest Festival and the holiday walk. It also has a broad outreach program in place, sharing the Foundation’s commitment to stewardship of the land, as first embraced by the Motts, with school children and community groups.

As Applewood and the grantmaking programs have evolved and matured together, the Foundation has become an important resource in Genesee County – just as Mrs. Mott designed it to be. Today it is both a major funding source for the revitalization of the area and, through Applewood’s activities, a center for community engagement, enrichment, and celebration of the area’s rich heritage and diversity.

2 Flint DDA website: http://www.cityofflint.com/dda/dda.htm

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1 RMF website: http://www.ruthmottfoundation.org

2 Flint DDA website: http://www.cityofflint.com/dda/dda.htm
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Front Matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements &amp; Authors’ Statement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part I: Illuminating a Path to the River</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Initial Concept Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting Elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Conceptual Design Guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Guideline Illustrations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part II: The Placemaking Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Phase I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverbank Park, South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckham Alley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Phase II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverbank Park, North</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part III: From Placemaking to Vision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contextual Maps &amp; Diagrams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckham Alley Plans &amp; Concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverbank Park Plans &amp; Concepts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part IV: From Vision to Reality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Implementation &amp; Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Buckham Alley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 Block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 Block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 Block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 Block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancement Options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Riverbank Park, South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphitheatre Block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphitheatre Key Map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Stall Block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Stall Key Map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancement Options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Riverbank Park, North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverbank Park - North Key Map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Fountain Block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Wall Block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archimedes Screw Block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancement Options</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part V: Appendix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Additional Resources &amp; Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizations, Products &amp; Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Funding Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Funding Sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverbank Park Donor List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Meeting Summaries, Reports &amp; Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flint Club Summer 2007 Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverbank Park North Options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architectural Wind Trubine Study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We would like to take a moment and recognize the fantastic opportunity we’ve been given to not only engage in the discussion of how downtown Flint can revitalize itself, but to present some of our suggestions & ideas as to the form and design of how that revitalization can happen. We’ve walked every step of this process with not just our project partners, but with city & community stakeholders, as well. As vested members of the Flint community, we recognize that this project has the potential to impact the quality of life of our community for generations to come. What you see here isn’t just our ideas, but your ideas, too. Our intent is not to tell people what has to happen with their property or how they have to do things; our intent is to put shape and vision to the desire to improve several key downtown assets and provide an exciting signature project for the DDA’s core vision and mission statements. This includes providing the DDA with the necessary resources & ideas to put a plan into action for the rehabilitation of Buckham & Brush Alleys and portions of Riverbank Park to the best of our abilities, knowledge and experience. The rest is a great starting point for the further discussion, exploration and development of ideas for these spaces and the role they play in revitalizing our community. It’s a way to get others as involved, committed and excited as we are about these possibilities and how we can work together to make our community as great as it can be.

Sincerely,
ROWE Professional Services Company

Doug Schultz, RLA, Director of Landscape Architecture

Justin Sprague, Planner

Shaun Smakal, Graduate Landscape Architect
FROM PLACEMAKING TO A VISION FOR DOWNTOWN: Introduction

This project took root several years ago with a series of conversations between civic-minded individuals and organizations interested in transforming a vacant lot in downtown Flint. As the conversation grew & evolved, so did the interested parties and their ideas. The city was changing too, with downtown redevelopment fostered by a variety of public and private stakeholders that has led to ongoing investments in infrastructure. Two project areas emerged from these developments: the downtown alleyways and Flint Riverbank Park.

New water lines running through the alleyways parallel to Saginaw Street—Flint’s “Main Street”—meant that the alleys were going to be torn up and reconstructed. The Flint DDA saw this as an excellent opportunity to rebuild these spaces as a more walkable, pedestrian-oriented thoroughfare in line with both their vision for the downtown and their mission as a DDA. Throughout the city’s history, Buckham Alley and Brush Alley have not only been the “back door” for buildings along Saginaw Street, but the main entrance for many warehouses, factories, bars and other businesses located along the alleys themselves. Today their potential is inhibited by haphazard traffic, unsightly appearances and unsafe conditions. While the alleys have been in decline for several decades, they present a great opportunity for reuse by residents; for new and existing developments and businesses; and to link the many places and activities happening downtown to each other.

The second project area is one of the places and activity centers that would benefit from these improved linkages. Riverbank Park lies along the Flint River at its intersection with downtown. The park was designed by Lawrence Halprin as part of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flood control project and completed in 1976. In 1982, it won the American Society of Landscape Architects Honor Award for Parks and Recreation Planning. The intricate and complex design scheme created a series of five separate but connected block parks that included market stalls, an amphitheatre, grand fountain and many water-based site features that incorporated flows from both storm water and the Flint River. Over the years these parks have suffered from a lack of upkeep and maintenance and are in need of reinvestment to make them safe, accessible and usable again. With the amphitheatre block remaining an important event space on the riverfront, occupying a strong visual focus in the downtown and in the conscious of local residents, Riverbank Park is another existing asset that could be capitalized on.

Both of these projects gave the Flint Downtown Development Authority, with help from the Ruth Mott Foundation, the chance to explore options for using these improvements to help create a safe and vibrant pedestrian realm to reinforce the numerous redevelopment projects in the downtown and surrounding areas.

The initial concept in these explorations was based on the existing condition of Saginaw Street with its “Vehicle City” arches that create a unique street corridor, especially at night. We carried over the role that light plays on Saginaw Street to the alleyways by illuminating a path to the riverfront. The conceptual design for the park and alleys was refined further by four guidelines that were derived from the public meetings and workshops: 1) Create a series of interconnected vibrant spaces that flow to the river; 2) Design the alleys and park as the catalyst for influencing the character, function and form of future urban landscapes and development; 3) Express the function and infrastructure of the alleys and park in a way that is visible and strengthens their pedestrian character; and 4) Use regenerative (“green”) design practices to promote long-term social, economic and environmental sustainability. These guidelines work to unify the project across the whole district, right down to specific site elements.

