

# **City of Lowell RV Park Feasibility and Development Study**

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# Outline



- I. Project Introduction
- II. Community Description
- III. Floodplain and Wetland Regulations
- IV. Feasibility Matrix
- V. Case Studies
- VI. Design Alternatives and Recommendation

# 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.





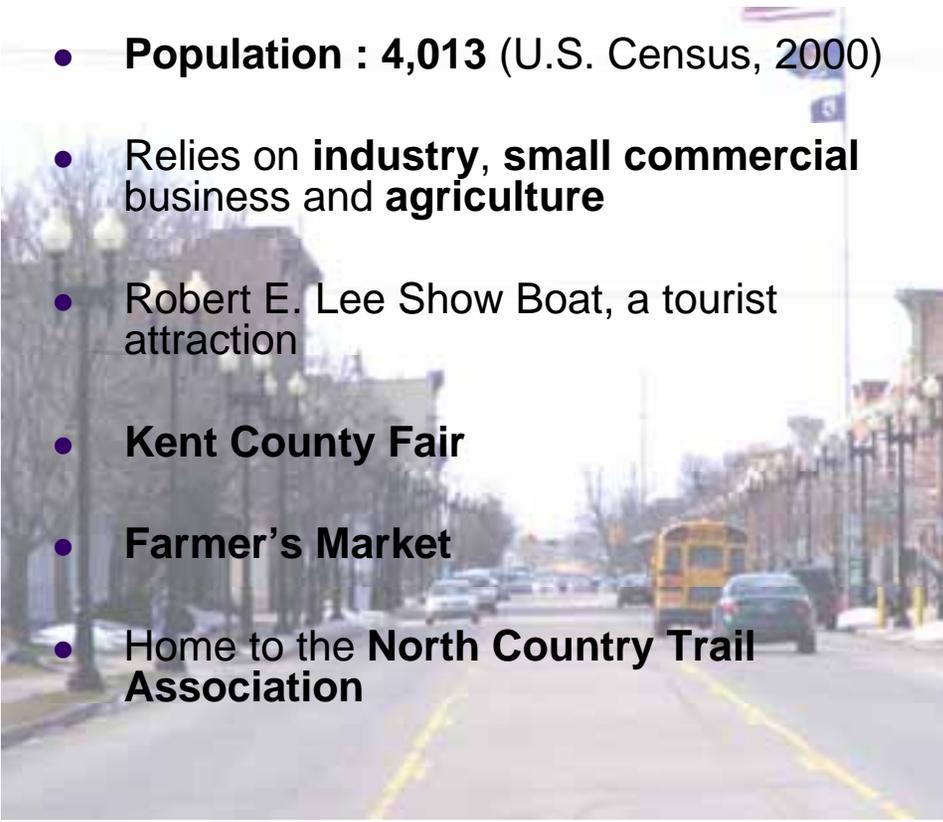
# Goals of the Study:

- 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
- **Population : 4,013** (U.S. Census, 2000)
- 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**

