City of Lowell RV Park
Feasibility and Development Study

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Spring 2009
Outline

● I. Project Introduction
● II. Community Description
● III. Floodplain and Wetland Regulations
● IV. Feasibility Matrix
● V. Case Studies
● VI. Design Alternatives and Recommendation
City of Lowell RV Park Feasibility and Development Study

Scope of the Project:

- Partnered with:
  - Jim Hall, City of Lowell Parks and Recreation Chairman
  - Dave Pasquale, City of Lowell Manager
  - Carol Townsend, MSU Extension Educator

- Overall Goal of the Study:
  - Assess the viability of the Moose and Rogers Properties and to determine the best possible uses for those properties.
Goals of the Study:

- To determine the **feasibility** of constructing a Recreational Vehicle Park.
- To suggest reasonable **alternatives if** an RV Park is **not feasible**.
- Provide accurate information that can be utilized by Lowell in the future to determine the project’s overall **feasibility** and **viability**.
Background Information of Lowell, MI

- Located in Kent County, in close proximity to Grand Rapids
- Initially founded in 1829
- Relies on industry, small commercial business and agriculture
- Robert E. Lee Show Boat, a tourist attraction
- Kent County Fair
- Farmer's Market
- Home to the North Country Trail Association
Site Information

- Moose and Rogers are City-Owned Properties which also includes several islands on the Flat River
- Located at the confluence of the Flat River and Grand River
- Within close walking distance to Downtown Lowell (Main Street)
- 33 acres total
  - Wooded wetlands
  - Railroad bisects the properties
  - Located in the 100-Year Floodplain and Floodway
    - Annual 6-10 feet of flooding in the Winter
Flood Insurance Rate Map
Topographic Map for Moose and Rogers Properties

- 620 Ft elevation
- 618 Ft elevation
- 100 Year Floodplain
Extent of Wetlands on the Moose and Rogers Properties
Business Amenities Analysis

- Business Amenities applicable to potential RV users analyzed for:
  - Alpena
  - Grand Haven
  - Ionia
  - Lowell
  - Manistee
  - Whitehall
- Criteria for the cities chosen was the location of campgrounds within 15 miles of the downtowns
- Source: MSU Research Team on the Economic Impacts of Recreation Tourism
## Amenities Analysis

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Amenities Analysis

- The table shows that Lowell in comparison to the other cities has minimal business amenities available to potential RV users.
- However, Lowell does show an adequate number of Food Services & Drinking Places.
- Recommend that Lowell reevaluate their downtown amenities to more readily support potential RV or campground users.
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Community Description

- Documents relevant to the Moose and Rogers Properties:
  - 2007 Lowell Master Plan
  - 2008 Lowell Recreation Plan
2007 Lowell Master Plan

- Highlights demographics and analyzes them to determine future needs of the City, including the demand for parks and recreation

- **Goal:** Lowell will promote a walkable community with stable neighborhoods, and conveniently located public, commercial and service uses.

- Assessed Existing Land Uses
  - Many of the vacant parcels are undeveloped due to land use constraints
    - New projects will be the redevelopment of existing uses
Community Input Survey, 2006
- Importance of:
  - Small town quality
  - Maintain natural features
  - Hiking, walking, and nature trails
- Question if an RV park is a good addition to the City
  - 36% of the respondents agree it is a good addition
  - 17% disagree
  - 47% did not respond to this question

Recommendations in Master Plan
- Adoption of Zoning Ordinance Amendments
  - No mention of a Wetland Ordinance
2008 Lowell Recreation Master Plan

- 2008-09 City **Budget** for 8 Parks: $157,497
- Recreation programming provided by YMCA
  - *Surrounding townships seek programming from Lowell*
- Vision: Moose and Rogers **Properties have potential to be** developed into an **RV Park**
  - Connect to Recreation Park and to the Lowell Area Trailway
- Responsive to present and future needs of residents
  - Encourage development of RV Park
  - *Seek potential uses for the property through public input*
City of Lowell Existing Recreational Facilities
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Floodplain Regulations

- **Federal Regulations**
  - Require that the *lowest level* of structures be at or above the *base flood elevation*
  - RV’s are permissible within a floodplain

- **State Regulations**
  - Obtain a *permit* which analyzes the impact of an *alteration on the floodplain*

- **Local Regulations**
  - Floodplain District designated in Lowell Ordinance
    - *Protect public health* and help *prevent economic loss*
  - Flood Hazard Overlay Zone
    - Uses Permitted:
      - Opens Spaces: parks, golf courses, nature preserves, natural trails, and recreation
    - Development of a structure must be issued a zoning compliance permit by the Lowell Planning Commission
State Wetland Regulations

