

# A Vision for Thread Lake & Adjoining Neighborhoods

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*(Image: J. Spry)*

# A Vision for Thread Lake & Adjoining Neighborhoods in the City of Flint, Michigan

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Residents and Businesses in three neighborhoods surrounding Thread Lake

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**MICHIGAN STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

Planning & Zoning Center



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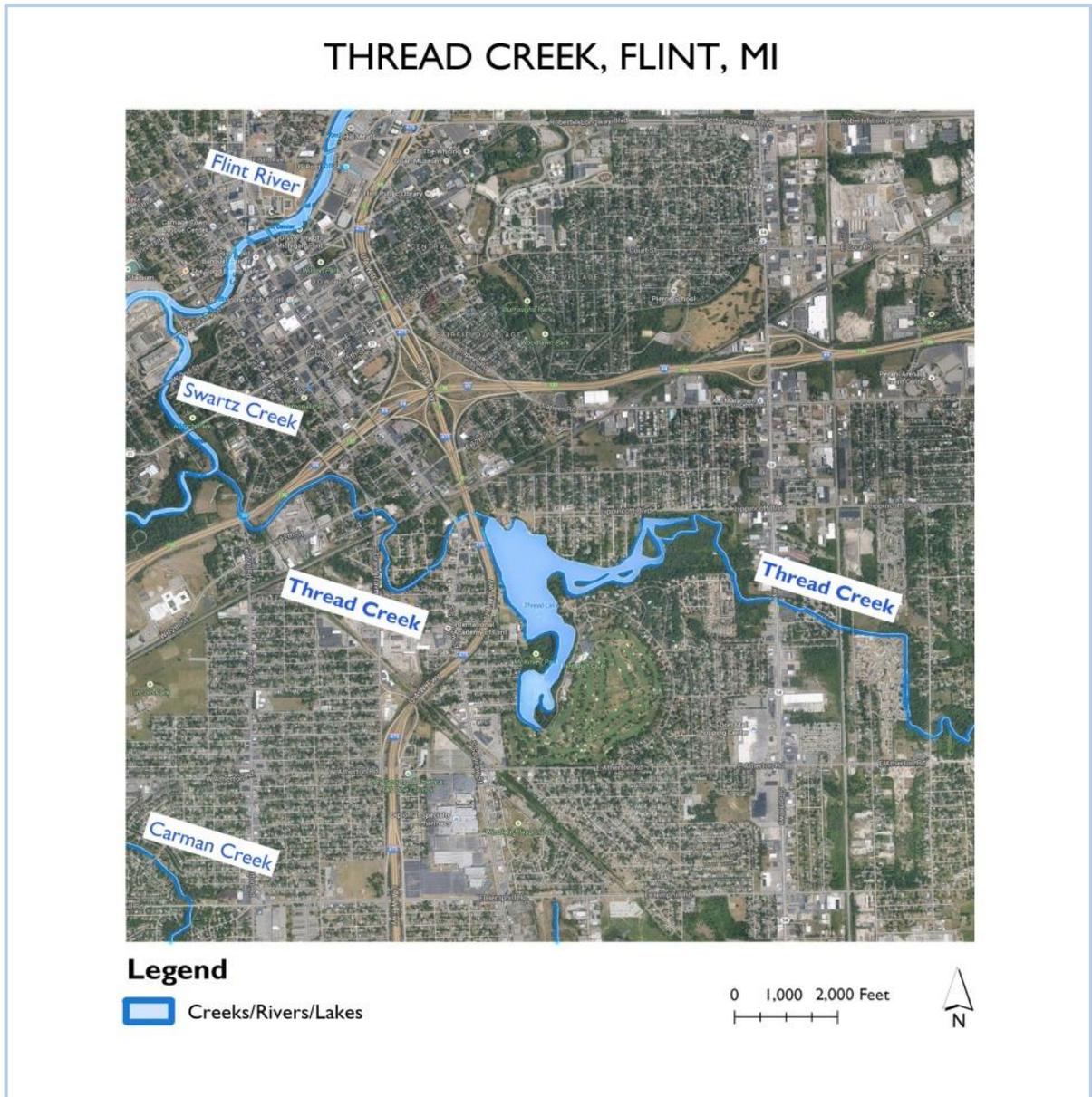
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## PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Flint, Michigan is unique in that it is a large city of 102,434 that features three distinct lakes within its city limits – Thread Lake, Flint Park Lake, and Kearsley Reservoir (US Census, 2010). Currently, these water bodies are underutilized assets in the community as years of neglect have resulted in concerns about water quality, safety, and widespread blight or abandoned land nearby. This report focuses on Thread Lake, and is one of three prepared to promote a better future for these lakes and the people of the neighborhoods that surround them. Thread Lake is located in the southeast part of the city and connects to the Flint River near downtown via Thread Creek to the west (*Figure 1*).



*Figure 1 – Relationship of Thread Creek to Thread Lake, Swartz Creek, the Flint River, downtown Flint, and the major freeways.*

Thread Lake and its surrounding neighborhoods feature citizens and local organizations that are committed to making efforts to improve and revitalize the area. The purpose of this document is to increase awareness of these multiple efforts while promoting more intensive collaborations that could lead to even more immediate, tangible improvements in Thread Lake and the surrounding neighborhoods, hereafter referred to as the *Thread Lake Community*. The vast amounts of energy and enthusiasm in the Thread Lake Community illustrate this potential for further teamwork in revitalizing this area.