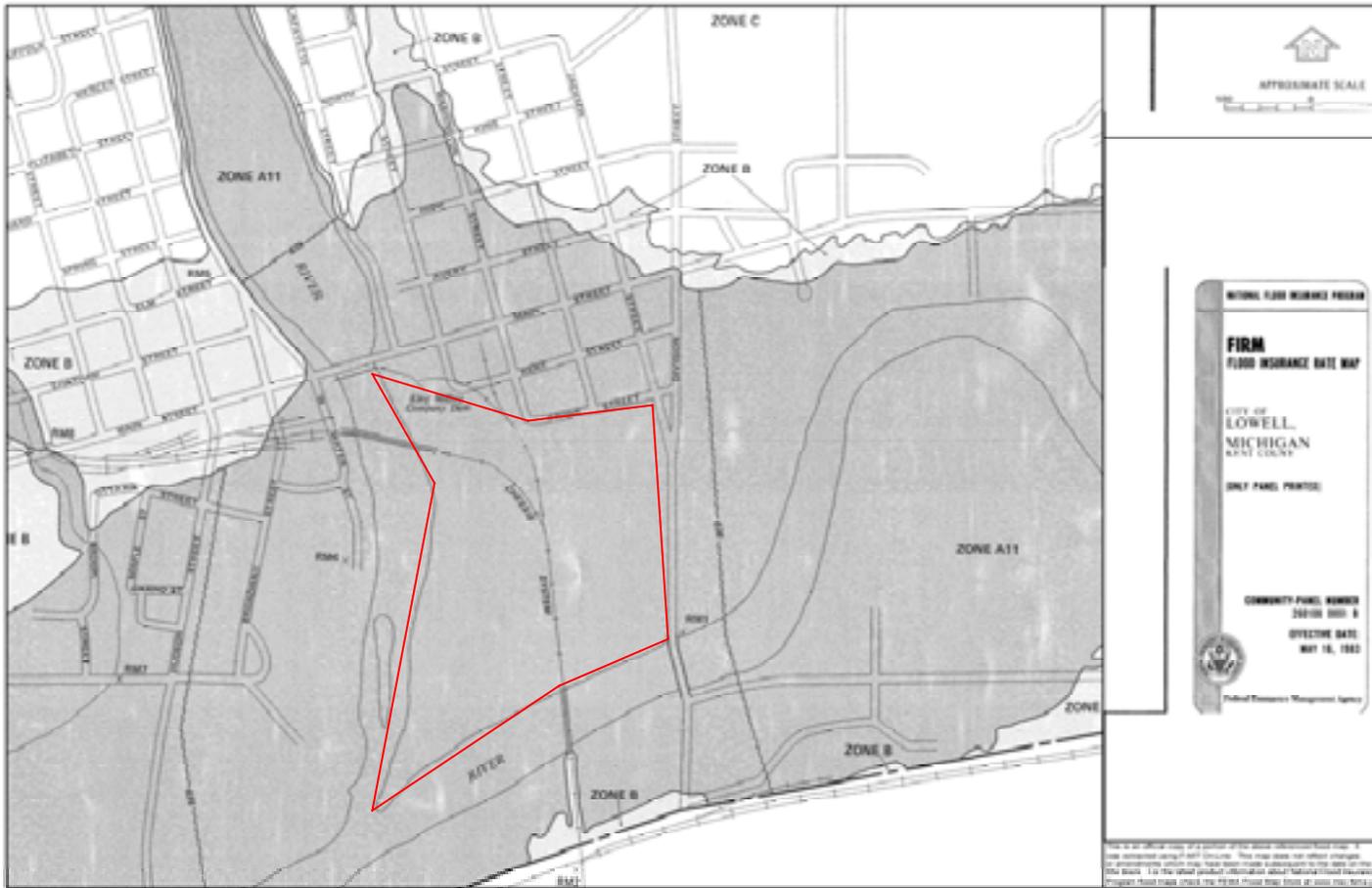


# Site Information

- 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



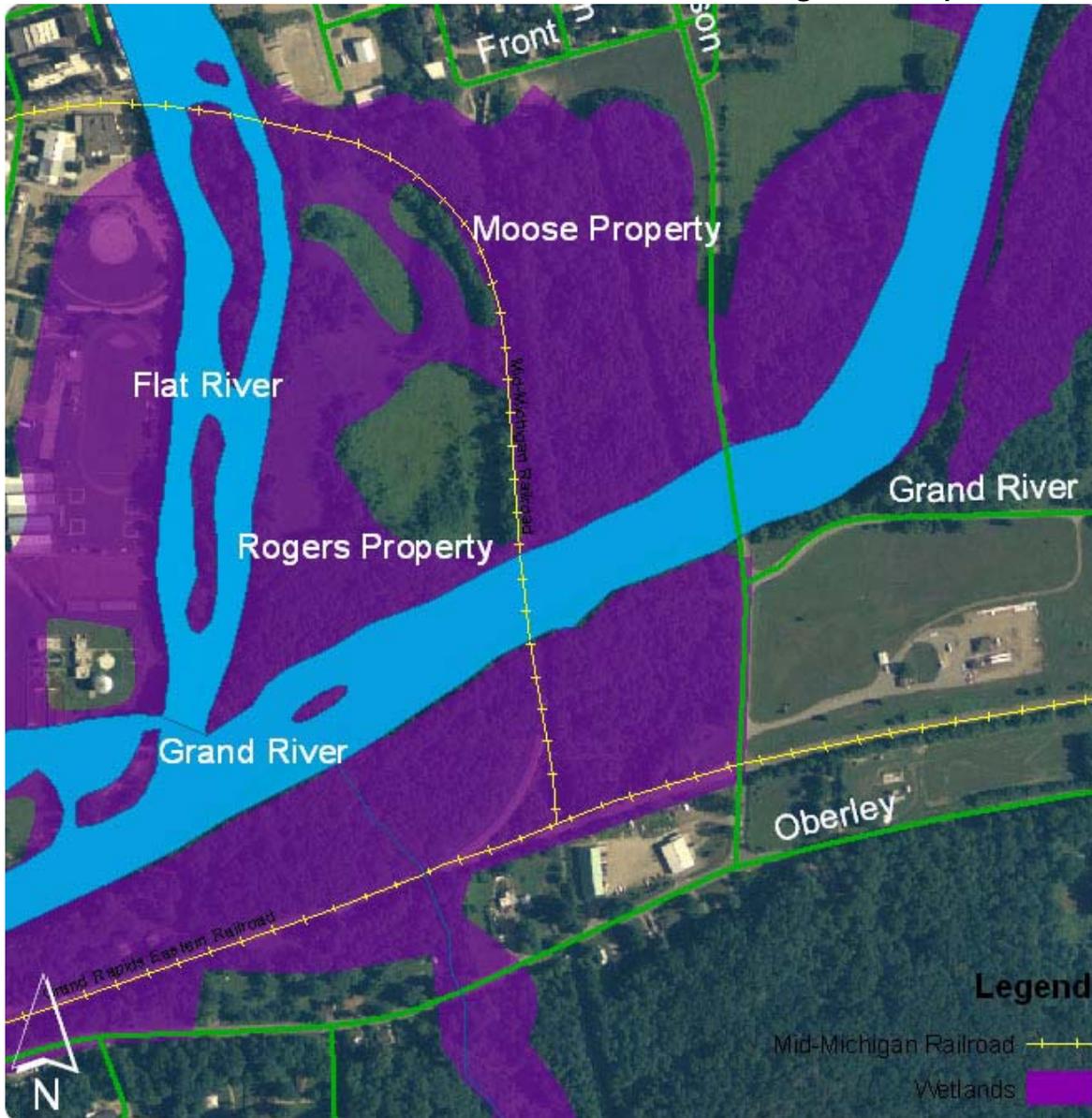
# Flood Insurance Rate Map



-  Moose and Rogers Properties
-  500 Year Floodplain
-  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