Due to the many different components and challenges associated with addressing the park blocks and most of the downtown blocks of alleys, the project was split into phases. Phase I incorporated the southern portion of Riverbank Park (Amphitheatre and Market Stall Blocks) and three blocks of Buckham Alley (two full blocks and two half-blocks). Phase II will focus directly on the much more challenging northern portions of Riverbank Park (Grand Fountain, Water Wall and Archimedes Screw Blocks). As with other projects in the downtown area, the public consultation process was seen as a key component to the project and Project for Public Spaces (PPS) was brought on to help gather public input & conduct meetings and walk-throughs of the sites. After these sessions, workshops lead by the landscape architects involved consultants and site specialists involved with past maintenance to distill the public comments into workable, short- and long-term design concepts. Once the concepts had been fleshed out, the drafts were presented with a variety of real-world precedents, examples and elements to the clients and key stakeholders for additional feedback before final concepts and cost estimates were prepared. Recommendations outlined in this report are already taking shape through continued collaboration on the design & construction of a new parking ramp along the alley and discussions of potentially using it as a basis for a form-based zoning overlay for the downtown.

There is a great amount of energy and excitement about all of the development happening in Flint. The downtown business and residential market is slowly reclaiming its once vacant and abandoned buildings. The urban universities and colleges are dedicated to engaging the city as a college town and there are many public, non-profit and private organizations working together to make the city a better place to live, work and play. At the heart of it all sits Riverbank Park and Buckham & Brush Alleys. Each is poised to make a vital contribution, not only to the existing and future framework of the City of Flint, but to how these places are potentially used and the position they hold in the public eye for decades to come. With this report to the DDA, they are well positioned to take a leading role in balancing the economic, social and environmental factors influencing not only the sites, but the many consultants, key stakeholders, public and clients. The Flint DDA has the opportunity to take the lead on the many possibilities these locations and public input have engendered; provide a cohesive framework for the many projects happening (and yet to happen) downtown; and give the city and their stated vision and mission for the downtown a new life and perspective.

The significance of this project is enormous for the City of Flint as it represents one of the most comprehensive and dramatic visions yet established for downtown. Great strides have been taken to present a level of design and presentation above and beyond expectations. In efforts to present as many realistic options as possible, many vendors, horticulturalists and alternative energy specialists were consulted to not only provide a good estimate for our proposals, but to strengthen the long-term role of design, sustainability, green infrastructure and alternative energy in our urban realms.

Finally, the importance these spaces have in the minds and eyes of the public, not just today, but long into the future, is vitally important. The use of New York-based PPS and the attention given to an award-winning Low-impact Halprin park are both tremendous assets and challenges to the design process. This report presents solutions suited to address the often messy and chaotic nature of urban space redevelopment and approaches these projects in a way that benefits not only the public and the PPA, but the project partners and design professions as well. With similar situations and projects continuing to engender a lot of press and controversy across the nation, this project advocates for an innovative process and forward-thinking solutions that not only works in Flint, but other places across the state, region and nation, as well.
The Buckham & Brush Alley project has been a vital component of the placemaking process and in guiding how downtown Flint is linked to Riverbank Park. With much of the current downtown revitalization occurring along Saginaw Street between University (Third) Avenue and Third Street, this district will establish an important framework for reconnecting existing places in the city with each other and their urban context, and for promoting future development and urbanism.

Possibilities for the kind of character that the alleys could convey after a successful redesign would be especially evident in a late-night, wintertime drive down Saginaw Street. If you travelled south down Saginaw Street and pull up to the intersection with Martin Luther King Boulevard, straight in front of you would be the Amphitheater Block of Riverbank Park, with its illuminated Christmas tree guiding your view into the heart of the park. South Saginaw Street and its arches would branch off to the left, blanketing the snowy streetscape with a warm yellow glow. Above it all would be Citizen’s Bank Weather Ball, its blinking blue light warning of colder temps and more snow. This glow—like the arches and weather ball themselves—is very much a signature of downtown Flint.

The existing condition of Buckham and Brush Alleys is very different from the description above and from what they could potentially be. Except for a few business signs and the rare security light, the alleys are not well lit at night, are poorly identified and have no obvious linkages or connections to Saginaw Street. In their current form, the alleys represent a great opportunity to build upon the illuminated signature of downtown. Giving Buckham and Brush Alleys their own unique glow and elements to help them connect to other downtown locations would be building upon an image that has already been established.

The Capitol Theatre, with its brightly lit & refurbished marquee, captures the essence of what the alley “glow” should be about. The theatre has been identified as an important part of downtown, and efforts to renovate & restore the structure have been planned. With the new MTA transit center right across the street and the theatre’s ability to accommodate everything from concerts & movies to guest lectures & plays, the renovated Capitol Theatre will serve as an important anchor for the alleeways.

Second Street provides an excellent opportunity to connect between the Capitol Theatre along Brush Alley and the start of Buckham Alley. This corridor can highlight the connection between Saginaw Street and the alleys. The intersection of Second & Saginaw can become a location where an emphasis on interactive displays for information, news and entertainment is made. WNEM-TV 5’s new downtown location provides an exciting scene for public interviews, a “talk spot” for recording public opinions and other interactive media opportunities.

The northern half of the 400 block of Buckham Alley provides an opportunity to do something unique. Instead of the typical 33’-wide alley, the alley opens up to more than 100’ wide. This is where the new parking ramp will be built upon an existing dirt lot. This condition allows for a wide array of possibilities, from an urban square or outdoor pavilion with an audio/visual tower for music, movies, art & events, to more urban infill development reflective of the First Street Lofts.

Buckham Alley appears to be blocked at the Character Inn, but that’s not the case. In reality, the alley and its pedestrian functions are deflected through the plaza at Saginaw & Union Street. This redirection orients visual and physical access into the new gateway proposed for the ice rink & Riverbank Park. From here it connects the alley & downtown with the riverfront, Flint River Trail and the activities and renovations proposed for those venues.