Blight and vacant lots dominate the landscape on land abutting parts of Thread Lake. Neighborhood recovery wanes in the face of political, fiscal, and economic uncertainty in the city. Nevertheless, considerable attention is being paid to the Thread Lake Community. The project that led to this report is one of those initiatives. With assistance from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and in partnership with the Flint River Watershed Coalition (FRWC), the Planning and Zoning Center (PZC, a part of the Land Policy Institute (LPI) at Michigan State University) engaged local residents in three neighborhoods around Thread Lake to create a vision document for this keystone asset.

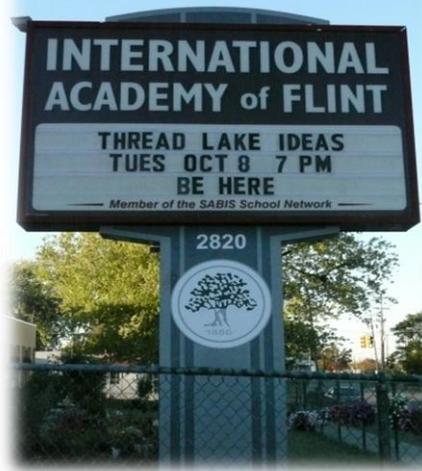
This document aims to report the community's short- and long-term Vision for Thread Lake and the surrounding neighborhoods. It is hoped by putting the Vision on paper, in black and white, that it will both inspire and lead to concrete implementation of actions presented in the final section. This Vision document was prepared based on input from a variety of sources, most importantly the residents of the neighborhoods surrounding Thread Lake.

PZC staff members and FRWC partnered with the City of Flint Planning Department, the International Academy in Flint, South Side Business and Resident Association, South Parks Neighborhood Association, and Circle Drive Neighborhood Association to engage residents in a mini-planning process. After identifying key local leaders and meeting with them, as well as providing information on the project at local neighborhood gatherings, the team sponsored two neighborhood input meetings and one follow-up meeting to review a draft of this document. Members of the planning team also attended South Side Business and Resident Association meetings to gain further insight into current stakeholder initiatives in the study area. The annual Southside Neighborhood Picnic on August 17, 2013 also provided the planning team an opportunity to meet residents and introduce them to the project prior to hosting visioning sessions. The first engagement meeting was held as part of an ice cream social at the Vista Center in McKinley Park on the west bank of Thread Lake on September 7, 2013. Residents from all three neighborhoods around the lake gathered to provide feedback on the current and desired conditions for Thread Lake and the surrounding neighborhoods as it pertains to water quality, safety, access, connectivity, and future recreational opportunities. The second meeting was held at the International Academy in Flint on October 8, 2013 with the aim of brainstorming specific short- and long-term desired outcomes, strategies, and improvements. The resulting input from both engagement events is compiled in this Vision document, along with the result of additional work by staff and students at the Planning and Zoning Center at MSU. A third meeting was held to receive citizen and stakeholder input on the draft document on February 20, 2014. Thereafter, the Vision was refined based on public feedback.



(Photos: MSU Planning & Zoning Center)

PZC, in collaboration with FRWC, participated in four community engagement events around Thread Lake: The Southside Neighborhood Picnic at the Brennan Community Center on August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013; an Ice Cream Social at the Vista Center on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013; a Visioning Session at the International Academy of Flint on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013; and the presentation of the Vision on February 20, 2014 at the International Academy of Flint.

