GrandWalk Trail
Planning & Development Study
Kent County, MI

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Introduction to GrandWalk Trail Study

Clients

Rick Chapla - The Right Place Inc.
Carol Townsend - MSU Kent County Extension

Project Purpose

Develop and analyze a GrandWalk area community profile

Identify challenges to planning and building a non-motorized trail and propose solutions to overcome them

Propose an ideal route for a trail in relation to area characteristics

Assess the impact of a trail on the community

Propose an implementation strategy for a trail
GrandWalk Paper Practicum Topics

Profile of GrandWalk
  - History of GrandWalk
  - Socio-economic and Business profile
  - Land and infrastructure inventory

Recreational Context and Planning Objectives
  - Master/Recreation Plans and Policy

Legal Requirements, Liability and Construction Standards
  - Trail planning and construction challenges
    - Parcel acquisition procedure
    - Construction along an active railroad, next to water, at intersections
  - Trail Standards and Materials
  - Safety and Liability Concerns

Case Studies
  - Trail Impact on Property Value and Crime – Case Studies

Recommendations
  - Trail location, phases of development, access points, amenities
  - Estimated Cost of Parcel Acquisition
  - Trail Financing Options
  - Stakeholders
Questions to be Addressed

1. What is GrandWalk and how is the proposed trail a tool to redevelop the area?

2. What would be the benefit of building the trail?

3. What community support is available for building the trail?

4. What are the challenges of building the trail and how can they be overcome?

5. What is the proposed location of the trail? How would development be phased? What amenities could be included?

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GrandWalk Boundaries
GrandWalk History

- Area settled in 1830s
- Historic industries: lumber, gypsum mining, oil, gravel pits and wagon construction

- First mill stones – Public Museum of Grand Rapids
- Indian Mill Creek scrip labor
GrandWalk Socio-economic Profile

- 1,833 acres
- 4812 residents
- Increasing number of young people/nearly 30% of population
- 32 years old - median age
- Low household size

### Age distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>1990-2000 Change</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 5</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>7.53%</td>
<td>37.31%</td>
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<td>5 to 9</td>
<td>664</td>
<td>7.76%</td>
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<td>10 to 14</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>7.33%</td>
<td>50.72%</td>
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<td>15 - 19</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>6.12%</td>
<td>9.87%</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>18.71%</td>
<td>19.76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>1,393</td>
<td>16.29%</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
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<tr>
<td>40 - 49</td>
<td>1,218</td>
<td>14.24%</td>
<td>39.20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>50 - 59</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>9.41%</td>
<td>28.18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>60 - 64</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>3.09%</td>
<td>-13.44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over 65</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
<td>-19.72%</td>
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### 2000 Median age

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GrandWalk</td>
<td>32.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walker</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>35.5</td>
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### Household size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GrandWalk</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>-16.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>-18.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>-17.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>-19.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walker</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>-22.47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GrandWalk Socio-economic Profile

- Low median household income
- Low median housing value
- Low vacancy rate
- 16% of working population travel less than 10 min. to work

![Image of 1990 and 2000 Median Household Income Change]

![Image of 1990 and 2000 Median Housing Value]

![Image of 2000 Occupied and Vacant Housing Units]
GrandWalk Business Profile

- Approx. 380 businesses

Small businesses
- 67% with less than 10 employees
- 52% with less than $249,000 sales volume

Distribution of Local Businesses by Size

2005 Sales Volume
- 17% Less than $49,999
- 10% $50,000 to $99,999
- 13% $100,000 to $249,000
- 12% $250,000 to $499,999
- 3% $500,000 to $999,999
- 4% $1,000,000 to $1,999,999
- 4% $2,000,000 to $4,999,999
- 3% $5,000,000 to $9,999,999
- 2% $10,000,000 to $55,000,000
GrandWalk Business Profile

- **Major economic sectors:**
  Manufacturing (36% of employees), Retail trade (13%), Wholesale trade (11%) and Services (8%)

- **Strong economic sectors:**
  - Building Materials Dealers
  - Non-store Retailers
  - Educational Services
  - Performing Arts
  - Spectator Sports
  - Waste Management
  - Rental and Leasing Services
GrandWalk Business Profile
GrandWalk Zoning Map

Proposed GrandWalk Trail - Heavy Industrial and Residential Areas
GrandWalk Business Profile Implications

• Large number of **salvage yards** adjacent to the proposed route of the trail

• Recreational and entertainment opportunities: DeltaPlex Theater, **Richmond** and **Riverside Park**

• Proximity to **downtown Grand Rapids** and Walker

• Opportunity for growth in **trail tourism** industry – connection with existing trails
GrandWalk Parks and Schools
1. What is GrandWalk and how is the proposed trail a tool to redevelop the area?

2. What would be the benefit of building the trail?

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4. What are the challenges of building the trail and how can they be overcome?