As this project evolved, stakeholders expressed that the alleys should have their own character—one that neither copied elements of nor detracted from Saginaw Street. With the necessities of daily services to local businesses & utilities and the shift of pedestrian activities that would primarily occur between weekdays, evenings & weekends, it was obvious that a transition between day & night, work & play was not only needed, but presented an exciting opportunity. The transformative nature of downtown’s revitalization, public/private uses, activities, seasons and a variety of other events can becelebrated by taking advantage of this opportunity. While Saginaw Street defines the signature gateway into downtown Flint’s active working/business district during the day, the alleys can become Flint’s vibrant, lively and inviting entertainment district during the night.
ILLUMINATING A PATH TO THE RIVER: Lighting Elements

A/V & Light Towers
Strong vertical features that incorporate programmable and interactive audio & visual components that direct or are directed by adjacent activities or environmental factors.

Event Lighting
These lighting elements are limited only by the imagination. They can highlight cultural, civic and seasonal holidays, festivals, special occasions or events. Applications can be temporary or permanent.

Signage & Identification
Creative and functional 3-D, vertical & horizontal elements that identify locations, businesses, services and advertisements.

Lighting Units
A selection of in-grade, wall/ceiling, bollard & pedestrian lights available today that illustrate the diversity of applications, styles and materials. Larger fixtures should be low maintenance and Dark Sky compliant.

Applications
These photos show real-world applications similar to proposed conditions along the alleys and within the parks.

"The design does not disguise the utilitarian nature of the building, but instead seeks to celebrate this aspect as part of the design aesthetic. The design solution uses colored laminated glass channels, photovoltaic panels, ribbed pre-cast concrete panels, and steel mesh to render a unique civic presence. The dynamic integration of these materials makes the structure function as an urban curtain in its vibrant context."
James Mary O’Connor, AIA
Civic Center Parking Lot, Santa Clara, CA.
Moore Ruble Yudell Architects and Planners
1st LEED Certified Parking Structure
A framework is needed to transition smoothly from the “glow” concept into the conceptual design of Buckham and Brush Alleys. The guiding statements of the Flint DDA have been important reference points (see side-bar, Left). These elements have been the core of the project’s intent and scope since its earliest inception. Other key references at the heart of this transition are the opinions and comments made by stakeholders during the public meetings and workshops held in November 2007, in collaboration with PPS and UM-Flint Outreach. The five principles (see side-bar, Right) developed from these meetings and explained in further detail by PPS in its report, “Flint Alleys: New Directions for Downtown,” highlight the key goals of this framework. Since then, further meetings with a narrower and more focused approach have helped to refine, inform and explore the project—especially the concepts and proposals for Riverbank Park.

With all this in mind, we distilled the principles, statements and public input into four conceptual design guidelines:

Guideline One: Create a series of interconnected vibrant spaces that flow to the river.

Guideline Two: Design the alleys as the catalyst for influencing the character, function and form of future urban development and landscapes.

Guideline Three: Express the function and infrastructure of the alleys in a way that is visible and strengthens their pedestrian character.

Guideline Four: Use regenerative (“green”) design practices to promote long-term social, economic and environmental sustainability.

These guidelines are explained in greater detail in the following pages. Explanations include a greater definition of the guidelines, specific goals for meeting the guidelines in the conceptual design and example imagery of how some of these goals look in similar situations. These situations are taken from other examples from the City of Flint and, where appropriate, from similar cities and urban conditions from around North America and the rest of the globe.
Create a series of interconnected vibrant spaces that flow to the river: GUIDELINE ONE

A natural stream channel is defined by its rough, churning riffles and clear, swift-moving runs that supply the deep, sheltered pools with the necessary ingredients to make aquatic life thrive. Much like a stream, Buckham and Brush Alleys and Riverbank Park should use a well-defined palette of materials and site elements and a unified system of lighting, landscape and built form to create a natural "flow" that draws pedestrians through the alleys and gives life to the "poools" of activities, businesses, and public/private spaces they feed into. Pedestrian-focused, "walkable urbanism," is nothing new and is the way our communities were developed prior to the influence of the automobile. By re-establishing this emphasis on pedestrians, we’ll be helping to support the growing movement of economic and cultural investment back into cities like Flint.

Each principle impacts how the alley is designed and shaped at different levels, but the one with the greatest influence on the design of the alley is the improvement and reinforcement of linkages. It’s our intent to use the alleysway and their infrastructure to establish a cohesive series of interconnected spaces that flow through the district and link its many services, facilities, businesses and functions. This train of thought stems directly from the importance of linkages and connections expressed by the public, and applies it across the whole district—from the urban core to the riverfront. It also reflects the interconnected nature of natural systems and the manner in which landscapes influence—and are influenced by—these flows. This includes the creation of "focal points" within the district that work at a variety of scales—pedestrian, alley, street, block, district and city—to provide a physical and visual connection to the alleys and park and highlight the linkages inside and outside this area to its surroundings.

Linkages help foster increased densities, diverse activities and the constant mixing of cultures & people that define great urban places. The alleys, acting at the core of a fine-grained, walkable, pedestrian framework in downtown Flint, will impart considerable potential to enriching past, current and future urban developments in downtown.

Left: Large-scale murals can give interest to large blank walls [like those on the old Hyatt Regency hotel] during the day, while lighting can extend their interest into the evening hours. Portland, Oregon.

Right: Whether they are a stationary audio/visual tower, lit marquee or an illuminated wind turbine, these features act as focal points from inside and outside the alleways that highlight key destinations.

Goal 1
Create a unified character of site furnishings, elements and ground plane that reflect Flint’s industrial heritage & materials.

Goal 2
Establish focal points to draw people to and guide them through the alleys.

Goal 3
Create points of access & interaction between the alleys, the cross streets & Saginaw Street.

Goal 4
Enhance the connection between Brush & Buckham Alley at 2nd Street and seek out ways to strengthen and create other connections.

Goal 5
Use a materials palette based on surrounding character & components used in new, intricate and diverse ways.
Defining this district entails three primary design objectives. The first of these is to extend local perspectives and practice by looking at the alleys and downtown in a way that is not constrained to any specific block, parcel or right-of-way. By looking at urban forms and landscapes with a trained eye, many more opportunities & possibilities can be identified. The second objective is to design for rehabilitation of the alley corridor in a way that captures opportunities to enhance & expand the pedestrian landscape. When done in this way, design is not just an afterthought, but is an important consideration the many opportunities, extra “left-over” spaces and around them can be utilized to enhance that definition and provide a flexible framework for continued growth and renewal.