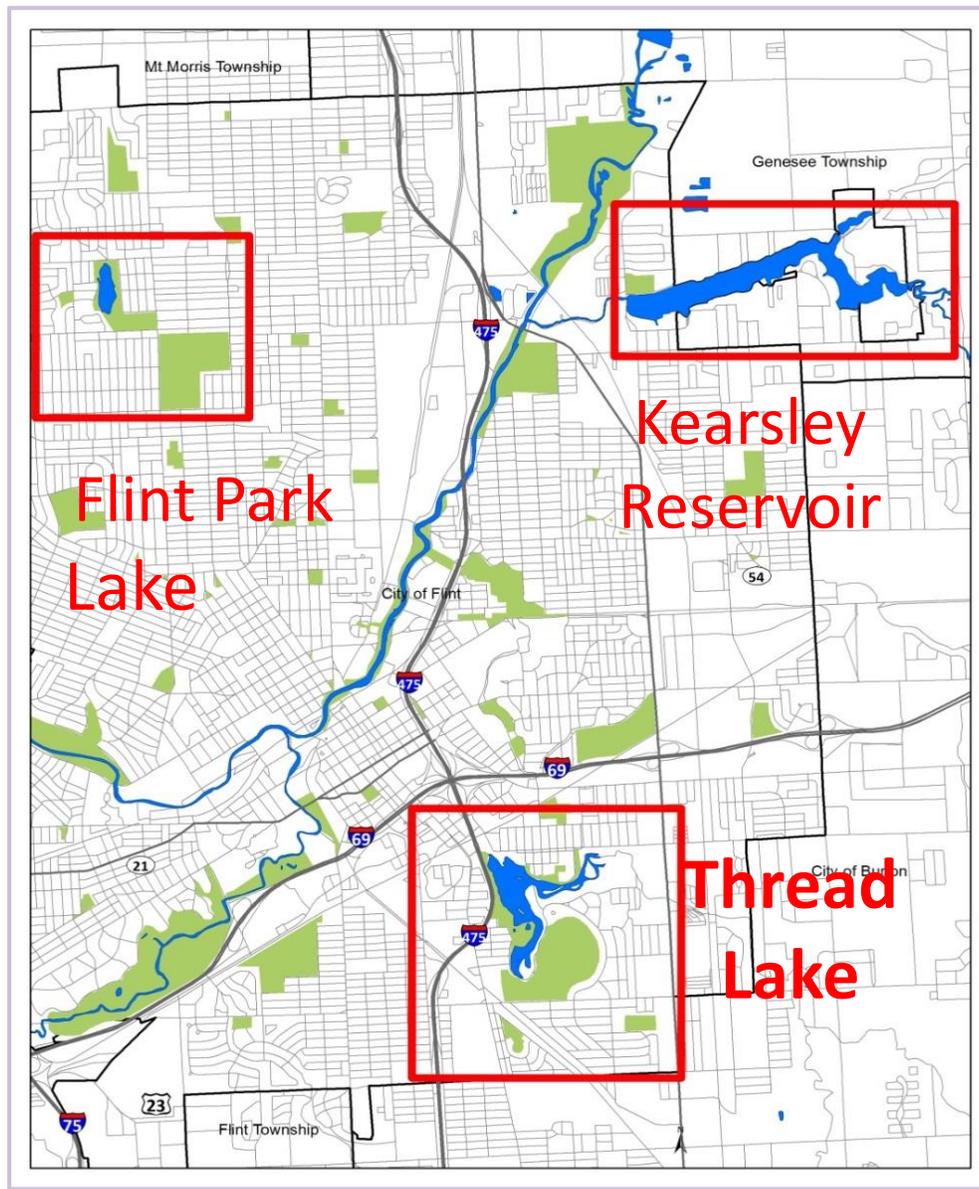


*(Photos: MSU Planning & Zoning Center)*

## CURRENT CONDITIONS

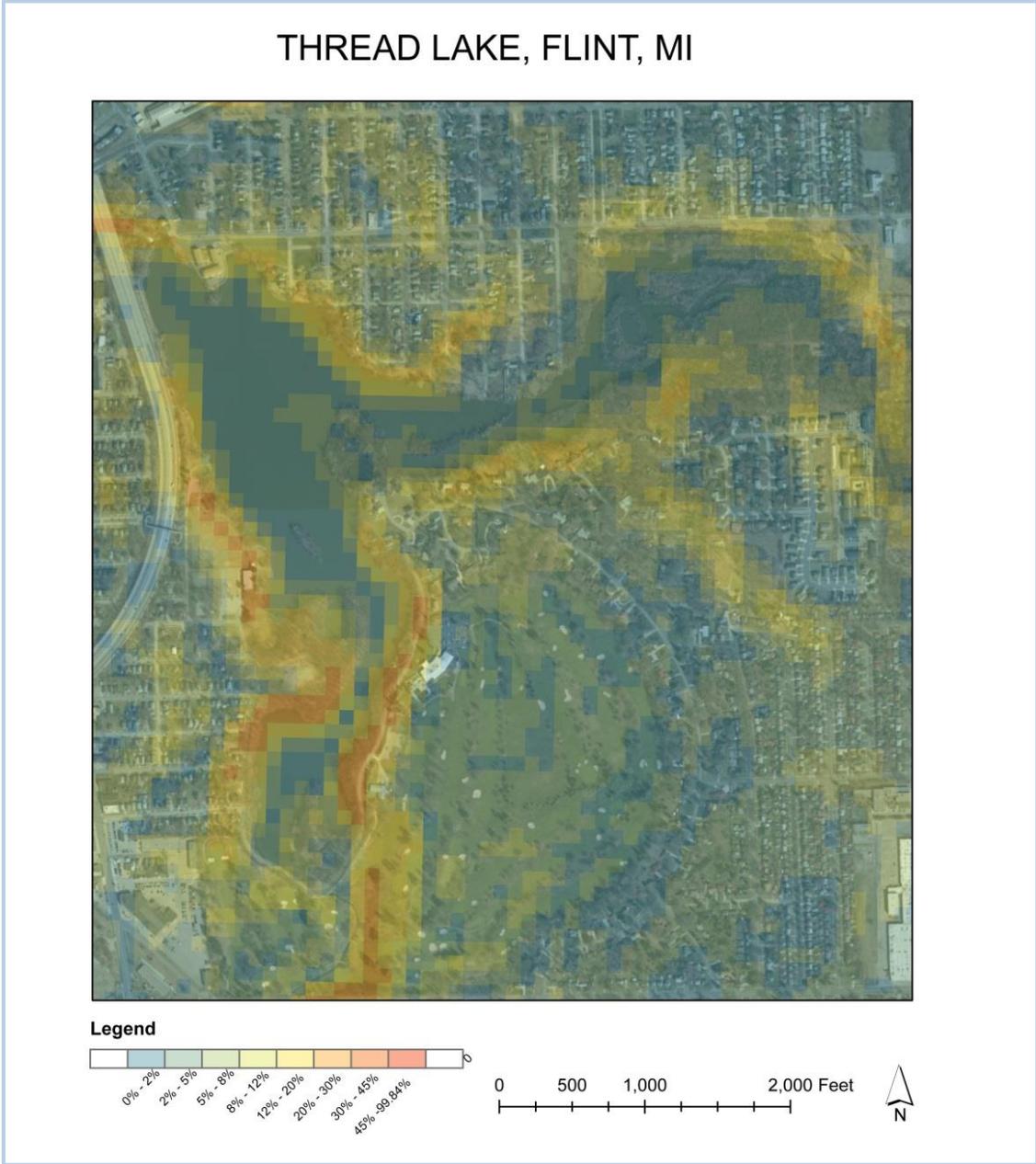
Thread Lake represents a seriously underutilized water resource that offers unique opportunities for the community. The lake has considerable value as a scenic water body that creates enhanced value to adjacent land, while offering a natural respite in the middle of a large city. Thread Lake also sustains a valuable ecological habitat for fish and wildlife while providing natural green space for public use. The stakeholders discussed in the following section can all play a role to further improve and enhance the appearance and utility of Thread Lake by investing their efforts to capitalize on this natural resource.