- 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

# 2007 Lowell Master Plan



- 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



# Outline

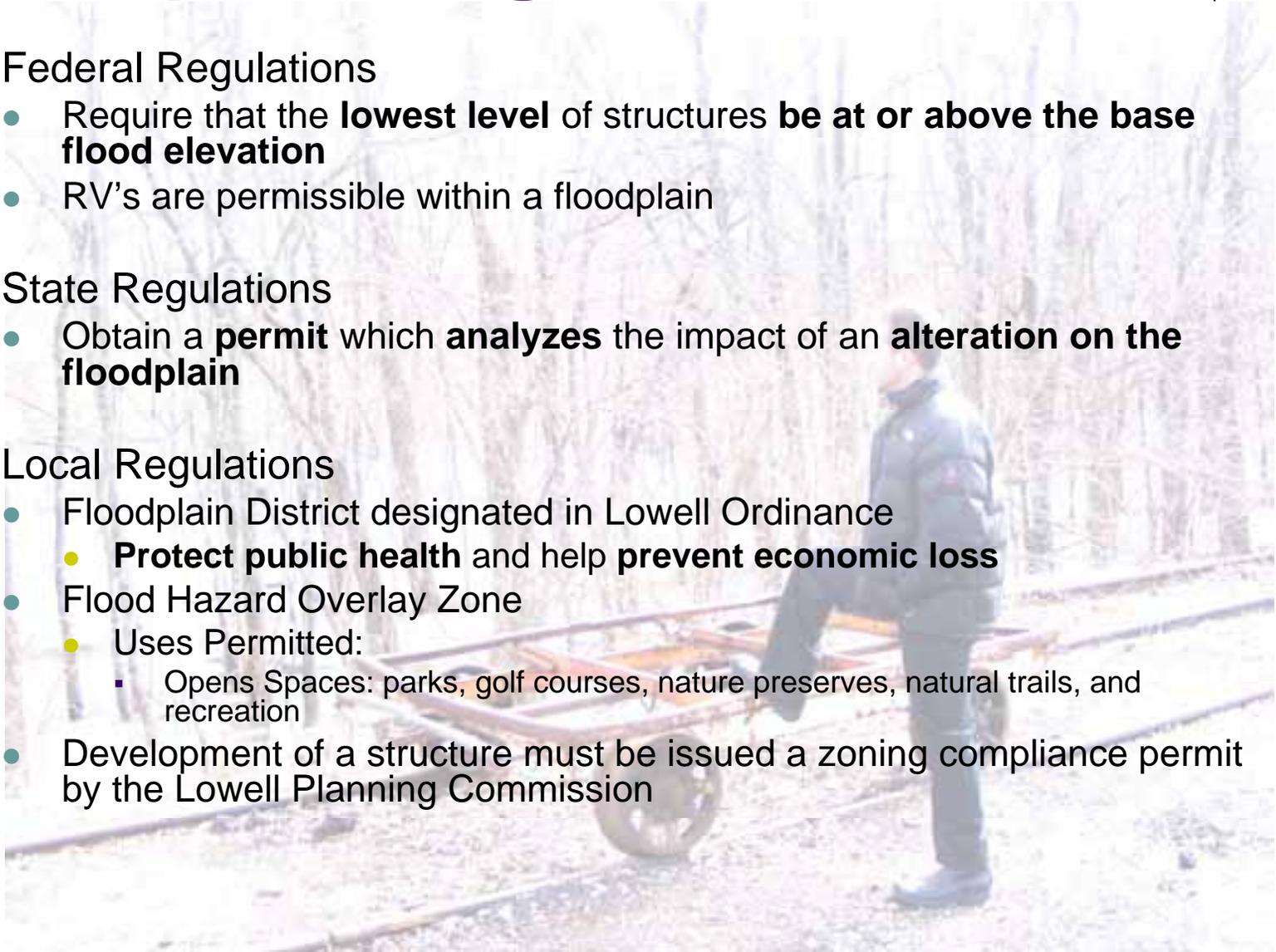


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# Floodplain Regulations

- 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

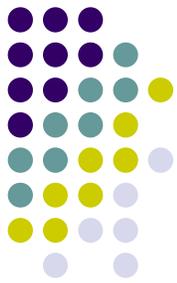
	Yes	No	Conditional	Why?	Limitations
Modern Campground/ RV Issues					
Water					
Water under pressure	X				
Flush Toilets			X	R 325.1552.3	Top of sewer must be above Base Flood Elevation (BFE)
1 gpm pumping, housed above ground			X	City Water connections is in close proximity to site boundary	