The pro-active approach we have engaged in takes into consideration the many opportunities, extra “left over” spaces and conversations with stakeholders. This allows us to make the connection between these places and their character, function and form that would otherwise go unnoticed as stand-alone projects. These observations and insights can be used to enhance not just the alleys, but adjacent redevelopment and public spaces in a way that reinforces these activities and strengthens the sense of place they engender.

As much as downtown’s up and downturns have influenced Buckham and Brush Alleys, they have engendered a strong influence themselves. This is obvious in the form and arrangement of many of the buildings in downtown Flint built prior to WWII. The intricacies of Flint’s urbanism were impacted after WWII by large-scale developments like the former Hyatt Regency and the Flint State Office Building. These projects disconnected the city from the riverfront that it had just invested so much time and money in revitalizing and reconnecting. In this light, this project shouldn’t merely be about cleaning up the downtown alleys or parks. It should be about defining a district and identifying ways that the alleys, parks and the marginalized spaces in and around them can be utilized to enhance that definition and provide a flexible framework for continued growth and renewal.

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By intentionally adopting existing infrastructure elements—utility meters, fire hydrants, manhole covers, security bollards, etc.—and proposed infrastructure elements—wind turbines, solar panels, stormwater gullies and infiltration beds, green walls, etc.—into the palette of materials and site elements of the alleys, they will become a unique component of these urban landscapes. This serves several functions: it enhances the alleys’ overall appearance and character; illustrates & defines how natural and man-made processes can interact sustainably in urban environments in a way that is not mutually exclusive; and strengthens the effectiveness and importance of sustainable design practices in the public’s mind.

It’s important to note that these spaces, in their present condition, are a tangled, chaotic range of utility services and infrastructure vital to a city’s function. Efforts to keep these things out of the way and hidden have relegated the alleys to the urban version of the “back yard.” Buckham and Brush Alleys have additional layers of pedestrian access and daily vehicle traffic and parking that have typically been reduced or removed completely from alleys in similar cities in recent decades. The fact that these uses have remained in Flint is a testament to the alleys’ ongoing function, importance and character within the City of Flint.

Removing parking and limiting access to business and service uses is important to enhancing the alleys’ pedestrian-oriented nature. It’s important that their functional and infrastructural uses not be removed or hidden away. Instead, the alleys’ function should transform (a potential event in-and-of itself) from a pedestrian-friendly, active business corridor during the day, to a vibrant, pedestrian-only entertainment district & corridor during the evening. Making the daily functions and infrastructure of the city and local businesses visible & intriguing not only enhances the sense of place and character within the district, but also makes efforts to improve their sustainability and appeal.

Left: Manual/automatic security bollards are one way to make a safe, quick and easy transition from vehicular to pedestrian space after business hours.

Right: Secured access to residences, businesses & offices will reduce security risks and control access to private areas. New York, NY.

For Right: Bollards, special paving & at-grade crossings provide improved safety for pedestrian crossings. Vancouver, BC.

For Left: These images show alternative designs for treating stormwater through a constructed bio-infiltration garden.

Left & Below: The use of small, quiet, wind turbines to supply local lights or buildings. Vancouver, BC.

Below, right: Fence/lighting treatment to beautify and enhance an electrical substation. Georgia Tech, Atlanta, GA.

Left & Below: Examples of how restaurants and bars can take advantage of dedicated flex-space and activate an alley. L-R: Portland, Maine, and Prague, Czech Republic.

Left: Existing parking in Buckham Alley; cars often use the alley as a short cut. The mass of cars parked behind the buildings blocks access and creates a space that is difficult to access, unfriendly, and un flexible.

By removing parking, half the alleyway is dedicated to more interesting, productive and flexible uses. Brush & Buckham Alleys, Downtown Flint, Michigan.

Goal 1 Increase accessibility & safety for pedestrians through pavement treatments & details, site elements, etc.

Goal 2 Promote green infrastructure within the alleys, i.e. infiltrate storm water runoff through pervious pavements or bioswales, make human and environmental systems more visibly appealing and dramatic, implement alternative energy solutions, layer multiple uses into features, etc.

Goal 3 Remove car parking & limit vehicular access to business uses and loading/unloading to specific times during the work week.

Goal 4 Provide space & supporting elements for adjacent buildings, their functions and other flexible uses.
Regenerative design is a practice that incorporates natural processes into the design and function of landscapes—especially urban ones. Regenerative design takes the idea of “sustainability” one step further. This practice doesn’t stop at maintaining a condition, but seeks to enhance, repair or reintroduce the function and benefits of natural flows and conditions.

One practical example of regenerative design is eliminating impermeable paving and surfaces. Allowing storm water to infiltrate the ground serves several functions of sustainability. First, it reduces the amount of very costly engineered infrastructure, treatment and maintenance typically associated with underground storm water systems. Second, it allows for the recharge of groundwater and aquifers that feed streams, plants, drinking water and other natural & human systems. Third, permeable pavements can be much more aesthetically pleasing than traditional paving options and enhance the appeal and quality of public spaces. They also cultivate the importance of water within the public consciousness.

Regenerative design also applies to human systems and development. Using design and developments that promote walkable urbanism was something human societies did exclusively for nearly 5,000 years, prior to the introduction of the car. This type of development is seeing a growing resurgence as people begin to look for something that functions better in adapting to transitioning economies and society. Walkable communities reduce car dependence and improve people’s health as they walk and bike more. The reuse and rehabilitation of existing buildings and infrastructure can regenerate & enhance neighborhoods and communities. The recycling, repairing and salvaging of materials and development of alternative energies such as wind, solar and bio-diesel present new opportunities for economic investment. As we adapt to using a regenerative approach in how we develop and live, the impact we have on the environment is also reduced.