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7. What are the next steps in trail development?
Proposed GrandWalk Trail Benefits

**Recreation** - access to, and link between Richmond and Riverside Parks

**Health** - trails associated with decreased obesity rates

**Youth** - education, exercise, safe school routes

**Enhancement of natural resources** - Indian Mill Creek environmental awareness, salmon population

**Economic** - area revitalization

**Transportation** - non-motorized alternatives, connect two regional trail systems
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Community Support - Stakeholders

Residents and Landowners alongside the proposed trail

Community Organizations
• West Grand Neighborhood Organization
• Steepletown Youth Group

Advocacy Groups
• Friends of Indian Mill Creek
• Friends of Walker Highland Trails
• Friends of White Pine Trail and Musketawa Trail

Municipalities
• Grand Rapids and Walker Planning and Engineering Depts.
• Recreation Depts., Drain Commissioner
• Kent Co. Parks & Rec. Dept., DNR, MDOT
• West MI Strategic Alliance, West MI Trails and Greenways
Community Support - City of Grand Rapids Plans

**Parks Plan**
- Increase recreational benefits
- Encourage connectivity
- Linkages with parks system
- Walkability - lack of policy

**Master Plan**
Theme of Balanced Transportation
- Reduce auto dependency/increase non-motorized trans.
- Preserve natural areas
- Increase mobility and access

Community Support - City of Walker Plans

**Parks Plan**
- Explicit connections
- System of trails
- Multi-modal transportation
- Increase recreation

**Master Plan**
Neighborhood Section
- Neighborhood connectivity and "livability"
- Neighborhoods - expanded recreational opportunities
Community Support - Kent County

Kent County Parks Plan
- MSU Recreation Needs Assessment
- Working Draft to be updated summer 2007

United Growth for Kent Co.
- Connect neighborhoods
- Encourage development that utilizes existing infrastructure

Community Support - West Michigan

West MI Strategic Alliance
- 25 year-plan
- Integrate park access/green infrastructure into urban neighborhoods

Trails & Greenways Coalition
- Goal: 510 miles of trail network
Community Support - State

**State Long Range Plan**
- Limited MDOT control of non-motorized facilities
- 1,428 mi. of trails – 1st in Nation (2005)
- Transportation Enhancement Fund

**Land Use Leadership Council**
- Encourage state-wide trail system

Community Support - Federal

**SAFETEA-LU** - Transportation Legislation
- Increase inter-modal connectivity
- Streamline government
- $370 million through 2009 for recreational trails

**Safe Routes to School**
- Encourage/Enable walking and biking to school
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Proposed Trail Planning Challenges

Property Owner Concerns

• Private Liability Concerns
• Impact on Crime
• Impact on Property Value

Construction Challenges

• Intersection with Roadways
• Intersections with Railroads
• Adjacent to Water
Proposed Trail Planning Challenges

Property Owner Concerns

• Private Liability Concerns
  ◦ Trespassing
  ◦ Noise
  ◦ Litter
• Impact on Crime
• Impact on Property Value
Proposed Trail Planning Challenges

Private Liability Concerns

Types of Property Owner Concern
• Trespassing
• Duty of Care

Protections
• Recreational Use Statutes - Michigan Natural Resource and Environmental Protection Act
• Easements
• Insurance Policies

Conclusions
• No liability landowner liability adjacent to trail
• No need for landowner to purchase additional insurance
Proposed Trail Planning Challenges

Impact on Crime

Case Studies
• Omaha Recreational Trail, NE
• Pinellas Trail, FL
• Pere Marquette Trail, MI

Conclusions
• No adverse impact on safety or security
• Crime rates not statistically different

Sense of safety and security for trailside residents

Source: Pere Marquette Trail Case Study, Michigan State University
**Proposed Trail Planning Challenges**

**Impact on Property Value**

**Case Studies**
- Omaha Recreational Trail, NE
- Pinellas Trail, FL
- Pere Marquette Trail, MI
- Minuteman Bikeway and Nashua River Trail Run, MA

**Impact of Trail on Selling Price**

- Increase 42%
- No effect 36%
- Don't know 20%
- Decrease 2%

**Impact of Trails on Selling Home**

- Easier to sell 65%
- More difficult to sell 2%
- Don't know 18%
- No effect 15%

**Conclusions**
- Majority residents felt no impact on value
- Many felt increased value
- Houses near trail sold twice as fast as other
- Positively influence purchase decision

**Source:** Omaha Recreational Trail Case Study
Proposed Trail Planning Challenges

Construction Challenges

• Intersection with Roadways
• Intersections with Railroads
• Adjacent to Water
Proposed Trail Planning Challenges

MAP 3: Location of Proposed GrandWalk Trail Relative to GrandWalk

MAP LEGEND
- Proposed GrandWalk Trail
- GrandWalk Study Area

Intersections with Roadways
Intersections with Railroads
Proposed Trail Planning Challenges