Thread Lake is located just southeast of downtown Flint (*Figure 2*) and is one of three lakes located within the boundaries of the city.



*Figure 2 – Thread Lake is located on the southeast side of Flint, Michigan.*

The natural elevations around Thread Lake, specifically the high elevation on the south side of the lake, immediately west of the Flint Golf Club, offer unique views of downtown which can be seen from various clearings along the shoreline (*Figure 3 and Photo 1*).



*Figure 3 – The elevations around Thread Lake.*

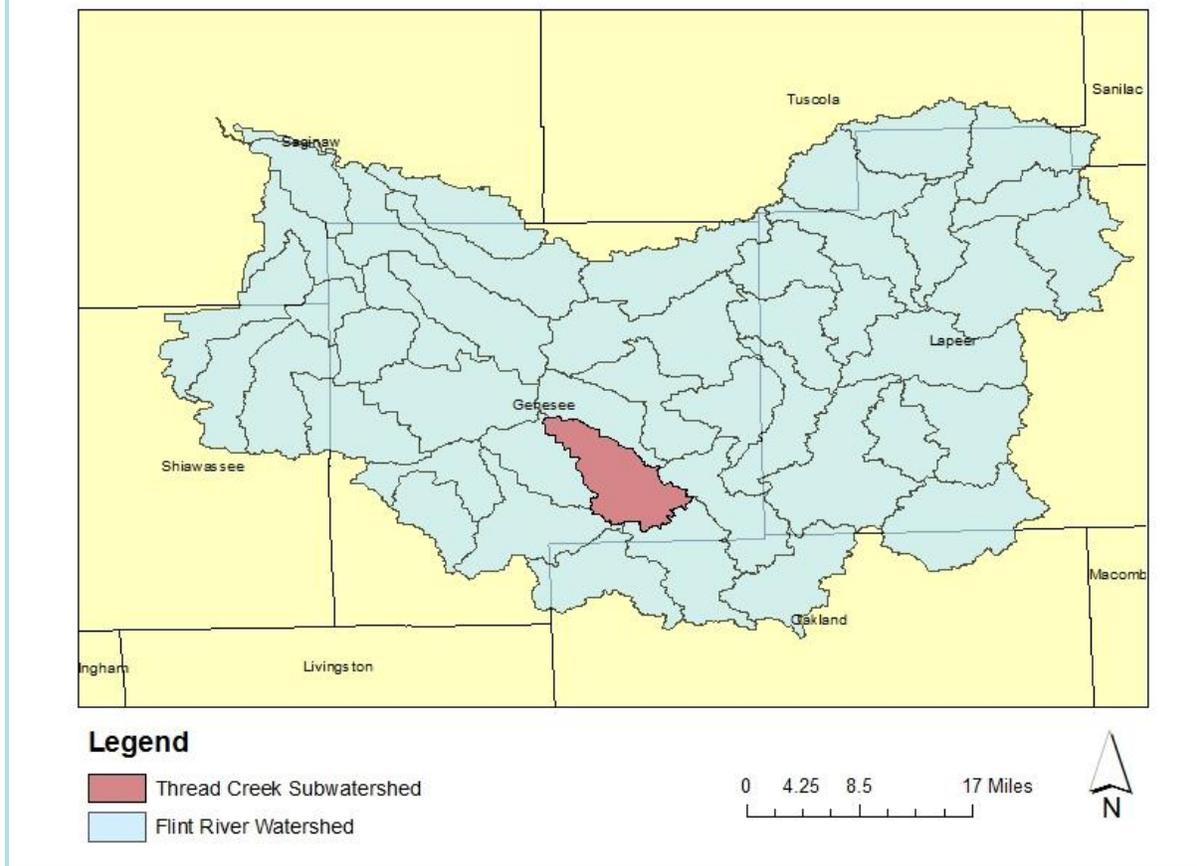


*Photo 1 – The south side of Thread Lake offers glimpses of downtown Flint. The building seen in the distance, Genesee Towers, was demolished on December 22, 2013.  
(Photo: FRWC)*

### **Thread Lake and Its Tributaries**

Thread Lake is a dammed portion of Thread Creek near its connection with the Flint River. Thread Creek is about 26 miles long and has an elongated oval shaped subwatershed that runs from Algoe Lake in Groveland, Mich. to the Flint River at Fenton Road (*Figure 4*). Thread Creek varies in width from 3 ft. at its narrowest point to 35 ft. at its widest point near the mouth where it joins Swartz Creek. The watershed is approximately 28,955 ft. across at its widest point and includes approximately 62.9 sq. miles. Land uses around Thread Creek range from a limited amount of agricultural, as well as residential, commercial, office, and service industrial. The floodplain around Thread Lake is fairly extensive, as seen in *Figure 5*. Thread Lake was created when the first Thread Lake Dam was built in the 1880s. The current dam was constructed in 1973. At normal levels, the lake covers approximately 82 acres. The Thread Lake Dam is 9 ft. high with a length of 42 ft. The maximum discharge is 1,800 cubic ft. per second and its capacity is 1,250 acre ft.