 Regardless of its application in human or natural systems, regenerative design is a substantial commitment to sustainability and the redevelopment of Flint. | Use regenerative design practices to promote long-term sustainability: GUIDELINE FOUR | Left: The narrow alley & tight-knit shops and buildings is an iconic example of walkable urbanism. Paris, France. | Right: Mix of heritage & contemporary architecture and new public waterfront along the Milwaukee River. Milwaukee, WI. | Far Right: Adaptive reuse of an existing warehouse building that was converted into residential condos. Portland, OR. | Sec3:9 | Goal 1 | Promote “walkable urbanism” as the primary impetus for design & development in downtown Flint. | Goal 2 | Use sustainable design practices, activities & elements that support local residents, businesses and the city. | Goal 3 | Incorporate urban landscapes that reintroduce natural stormwater flows, improve habitat & diversity, utilize green space more productively, reduce heat island effects and improve air quality. | Goal 4 | Integrate design with alternative & public forms of transportation. | Left & Above Left: Community Supported Agriculture and the Flint Farmer’s Market hold much potential in applying urban agriculture to vacant lots. Flint, Michigan Above: Urban forestry has many benefits: cooler climate, cleaner air & soil, attractive streets, habitat, etc. Riverbank Park, Flint, Michigan. Right: Storm & wastewater treatment using native plants. Portland, Oregon. | Left & Above Left: Community Supported Agriculture and the Flint Farmer’s Market hold much potential in applying urban agriculture to vacant lots. Flint, Michigan Above: Urban forestry has many benefits: cooler climate, cleaner air & soil, attractive streets, habitat, etc. Riverbank Park, Flint, Michigan. Right: Storm & wastewater treatment using native plants. Portland, Oregon. | Left: Like many other cities in North America, Flint once had its own network of trolley lines through the city that could be reintroduced. Light rail and shared use car. Portland, Oregon. | Right: Examples of how alternative modes of transportation are integrated into urban spaces. L-R: Public bikes in Paris, France, and Transit center in San Francisco, CA. | Far Left: Using existing & new restaurants as resources, small-scale biodiesel production becomes feasible. Left: Small cottage industries could be established to provide, stone and service bikes downtown along the Flint River Trail. Right: Businesses dedicated to salvage, deconstruction, recycling, restoration and reuse are a missed opportunity to provide jobs and value in Flint. | Far Left: Using existing & new restaurants as resources, small-scale biodiesel production becomes feasible. Left: Small cottage industries could be established to provide, stone and service bikes downtown along the Flint River Trail. Right: Businesses dedicated to salvage, deconstruction, recycling, restoration and reuse are a missed opportunity to provide jobs and value in Flint. | DDA_Guidelines_Booklet.indd

Downtown Flint Placemaking Project – Phase I & II — 3/9/21 CAD\adl\ps\Projects\07f0153\Doc\booklet\DDA_Guidelines_Booklet.indd
The following visualizations illustrate one of the many configurations of a Buckham Alley that has been designed and reconstructed in accordance with the Guidelines and Goals outlined in this document.

**Figure 1. Existing Conditions**
Looking south down the 500 Block of Buckham Alley, as it appeared in August, 2007.

**Figure 2. Open for Business**
During the day, the expanded pedestrian spaces along the buildings accommodate residential and business foot traffic, wayfinding, outdoor lunch and break spots, and provide a buffer from the vehicular ROW that allows service and maintenance access to the businesses and buildings along the alley.

**Figure 3. Night Life**
At night, the alley transforms to limit vehicular access and allow the whole alley to be used to support outdoor dining, vendors, fairs and other pedestrian-oriented events. New lighting elements, both public and private, are vital to establishing the “mood” in the alley. Flexibility will be key to creating a livable, inviting, active space that can reflect changes in the seasons or special events without compromising the alley’s character by creating an environment that is too bright and sanitizing.
The following visualizations illustrate one of the many configurations of an existing side alley between Buckham Alley and Beach Street that has been designed and reconstructed in accordance with the Guidelines and Goals outlined in this document.

Figure 1. Existing Conditions

Figure 2. Urban Art, 101
This particular configuration proposes the alley be developed as a ‘green’ outdoor art wing for a new gallery that would accommodate outdoor sculptures, guerilla gardening, certain forms of environmental and landscape art, urban art forms, and related programs.

Figure 3. Password, Please
After the sun goes down, the side alley can easily be converted to hold gallery parties or events, outdoor dining, video or light-based art or a host of other programs. Access and entrances can shift as well, with the loading dock becoming the new ‘front door’ for anything from a really bad local punk rock band CD release party, to an exclusive, black-tie only fund raiser for local charities.
The following visualizations illustrate several reconfigurations of Riverbank Park that have been designed and reconstructed in accordance with the Guidelines and Goals outlined in this document.

**Figure 1. Existing Conditions**
This October 2008 panorama of the Grand Fountain Block of Riverbank Park shows its spartan and labyrinthian appearance.

**Figure 2. Removing Barriers**
The conceptual illustration shown here highlights several big moves that include removing a large “island” between the existing accessible ramp to the fountain and the river front to make it more open and accessible, repairing the Grand Fountain to make it safer and easier to program, and adding a flexible use space that could serve as a café, event space, or catering spot.

To the far left, the existing dirt parking lot is shown as a new storm and waste water treatment lab that extends the park, public access and the water front along the north side of the river.

**Figure 3. Other Possibilities**
Other possibilities, from left to right, for Riverbank Park include a new pedestrian connection over a series of constructed rapids where Hamilton Dam once stood, an elevated walkway through the trees and a public art / energy visualization project for the Consumers Energy substation.
THE PLACEMAKING PROCESS — PART II
Public consultation and visioning started in July, 2006. The public consultation consultants began their work with the intent of engaging a wide range of stakeholders in a full day of training and visioning. This set the tone for future efforts to engage business & local leaders, city and client staff, community advocates and other interested residents; it set the stage for not only this project, but for future engagement and stakeholder involvement long into the future.

From this initial meeting, discussions and smaller breakout groups addressed specific issues within the park itself. These groups walked through the park and engaged in analyzing and assessing the strengths and challenges of the sites. In addition to the public involvement and site walk-throughs, copies of Lawrence Halprin’s original park designs, high-resolution aerial photography & digital photos and other professional tools were used to assist in refining and informing the site assessments.