# 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 Soupbowl
  - Modern and Rustic Camping Available



# Campgrounds Near Rivers



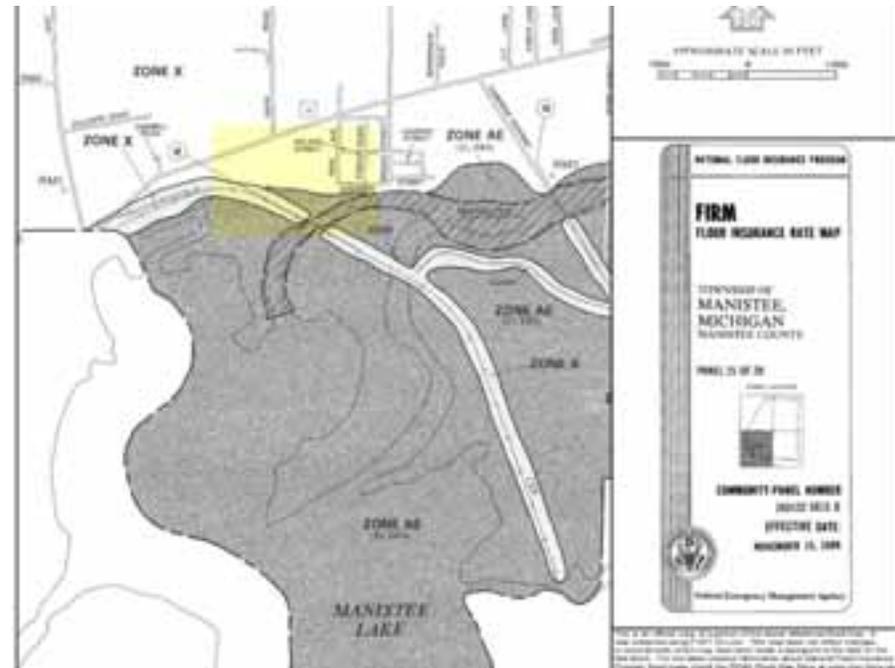
- Camper's Cove : Alpena, MI
  - Private Campground
  - Located on Thunder Bay River
  - Not in the floodplain or floodway
  - Various indoor and outdoor amenities
  - Modern and Rustic Camping Available



# 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



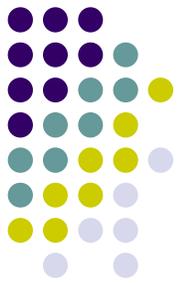


# Campgrounds Near Rivers

- **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



Lowell Area Recreation Authority

Map 3. Trailway Recreation Plan

March 11, 2009

- - - North Country Trail
- - - Safe Routes 2 School (2000)
- LARA Trail - Phase 1
- Rail to Trail Connector Route
- LARA Trail - Phase 2
- Lowell-Greenville Rail Trail
- LARA Trail - Phase 3
- Lowell Forks Rail Trail
- ... Potential Connectors
- Existing/Proposed Kent County Trail
- Existing Sidewalk / Trail
- Recreational Facilities