## THREAD CREEK SUBWATERSHED, FLINT, MI



*Figure 4 – Thread Creek Subwatershed within the Flint River Watershed. The Flint River ultimately discharges into Saginaw Bay.*

The U.S. EPA collected water quality assessments from the State of Michigan for Thread Lake in 2004, 2006, and 2008 and found agriculture, industrial water supply, and navigation are all good uses for the water in Thread Lake. Nutrient levels, biological oxygen demand, and fecal coliform levels were not measured. However, nutrient levels are high based on the amount of aquatic vegetation. In all the testing years, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were found in fish and the use was deemed “Impaired”, meaning all designated uses were not met. The result is that at the present time, the water in the lake is not suitable for drinking or swimming, and regularly eating fish that are caught in the lake is not recommended. Water in the lake is used for irrigation by some surrounding landowners, including the golf course.

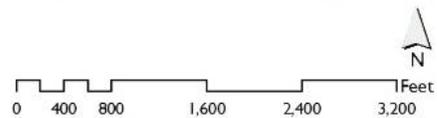
The City of Flint conducted water testing on Thread Creek eleven times between June 2, 2009 and August 28, 2012. The City tested at two locations: upstream at Term St. and at the mouth of the stream at Fenton Rd. The City tested dissolved oxygen, coliform bacteria, nitrates, oil and grease, pH, total phosphates, temperature, toxicity, and turbidity.

## FLOODPLAIN, THREAD LAKE, FLINT, MI



### Legend

- Thread Lake
- 0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
- 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard



*Figure 5 – The floodplain around Thread Lake.*

A probable source contributing to the PCBs is atmospheric deposition of toxics. The wind carries air pollutants from smokestacks near and far away, and the rain picks up toxics as it falls from the sky. Nutrients are likely coming from fertilizers used upstream on Thread Creek and run-off from the golf course on the east side of Thread Creek. Thread Lake is eutrophic, meaning that it has extensive aquatic plants, due to high levels of nutrients. The marine plants completely choke the south arm of the lake and have large patches elsewhere, as well. However, according to a 2001 Michigan Department of

Natural Resources report, principal fish species found in Thread Lake include black crappie, bluegill, white sucker, northern pike, largemouth bass, channel catfish, and carp. This makes Thread Lake an unusual fishing resource near a large urban population. Catch and release fishing is a thrill that could be readily enjoyed by residents if access to the lake were easier.

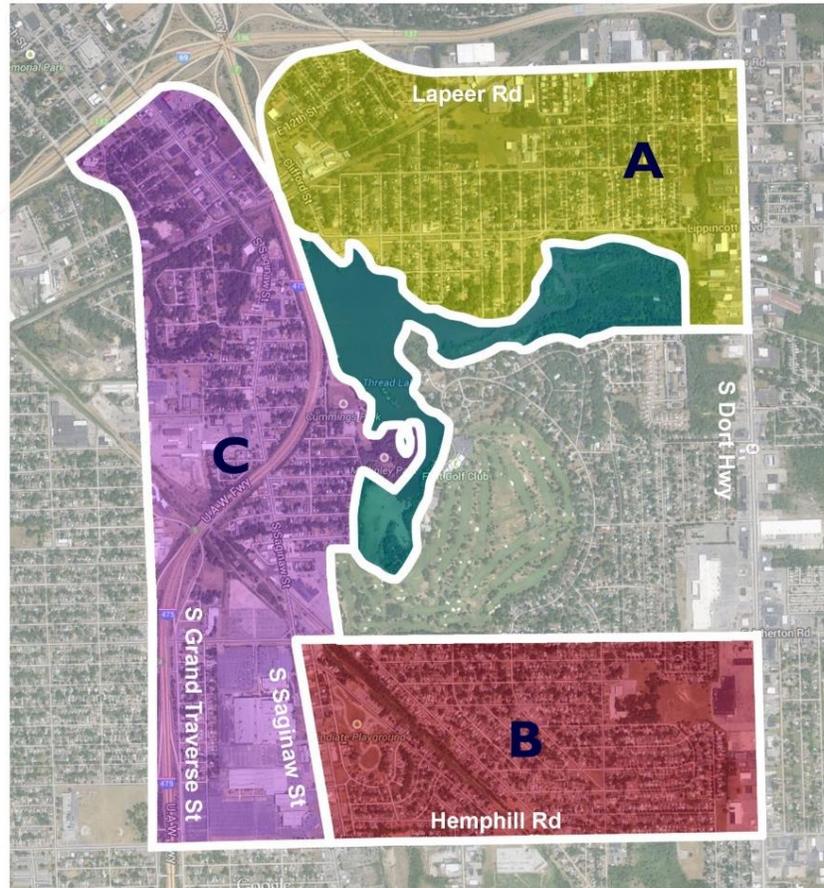
An unknown regarding the current condition of Thread Lake is the degree to which upstream nutrient run-off is impacting water quality. Researchers at the University of Michigan-Flint are in the process of preparing a Stormwater Asset Management and Wastewater (SAW) grant application to test and sample water from Thread Creek in order to determine nutrient run-off from various sources. The results of the study will impact understanding of how the water quality in Thread Lake can be improved or maintained at its current level. In addition to the scientific data, Thread Lake faces challenges of local folklore and perceptions about the water quality and pollutants inhabiting the water body. Throughout the engagement process, concerns about dumping of toxic waste decades ago were expressed. As of October 2013, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) does not have reports of “barrel dumping” or disposal of toxic wastes into the lake. Existing water quality samples do not show evidence of such toxics either. The absence of such reports doesn’t disprove the perceptions, but clarifies three distinct paths for further research on water quality: 1) can upstream nutrient flow be reduced enough to stabilize nutrient loads in the Lake; and 2) if not could periodic harvesting of lake weeds and/or chemical treatment of aquatic vegetation improve the potential for increased surface use of the Lake for boating, canoeing, and kayaking; and 3) can water quality be improved by draining and dredging the Lake?