Once the public comments and assessments were collected, the public consultants distilled them into a document that framed them within the placemaking strategy and its relationship to other initiatives occurring in the city. The project team then met for a series of workshops onsite to synthesize the public comments and assessments into workable design solutions. Separate discussions were also held with committees of the Flint River Corridor Alliance, Safe and Active Genesee County, Crim Foundation, et. al.

Design responses and solutions were broken into short- and long-term solutions to allow our clients to take a phased approach to funding and implementation. These early sketches and ideas were then digitized, refined into more presentable forms and related to other projects—particularly the alleyways—to place the design work appropriately within the downtown district. This allowed us to take advantage of the larger connections and relationships into and through the site. After additional team meetings, the workshop drawings and a wealth of precedent & example imagery for materials and site furnishings were presented to the client and city representatives. With their approval and input, the final concepts started taking shape.
The public consultation for Buckham and Brush Alleys paralleled that of Riverbank Park. Public meetings and workshops were held over several days in November 2007 to engage our clients, business leaders, key stakeholders and other interested parties in providing input for a vision of the alley ways. This included walk-throughs of the alleys and Saginaw Street to observe and analyze what did and did not work in these places, as well as to discuss what the participants wanted to see.

PPS put the responses to these investigations into a report as a way to provide a new direction for the alleys. Design responses and solutions were distilled from this document and our own investigations and assessments of the alleys. Unlike Riverbank Park, the overall design of the alleys was taken within a single phase and not broken into short- and long-term solutions. This happened later, throughout the cost-estimating process, to save time and present a grander vision for the alleys. The design work was framed within the downtown district as a whole to allow for the larger relationships between the alleys and adjacent spaces to impact the design process. After additional team meetings, the workshop drawings and a wealth of precedent & example imagery for materials and site furnishings were presented to the client and city representatives. With their approval and input, the final concepts were produced. Throughout the process, detailed discussions and coordination were held with the design team preparing the design & construction documents for the DDA’s new parking ramp that will be located along Buckham Alley at 1st Street.

On September 19th, 2008, the Green Arts Project at UM-Flint organized Flint’s participation in Park(ing) Day. The international event is designed to temporarily turn an on-street parking spot into park space, highlighting important issues surrounding public open space, parks, and alternative transportation. ROWE partnered with several other local groups to construct a space centered around the principles and precedents outlined in this document. In addition to the general public interest, our parking spot led to several articles in The Flint Journal and considerable interest from product and supply vendors at the annual meeting of the Michigan Association of Landscape Architects in October.
While Phases I and II have been a continuum of factors, lessons and influences that can’t be separated neatly between them, the public consultation and visioning that specifically addressed Phase II and the northern portion of Riverbank Park started shortly after the completion of Phase I in June 2008.

After developing some initial ideas based on what we had learned and developed from the early portions of the project, an initial stakeholder walk-through with the DDA and UM-Flint was held in early August. This walk-through helped highlight some key constraints and possibilities these park blocks presented. This information then helped direct the development of additional concept work. In October, PPS led an additional walk-through which reinforced the findings of the initial site visit. It also expanded on a separate initiative by UM-Flint to develop an outdoor classroom and activity space along the Flint River.

At the time of these walkthroughs, the DDA and UM-Flint were the most significant organizations potentially shaping and contributing to the park and its uses. This lack of public ownership played a significant part in the disinvestment and decline of Riverbank Park and is a challenging issue for the park’s revitalization. Since then, however, several residential developments have been completed, started and proposed that have the potential to dramatically contribute to the function and role of northern Riverbank Park and the Grand Fountain Block, in particular. These developments cover both market and low-income housing and seek to capitalize on the growing importance of student housing & residences. This new residential component not only changes the dynamics of the neighborhood as they stand today, but makes the revitalization of the park and its public infrastructure that much more important.

In keeping with the new regrowth of the surrounding neighborhood, the plans and ideas for the northern blocks of Riverbank Park were kept more conceptual than their southern counterparts. Instead of developing plans, a series of dramatic “before and after” visualizations and renderings were developed. This allowed us to take advantage of the larger connections and relationships into and through the site, without compromising the potential for future input and suggestions from the new neighbors and users of the park.

Some of the thematic ideas presented include restoring the Grand Fountain Block by making it more accessible and open, with an eye toward a younger, urban-oriented life style and culture of users (e.g. restoring the water works, incorporating more event & people space, the potential siting of venue space, better balance of active/passive uses, etc.); developing the Water Wall Block as a central, highly visual and exciting demonstration of the interplay between urbanism, public space & infrastructure (e.g. enhancing riverfront access between the other two park blocks, incorporating the substation as a way to illustrate energy use and infrastructure, growth of vertical urban gardens, etc.); and reflect the campus character of UM-Flint in the Archimedes Screw Block through improved connectivity and visibility (e.g. crossing the Flint River with a distinctive, architecturally significant pedestrian bridge, creating a more open & inviting landscape, enhancing the outdoor plaza in front of the William S. White building, etc.).

During the walk-throughs, UM-Flint stakeholders emphasized the importance of reopening or replacing the pedestrian crossing over the Hamilton Dam. With Hamilton facing an uncertain future, the university should leverage this opportunity to develop a bridge that doesn’t merely meet a minimum standard of service. Instead, this connection should serve as the literal spine of the campus that links both the north and south sides in a way that celebrates the university and inspires its landmark status within the city. This series of images illustrates just one possible configuration such a pedestrian bridge connection could look like. The bridge shown is based on the Puerto Mujer footbridge in Buenos Aires, Argentina, designed by Santiago Calatrava.
Flint Placemaking Project - Phase I

**FOCAL POINTS**
- Create a series of art/infrastructure elements that guide & connect people to the downtown, park, and alleys.
- Use new, existing & upgraded elements that work at multiple scales.
- Elements are not just for looks—they serve to inform, enlighten and entertain.