**Intersections with Roadways**

- Raised crosswalk or intersection
- Signage, crossing devices
- Refuge islands
- Overpass
Proposed Trail Planning Challenges

Intersections with Railroads

Easements not granted along active rail - CSX

Crossing a Railroad:

- Overpass
- Sunken
- At-grade
Proposed Trail Planning Challenges
Proposed Trail Planning Challenges

Adjacent to Water

- Indian Mill Creek within study area, not a classified drain
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Proposed GrandWalk Trail Location

Elements Considered for Locating the Trail

1. Safety
2. Cost
3. Existing Infrastructure
4. Connections with Other Trails
5. Trail Accommodations
6. Connections with Community
Proposed GrandWalk Trail Location

Trail Length: 1.9 Miles
Proposed GrandWalk Trail Location Phase 1
Proposed GrandWalk Trail Location Phase 1
Proposed GrandWalk Trail Location

Phase 1

• Start: Southernmost point of Riverside Park - access point

• Cross to South side Ann at 131 exit - access with parking

• Intersection with Turner

• West along Ann St.- lane reduction
Proposed GrandWalk Trail Location Phase 1

Phase 1 cont.

- Cross over railroad/pedestrian bridge to south side Indian Mill Creek - access with parking

- Overpass three active railroad tracks
Proposed GrandWalk Trail Location Phase 2
Proposed GrandWalk Trail Location Phase 2
Proposed GrandWalk Trail Location Phase 2

Phase 2

• Continue west on south banks of Indian Mill Creek

• Overpass intersection of Alpine - access point

• Continue along south side of Indian Mill Creek

• Reach Richmond Park – access with recreation
Proposed GrandWalk Trail Overpasses

Map 12: GrandWalk Trail Points of Interest

MAP LEGEND
- Proposed GrandWalk Trail
- GrandWalk Study Area

1. Connection with Riverside Park Trail
3. Turner Ave & Ann St Intersection
4. Ann Street lane reduction
5. Pedestrian bridge
6. 3 railroad crossings - raised walkway
7. Alpine Ave intersection
8. Richmond Park Real Area
9. Railroad traffic and scenic overlook
10. Bristol Ave intersection

Alpine Ave. Overpass
Railroad Overpass
Proposed GrandWalk Trail Location Phase 3
Proposed GrandWalk Trail Location Phase 3
Proposed GrandWalk Trail Location Phase 3

Phase 3

- Continue west on south side of Creek

- Cross over railroad trestle to north side of Creek

- Continue along abandoned rail corridor to Bristol
Proposed GrandWalk Trail Access Map

- Access Points
- Access and Parking
- Rest Areas
Proposed GrandWalk Trail Access Map

MAP 19: Location of Proposed Access Points, Parking Areas and Rest Areas

MAP LEGEND
- Violet: Proposed GrandWalk Trail
- Yellow: GrandWalk Study Area
- Red Circle: Access Point
- Blue P: Access Point with Parking
- Green P: Rest Area with Parking

Source: REGIS / GVMC
Map Created March 2007
Michigan State University, Urban & Regional Planning Program
Proposed GrandWalk Trail Amenities

- Informative Signs
- Mill Stones (Replica)
- Overlook Deck at Trestle
- Canoe Livery
- Benches
- Bike Racks
- Drinking Fountains
- Decorative Lighting
- Disposal Wastebaskets
- Emergency Boxes
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GrandWalk Trail Parcel Acquisition

**Easement** – Three
- GR Eastern RR Inc.
- Consumers Energy
- Chesapeake and Ohio RR
- 5.35 *acres total*

**Purchase** – Six
- Penndel Co. (4)
- Conrail RR
- CL Frost Inc.
- 10.49 *acres total*

**Previously Owned** – One
- City of Grand Rapids
- 3.35 *acres total*
GrandWalk Trail Parcel Acquisition
GrandWalk Trail Parcel Acquisition

Lower Cost Estimate

- Industrial - $1.50 per square foot
- Easement cost - 20% of total parcel value
- Estimated total: $883,527

Higher Cost Estimate

- Industrial - $2.50 per square foot
- Easement cost - 25% of total parcel value
- Estimated total: $1,539,813
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GrandWalk Trail Next Steps

1. Feasibility Study – information on property, environmental considerations, aesthetics, costs of alternative routes

2. Parcel Acquisition – funding sources include private donations, municipal funds, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

3. Engineering – exact location, surveying, permits, grading and earth movements, environmental impacts, title issues, material and construction costs

4. Construction

5. Maintenance – Cities of Grand Rapids and Walker, “Friends of Trail” groups
GrandWalk Trail Immediate Next Steps

- **Pursue Feasibility Study**
  - Apply for a Transportation Enhancement Grant from MDOT

- **Continue to Garner Community/ Stakeholder Support**
Thank you for your attention!

Questions?