### **Thread Lake Neighborhoods**

Thread Lake and its surrounding neighborhoods feature citizens and local organizations that are committed to making efforts to improve and revitalize the area. The population of the three neighborhoods around Thread Lake is 5,265 persons and is 64.7 percent African American and 28.7 percent white (US Census, 2010). The Thread Lake neighborhoods endured significant population loss from 2000 to 2010 which has resulted in increased property abandonment, blight, and severely decreased home values. The neighborhood west of Thread Lake was hit the hardest as it lost 32.7 percent of its population, while the Circle Drive Neighborhood experienced a modest 2.2 percent increase. The individuals that remain in some of the neighborhoods are also struggling financially as 41.5 percent of households earn less than \$20,000 per year. The median income household of all three neighborhoods around Thread Lake is \$28,074. This is in contrast to a median household income of \$26,339 in the City of Flint as a whole, and \$48,471 in the State of Michigan.

*Figure 6* illustrates the community organizations that serve the neighborhoods surrounding Thread Lake: the South Parks Neighborhood Association, the South Side Business and Resident Association, and the Circle Drive Neighborhood Association. All of these groups were crucial in engaging residents of this study area to provide input into this Vision. There is no organized neighborhood association east and north of the Flint Golf Club, and south of the north arm of Thread Lake. However, a number of property owners in this area participated in the development of this Vision document.

## NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS AROUND THREAD LAKE, FLINT, MI



### Legend

- A. South Parks Neighborhood Association
- B. Circle Drive Neighborhood Association
- C. South Side Business and Resident Association
- Thread Lake

*Figure 6 – Neighborhood organizations in the Thread Lake Community.*

Considering the population loss, blight, and economic circumstances of many residents, a challenge during this visioning process was determining the level of interest of the community in issues related to water quality, considering the more immediate concerns of many households. Improving water quality is a long-term goal in Thread Lake, and this Vision builds up to that goal through related short-term efforts that have a more immediate impact on the surrounding neighborhoods.



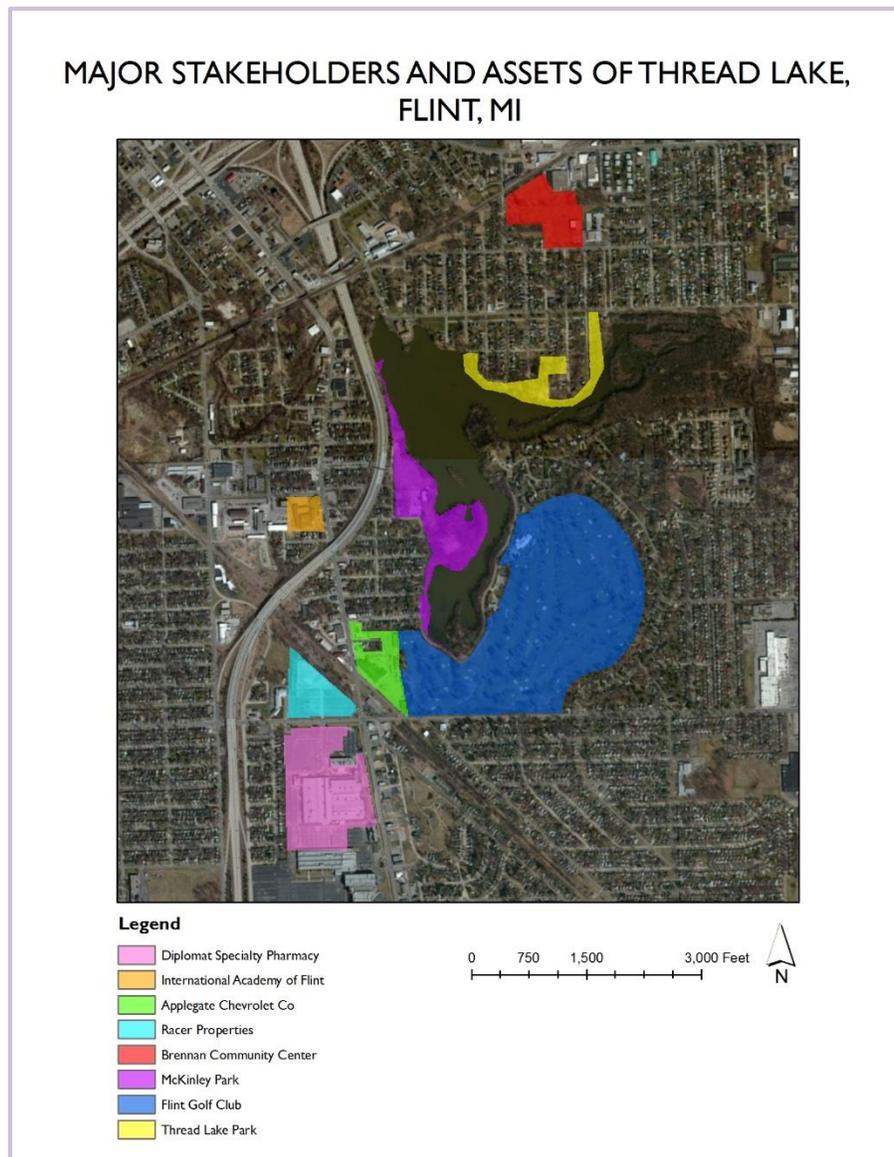
***CURRENT  
CONDITIONS***



*(Photos: MSU Planning & Zoning Center, FRWC)*

## EXISTING RELATED EFFORTS

Many stakeholders are independently invested in the redevelopment of Thread Lake and the surrounding neighborhoods, for a variety of different reasons. Collaboration between public and private stakeholders has formed a network of constituents that have invested financial and planning resources to engage local residents and envision an improved community together. Following is a summary of existing related efforts recently completed or underway to improve conditions on and around Thread Lake. *Figure 7* illustrates some of the key stakeholders, beyond the neighborhood organizations which have been previously identified.