**EXISTING PRECEDENT**
- Riverbank Park
- Ice Rink
- Hyatt Plaza
- Saginaw Street
- Capitol Theatre
- Buckham Alley
- Riverbank Park
- Ice Rink
- Hyatt Plaza
- Saginaw Street
- Capitol Theatre
- Buckham Alley

**FEATURES, ELEMENTS, ACTIVITIES**
1. **Riverbank Park**
   - Major Events & Big Ticket Shows
   - Historical Renovation
   - Refined character that accommodates a wide range of activities like Punk shows, movies & dance
   - "Town and Gown" events & uses linking the universities with the city

2. **Ice Rink**
   - Gateway into Riverbank Park
   - Youth-oriented activities & recreation
   - University related events
   - "Town and Gown" events & uses linking the universities with the city

3. **Hyatt Plaza**
   - Vital connection between Buckham Alley and the River Front
   - Prime location for redeveloped urban plaza & downtown identity
   - Donor naming opportunity

4-7. **Buckham Alley**
   - Create a pedestrian friendly environment that serves local workers, residents, & visitors that can be isolated from vehicular traffic
   - Incorporate Design Elements that serve day-to-day service & utilities for local businesses during the business day
   - Use site features to visually connect the alley and parks with the downtown, adjacent districts, and outer neighborhoods

8. **Saginaw Street**
   - Intersection with & into the Alleys
   - 24/7 News & Information (highlight connection to TV 5’s downtown location)

9. **Capitol Theatre**
   - Historical renovation defined character that accommodates a wide range of activities like Punk shows, movies & dance
   - "Town and Gown" events & uses linking the universities with the city

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**SEC6:19**
Buckham Alley — Daylight Design Concept
Flint Placemaking Project - Phase I

**Site Features & Infill Precedents**

These images are intended to show a diverse range of options for infill building typologies labeled "IF". A diverse range of site features for the Buckham Alley enhancements. These examples do not necessarily constitute a recommendation for development and are for illustrative purposes only.

**Proposed Infill**

Locations & layout are intended to show support for a denser, vertically-oriented style of building to allow for more diverse and intense uses along the alleys with more pedestrian space. Examples are for illustrative purposes only.

**Alley Linkage**

- N. Interactive Kiosks
  - Wayfinding
  - Information
  - Video Displays
- P. Ornamental Street Trees, Typ.
- Q. Wade Trim Courtyard
  - "Talk Spot" Video Recording & Display Kiosk

**Proposed Infill**

Locations & layout are intended to show support for a denser, vertically-oriented style of building to allow for more diverse and intense uses along the alleys with more pedestrian space. Examples are for illustrative purposes only.

**Sec6:20**
**Buckham Alley — Nightlife Lighting Concept**

Flint Placemaking Project - Phase I

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**Funding Provided by:**
Kuykendall Foundation

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**Lighting Feature Precedents:**
These images are intended to show a diverse range of lighting features and uses practiced by feature designers. They are not intended to represent specific Alley enhancements in line with this design guideline. Examples do not constitute a recommendation of specific products and are for illustration only.

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**SITE FEATURES**

**Buckham Alley**

A. Focal Point @ Alley Terminus [A A.T. shown]
B. In-Ground LED Pavers
C. Interactive Info Kiosk
D. Alley Lighting
   - In-Ground LEDs
   - Light Bollards, 42”
   - Light Columns, 132”
E. Light “Spill” into Alley
F. Plaza w/ In-Ground LEDs
G. Lighted Crosswalks
H. Overhead Light Strings
J. A/V Tower
K. Subdued Ground & Accent Lights in Side Alleys

**Alley Linkage**

L. Saginaw St. Arches & Lighting
M. Wade Trim Courtyard
   w/ “Talk Spot” Video Recording & Display Kiosk
N. Lighted Crosswalks
O. 2nd St. Lighting to Match Alleys

**Capitol Theatre & Brush Alley**

Q. In-Ground LED Pavers
R. Capitol Theatre Marquee
   w/ A/V Light Tower & info Kiosk Linked to Capitol Theatre
T. Alley Lighting
   - In-Ground LEDs
   - Light Bollards, 42”
   - Light Column, 132”
U. Accent Lighting on Existing Bldg

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*This section represents the official project limits for the Downtown Alleyways Project, modified to include portions of the 300 and 600 blocks of Buckham Alley. These limits are representative of additional downtown alleyway sections, including Brush Alley & linkages between the two alleys. Cost estimates associated with the proposed plan were calculated for this section only.*
Buckham Alley — Design Concept Details
Flint Placemaking Project - Phase I

**SITE FEATURES**

**Buckham Alley**
A. Focal Point @ Alley Terminus
B. Wall Treatments
C. Urban Art/Lighting
D. Ornamental Street Trees
E. Princeton Sentry Ginkgo
F. Columnar English Oak
G. Permeable Granite Cobble Paving w/ Stormwater Runnel
H. Courtyard Bench Seating, Typ
I. Interactive Info Kiosk
J. Custom Light Ballard (48") & Light Column (132")
K. Accessible Transitions b/w Paving Types
L. 11' Wide Walkway & Activity Zone
M. 8' Wide Walkway & Activity Zone
N. Outdoor Dining & Activity Space
O. Decorative Paving Treatment & Stormwater Runnel b/w Alleyways
P. Curb Bump-Outs
Q. Movable Planters
R. Side Alleys as Urban Art Galleries & Activity Spaces
S. In-Ground LED Pavers
T. Roof-Mounted Wind Turbines
U. Accent / Area Lighting on Existing Bldg
V. Decorative Signage
W. Decorative Stormwater Infrastructure

*These images are conceptual in nature and show only one possible configuration (labeled by feature) possible for the Buckham Alley enhancements. All elements shown are in accordance with the design guidelines and represent the extent of their potential. Specific examples do not necessarily constitute a recommendation of specific products.