www.lara.org Images 108



# 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

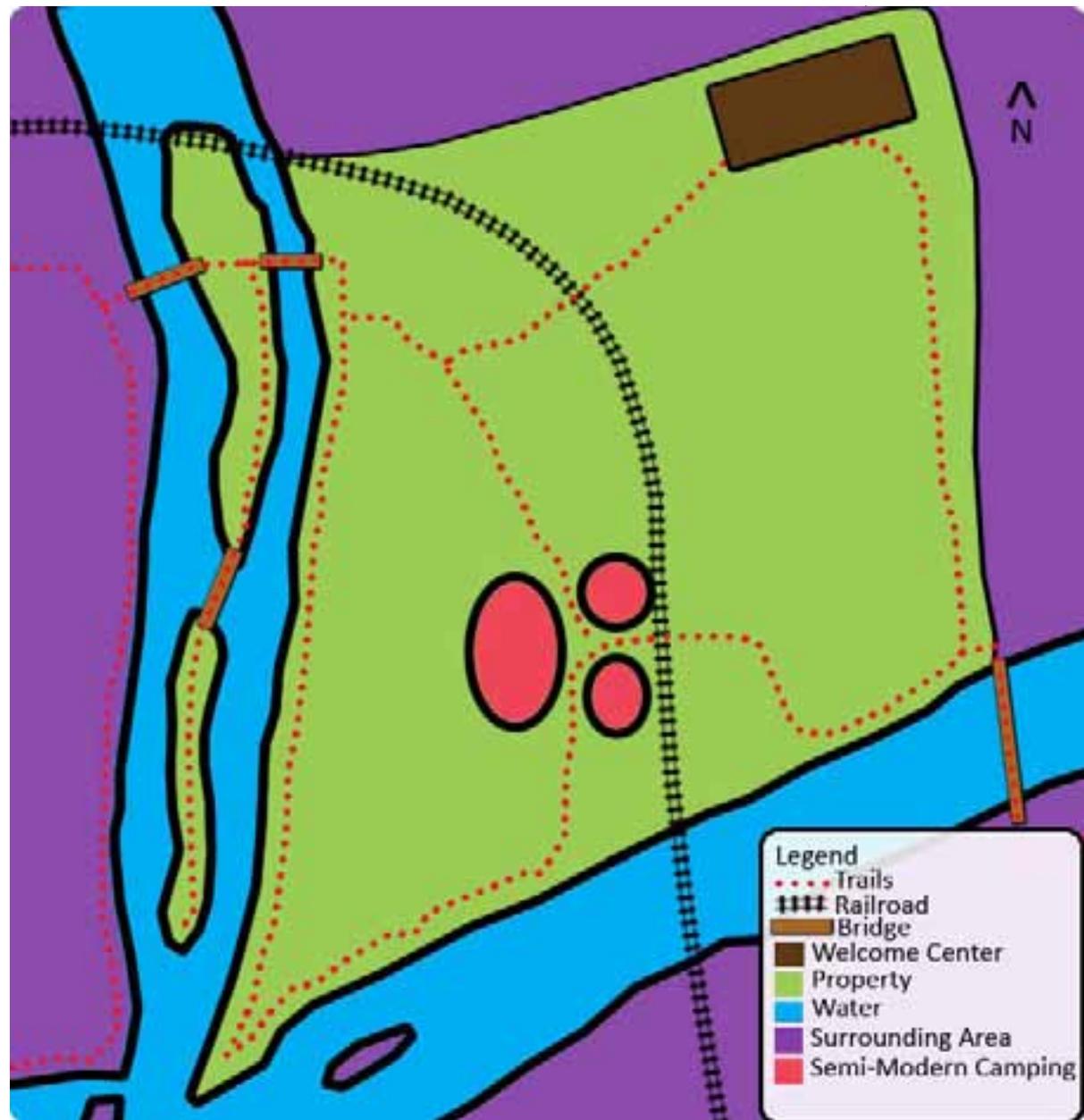


- Central gathering place
- Attached pavilion to be utilized as an educational center and dining facility