*Figure 7 – Key engaged stakeholders on the South Saginaw Corridor and surrounding Thread Lake.*

## City of Flint Planning Department

The Flint City Council approved Flint's first master plan since 1960 on October 28, 2013. The Master Plan was a collaborative process that involved over 5,000 individuals participating in 300 events throughout the process. The "Imagine Flint" master planning process was funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2011 and will include a capital improvement plan and zoning revision by the end of 2014 in addition to the Master Plan.

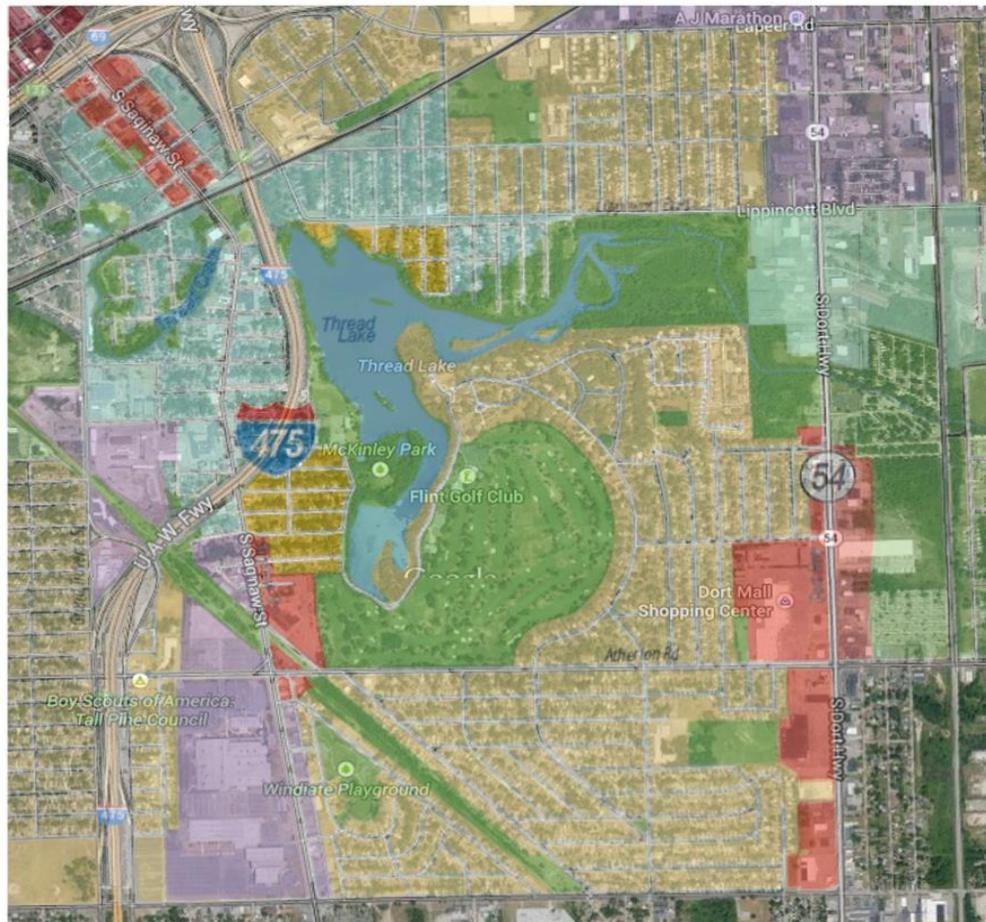
One of the subareas defined in the Master Plan is the "South Saginaw Corridor", which includes Thread Lake and the neighborhoods to the south, north and west of the lake along Saginaw Street (*Figure 8*). This area will be the subject of a more intensive future subarea study.



*Figure 8 – The South Saginaw Corridor as defined in the Flint Master Plan runs from Hemphill Road to the South to Interstate-69 to the north.*

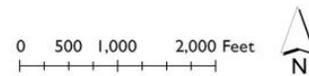
One of the principle challenges of this corridor is the physical barrier of I-475 immediately west of Thread Lake. Another physical barrier for the Thread Lake Community is the former railroad lines running through two of the neighborhoods. Future land uses for this area are included in the new Flint Master Plan and are illustrated on *Figure 9*.

## LAND USE, THREAD LAKE, FLINT, MI



### Legend

- Green Neighborhood
- Traditional Neighborhood
- Mixed Residential
- City Corridor
- Downtown District
- Commerce & Employment Center
- Green Innovation
- Community Open Space & Recreation



*Figure 9 – Future land uses in the South Saginaw Corridor and the Thread Lake Community as outlined in the Flint Master Plan.*

## South Side Neighborhood Plan

In 2011, the South Side Neighborhood Planning Group spearheaded efforts to produce a South Side Neighborhood Plan to improve housing conditions, create an economic development strategy and produce a public areas, open spaces, and infrastructure plan for the neighborhoods. The South Side Neighborhood study area is directly north of Thread Lake, and is defined in the plan as being comprised of the South Parks, Evergreen Valley, and Evergreen Estates neighborhoods (*Figure 10*). Evergreen Valley and Evergreen Estates are east of Dort Highway and beyond the defined study area for this Thread Lake Vision.