- Wetlands are regulated by the State to ensure protection of their possible benefits:
  - Flood and erosion control
  - Wildlife habitat preservation
  - Recharging ground water supplies
- Activities Permissible in Wetlands:
  - Fishing trapping or hunting
  - Swimming or boating
  - Hiking
  - Agricultural Activities
- Permit can be obtained if the development is determined to benefit the public
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Potential Uses for the Site

- Recreational Vehicle Campground
- Primitive Camping
- Hiking Trails
- Temporary Camping
- Camping Cabins
- Pavilion-Educational Area
- Water Treatment Pond
## Feasibility Matrix Example

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<th>Conditional</th>
<th>Why?</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
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<td>1 gpm pumping, housed above ground</td>
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<td></td>
<td>City Water connections is in close proximity to site boundary</td>
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</table>
Limitations

- Determined by Michigan Campground Regulations
- RV Park
  - Location, elevation, wetlands
  - Potable water, electricity, road access
- Primitive Camping
  - Elevation, seasonal camping, privies
- Hiking Trails
  - Forested wetlands, bridges to islands, trails
- Camping Cabins
  - Elevation, wetlands, seasonal use
- Pavilion-Educational Area
  - Location, elevation wetlands
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Selection Criteria for Case Studies

- Public RV Parks – geographically the closest
- Campgrounds near Rivers
  - Potentially in floodplains
Public RV Parks

- Ionia Recreation Area
  - Closest Public Campground to Lowell
  - Regional Destination
  - Multitude of Summer and Winter Activities

- Yankee Springs
  - Located in Kalamazoo County
  - Summer Activities
  - Unique Attraction: Devil’s Soup bowl
  - Modern and Rustic Camping Available
Campgrounds Near Rivers

- Camper’s Cove : Alpena, MI
  - Private Campground
  - Located on Thunder Bay River
  - Not in the floodplain or floodway
  - Various indoor and outdoor amenities
  - Modern and Rustic Camping Available
Campgrounds Near Rivers

- Insta Launch Campground and Marina: Manistee, MI
  - Private Campground
  - Located on the Big Manistee River
  - 25% of the campground is located in the floodplain
  - Modern and Rustic Camping, Cabins, Marina
  - Campground was “grandfathered” in, same owner since the 1950s
Campgrounds Near Rivers

- Trailway Campground – Montague, MI
- Not located directly in a floodplain
- Resembles Moose and Rogers property
  - Close to downtown
  - Directly on a river
  - Buttermilk Creek bisects property
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Criteria for Design Recommendations

- Feasibility
  - Floodplain, Wetlands, potential costs of construction
- Business Amenities
- Limited Regional Draw
  - Short term festivals
    - 4-H Fair
    - Farmer’s Market
Design Alternatives

- Design possibilities:
  - Trail way and welcome center (most basic)
  - Semi-modern camping
  - Tree house camping
  - RV Park (has the most limitations)
Trail Development

• Limitations on site allow for the ideal development of a trail.

• Design runs in accordance with LARA’s phase three of the recreation plan.

• Proposed trail hugs the Flat and Grand Rivers and network with recently approved Lowell Ionia Rail Trail.
Phase Map of the Lowell Area Trailway
Trail Development

- Acquisition of Land
  - 2009 Recreation Plan outlines funding sources

- Development and maintenance of trails
  - Guidelines according to North Country Trail

- Accessibility
  - Log placement
  - Rope bridges

- Benefits
  - Versatility, easily rerouted
Description of Welcome Center

- Central gathering place
- Attached pavilion to be utilized as an educational center and dining facility
Semi-Modern Camping

- Alternative to Primitive Campground which has more limitations
- Design layout of the campground avoids locating on wetlands
- Pathways built for walk-in sites
Tree House Cabins

- Small, but growing market
- Built on steel or wood posts, rest from 8-12 ft above ground
- Amenities include restroom facilities, electric hookup, gravel/path roads
**RV Campground**

- Most ambitious alternative for this site due to the amount of restrictions and obstacles
- Potential Operating Costs

**RV Park Amenities**

- Shower/Restroom Facilities
- Electric Hook-up
- Gravel Paths/Roads

**Phases for Development**

- **Phase 1:** *Develop a network of trails and roads through the property.*

- **Phase 2:** *Develop separate, individual campsites for RV’s and tents.*

- **Phase 3:** *Develop full amenities for an RV park and campground.*
Final Recommendation

- Create a Wetland Inventory and Wetland Ordinance
- Conduct Public Information Workshops
- Implement trail development in the first phase
- Construct a Welcome Center, 3-4 tree cabins and 25-30 walk-in sites in the second and third phases
- RV Park is plausible, but would be very costly
Thank you for your attention!

QUESTIONS?