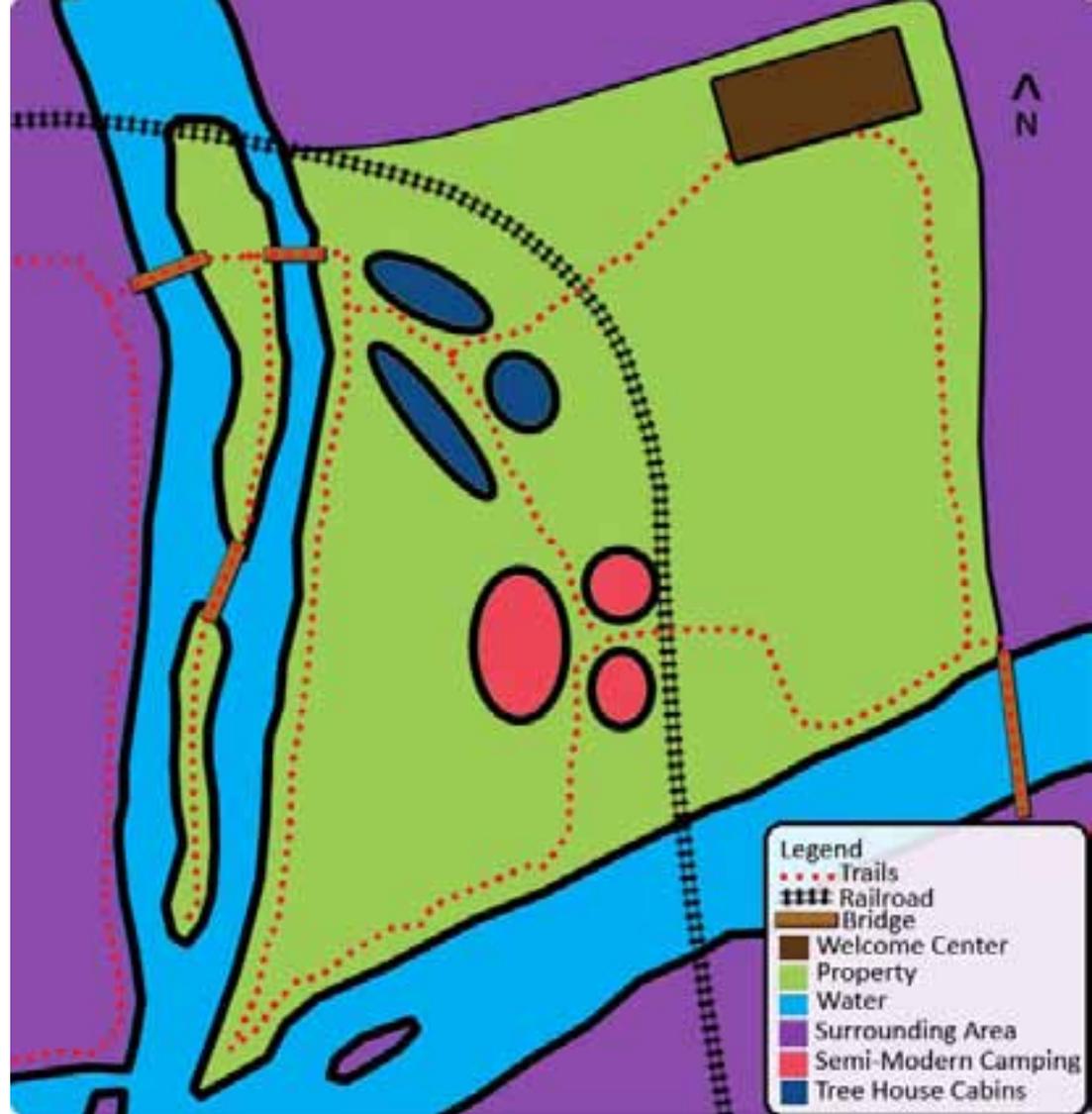
# Semi-Modern Camping

- 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

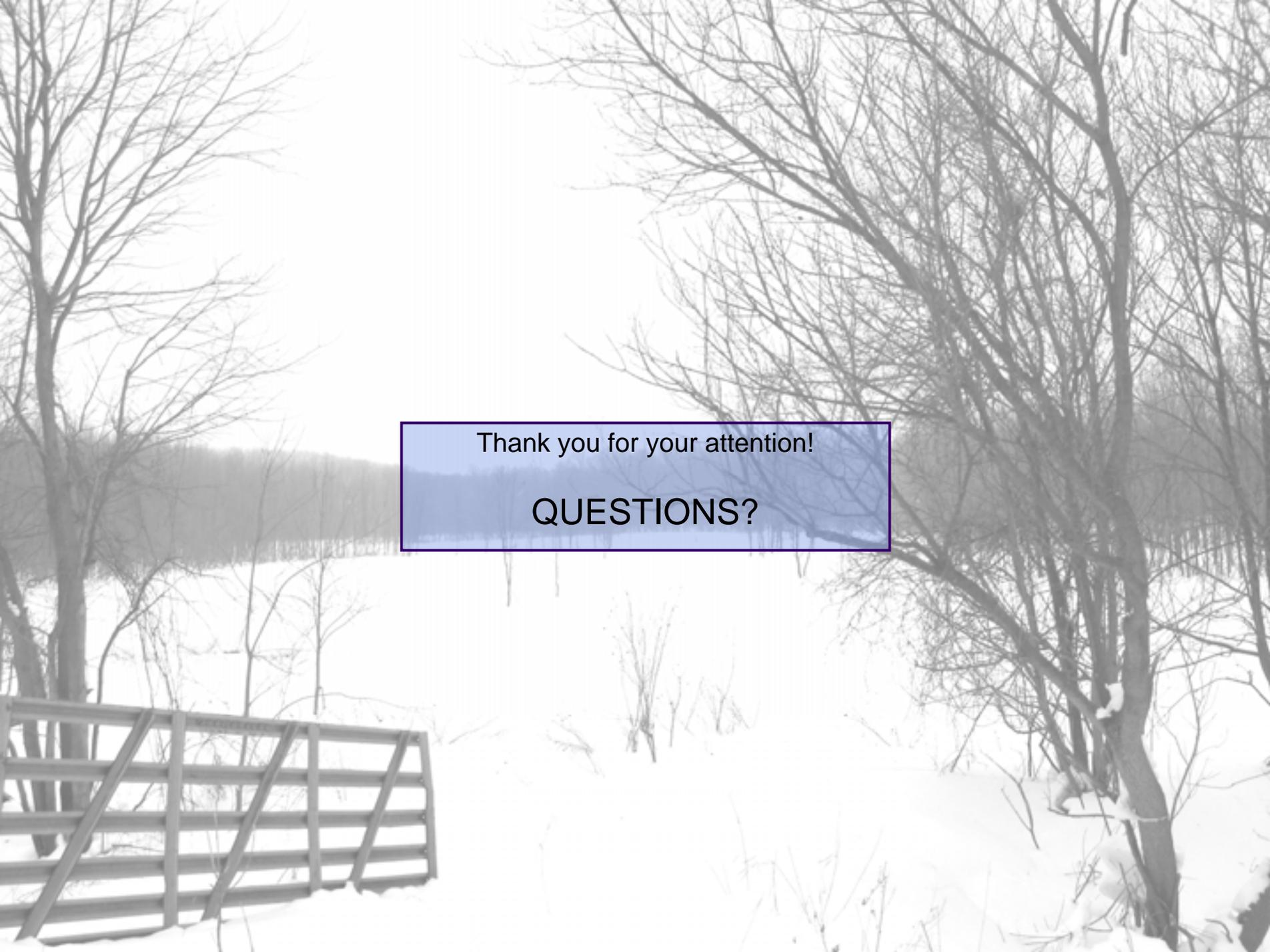
- **Phase 1:** *Develop a network of trails and roads through the property.*
- **Phase 2:** *Develop separate, individual campsites for RV's and tents.*
- **Phase 3:** *Develop full amenities for an RV park and campground.*





# 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

A winter landscape with snow-covered ground, bare trees, and a wooden fence in the foreground. The scene is overcast and misty. A semi-transparent blue box with a dark border is centered in the image, containing text.

Thank you for your attention!

**QUESTIONS?**