Not to scale

Sec6:22 SHEET 5 of 10
Prepared March 2009 - 07C0153
Sheet 5  of 10
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Flint Placemaking Project - Phase I

**FUNDING PROVIDED BY:**
Ruthe Moon Foundation

University of Michigan-Flint
University Outreach
University of Michigan
Flint Placemaking Project - Phase I
Riverbank Park — Amphitheatre Block
Flint Placemaking Project - Phase I

**SITE FEATURES**

**The Stage**
A. Expanded Stage
B. Stage Access Stairs
C. Riverfront Boardwalk Extension

**The Island**
D. VAWT & Overlook Bridge
E. Stormwater Pond & Water Garden
F. Boulder Edge & Seating Area

**The Island**
G. Pedestrian Bridge/Decking
H. Stormwater Channel
J. Colonnade Plantings & Lighting
K. Saginaw St. Plaza & Park Overlook
L. Business/Activity Plaza
M. Beach St. Plaza & Utility Vehicle Access
N. Accessible Ramp
P. Riverwalk Plaza
Q. Open Views & Access to Stage
R. Seat Wall

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**PROGRAM PARTNERS:**
- Bechtel/Rosenfeld Services Company
- Project for Public Spaces
- University of Michigan-Flint
- University Outreach
- City of Flint

**PREPARED FOR:**
- Project for Public Spaces
- University of Michigan-Flint
- University Outreach

**FUNDING PROVIDED BY:**
- Bath Most Foundation

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**FORMER HYATT HOTEL**
Riverbank Park — Market Stall Block
Flint Placemaking Project - Phase I

SITE FEATURES

Gateway Entrances:
A. Entry Plaza & Overlook
B. Sculpture Fountain & Lily Pond
C. Grand Staircase Plaza & Access Ramp
D. Vertical Axis Wind Turbines
E. Stormwater Channel & Water Fountains

Park Terraces:
F. Brush Alley Focal Feature
G. Hamilton St. Plaza & Overlook
H. Flex-Space
I. Interactive Water Feature
J. Riverwalk Plaza & Bridge
K. ‘Chadar’ Waterfall
L. Stormwater Pond & Water Garden Edge

The Island:
M. Pedestrian Bridge/Decking
N. Activity Green
O. Off-Grid Sustainability Demonstration Center
P. Urban Farm/Garden Plot
Q. Boat Launch
R. Gravel/Stone Walkway
S. Saginaw St. Bridge Access
T. Riverfront Boardwalk Extension

Additional Features:
- Flex-Space
- Interactive Water Feature
- Riverwalk Plaza & Bridge
- ‘Chadar’ Waterfall
- Stormwater Pond & Water Garden Edge
- Pedestrian Bridge/Decking
- Activity Green
- Off-Grid Sustainability Demonstration Center
- Urban Farm/Garden Plot
- Boat Launch
- Gravel/Stone Walkway
- Saginaw St. Bridge Access
- Riverfront Boardwalk Extension

Program Partners:
- Project for Public Spaces
- University of Michigan-Flint

Prepared for:
- Rowe Professional Services Company
- University of Michigan-Flint

Funding Provided by:
- Project for Public Spaces
- University of Michigan-Flint

For more information, visit:
- Project for Public Spaces: www.pps.org
- University of Michigan-Flint: www.umflint.edu/launch

Sec6:24
Riverbank Park — Design Concept Details
Flint Placemaking Project - Phase I

SITE FEATURES

- The Stage
  A. Expanded Stage
  B. Stage Access Stairs
  C. Riverfront Boardwalk Extension
- Amphitheatre
  D. Colonnade Plantings & Lighting
- Gateway
  E. Grand Staircase Plaza & Access Ramp
- Park Terraces
  F. Stormwater Pond & Water Garden Edge
- The Island
  G. Pedestrian Bridge/Decking
  H. Activity Green

AMPHITHEATRE & MARKET STALL BLOCK PRECEDENTS

Riverwalk and Expanded Amphitheatre

Restored Canals & Boardwalk

Expanded Boardwalk

Grand Stair

Not to scale
**SITE FEATURES**

**Central Fountain**
- Refurbish Fountains with Active / Visible Sprays
- Repair Lighting & Electrical Elements
- Enhance Safety & Access to Fountain
- Replace Bare Concrete with Vegetation, Mosaic or Public Art (not paint)
- Use Declining to Increase Safety & Usability of Fountain Area
- Develop "Catering" Space to Support Events
- Develop Visible Stormwater System

**River Front**
- Flint River Overlook
- Expanded Riverwalk
- Stormwater Pond & Water Garden Edge
- Remove Street-level "Island" to Open Uptown
- Expand Accessible Ramp & Pedestrian Space
- Refurbish/Replace Furnishings

**Street Level**
- Tree Pruning & Maintenance
- On-Street Parking
- Develop Parking Lot Across Garland St.
  (additional parking & infill with emphasis on continuing the public waterfront)
- Remove Concrete Walls to Improve Visibility
- Better Signage & Wayfinding

*These images are intended to show a diverse range of lighting features and uses (labeled by feature) possible for the Riverbank Park enhancements in line with the design guidelines. Examples do not constitute a recommendation of specific products and are for illustration only.

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**Riverbank Park — Visualizations**

Flint Placemaking Project - Phase II

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**Sheet 9 of 10**

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**Sec6:26**
Riverbank Park — Visualizations
Flint Placemaking Project - Phase II

SITE FEATURES

**Water Wall Block**
A. Refurbish Fountains with Active / Visible Falls
B. Use Accessible Riverfront Boardwalk to Link All Three Parks
C. Enhance Safety & Access to Fountain
D. Replace Bare Concrete with Vertical Gardens, Mosaics or Public Art (not paint)
E. Incorporate Alternative Energy / Low Maint. Furnishings
F. Emphasize Visible Infrastructure System
G. Refurbish Restrooms & Upper Level Pedestrian Areas

**Archimedes Screw Block**
H. Redevelop / Remove Overhead Water Trough
J. Expand White Bldg Plaza to Connect with the River
K. Outdoor Classroom Space
L. Prune / Trim Trees to Open Site to the River

**Pedestrian Bridge**
M. Re-establish Pedestrian Link Between North / South Campuses
N. Develop Bridge as a City Landmark & Focal Point

*AThese images are intended to show a diverse range of features and are not recommended by the project. Each design is a conceptual enhancement in line with the design guidelines. Examples do not constitute a recommendation of specific products and are for illustration only.*