*Figure 10 – South Parks Neighborhood in relation to the South Side Neighborhood boundaries.  
(South Side Neighborhood Plan)*

The South Parks Neighborhood includes Thread Lake Park (*Figure 11*). The action plan for Thread Lake Park calls for the creation of a walking path around the lakeshore area, installation of new piers and a boat launch to access the water, installing picnic tables and a shelter area, create a canoe rental, reserve land for nature area (bird watching), and create a large path to connect Thread Lake and McKinley Park.

## THREAD LAKE, FLINT, MI



### Legend

- Thread Lake Park
- McKinley Park
- Flint Golf Course

0 500 1,000 2,000 Feet



*Figure 11 – Two parks and the green space of the Flint Golf Club surround much of Thread Lake within the study area. Much of the forested area east of the lake and south of Lippincott Blvd. is property owned by the Genesee County Land Bank (See Figure 14).*

The plan also calls for: installation of more lighting, repair and replace old lighting, remove dead trees, plant new appropriate trees, and install new signs. The Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission and the Genesee County Land Bank were listed as potential partners of the plan.

The current housing conditions and challenges are also addressed in the plan. During the planning process, a neighborhood housing condition inventory was conducted in which every house was categorized as either good, fair, poor or should be demolished. From this survey, the following objectives related to housing were established in the plan: improve the maintenance of rental and owner occupied housing; create new investment in housing (renovation and future development); create opportunities for first time home buyers; and remove old housing stock.

### **South Side Business and Resident Association**

Formed in June 2006, the South Side Business and Resident Association works to connect residents and business owners in the South Saginaw area with other local organizations and resources to address community concerns. Applegate Chevrolet, Diplomat Pharmacy, and the International Academy of Flint provide regular meeting space for this group and have contributed in various capacities to its initiatives. The South Side Business and Resident Association consists of various committees that focus on specific issues such as code enforcement, community engagement, neighborhood beautification, and public safety. Organizations such as these may serve as a catalyst for implementing change by coordinating the proper resources to take the first steps in making this Vision a reality.

### **South Parks Neighborhood Association**

The South Parks Neighborhood lies directly north of Thread Lake (*Figure 10*). The South Parks Neighborhood is in close proximity to Thread Lake, Thread Lake Park, Brennan Park and the Brennan Community Center. The Brennan Community Center provides space for public gatherings and social events such as the annual Southside Neighborhood Picnic. The South Parks Neighborhood Association helps coordinate clean-up initiatives, neighborhood gatherings, and other community initiatives that promote the health and safety of residents in the South Parks Neighborhood, while seeking opportunities to capitalize on the presence of these nearby natural amenities such as Thread Lake.

### **Circle Drive Neighborhood Association**

The Circle Drive Neighborhood Association serves the area from Hemphill Road to Atherton Road to the north and south and Saginaw Street to Dort Highway from the west and east. The association stresses volunteer work in the neighborhood and collaborates to manage and maintain abandoned properties within the boundaries of their organization. The Circle Drive Neighborhood Association has been active during this visioning process and is also engaged in the conversion of the CSX Rail Line located in the Grand Traverse Greenway into a trail that connects with the center of Flint.

### **Urban Collaborators at Michigan State University**

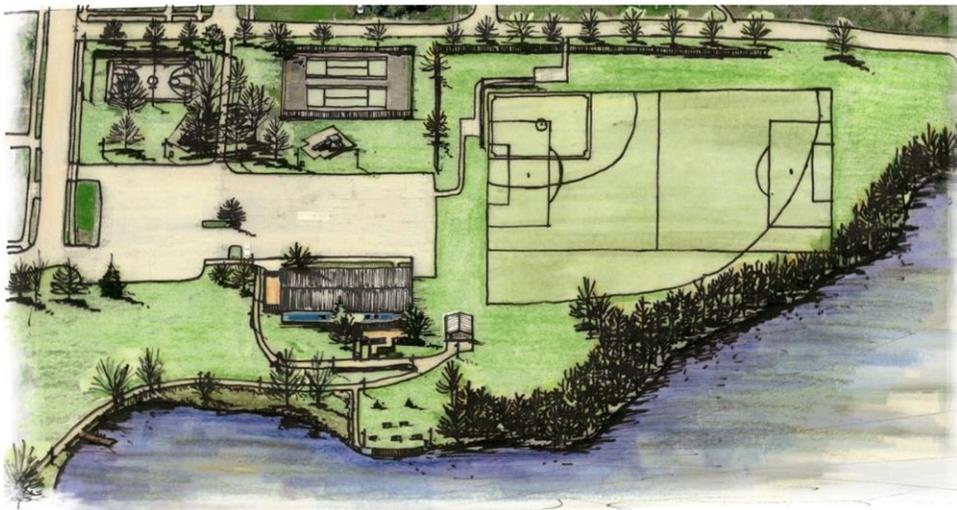
During the Spring 2013 semester, students from the Michigan State University urban and regional planning program worked with the City of Flint to draft a background report on the South Saginaw Corridor. This effort was made possible through the Urban Collaborators program at MSU, which unites practicum students with planners in the field to provide them hands-on experience working with actual stakeholders on real-world projects and initiatives. Planning students conducted a socio-economic profile, retail market analysis, and existing conditions report of the South Saginaw area, then incorporated their research into a conceptual design and improvement plan addressing commercial revitalization, traffic, public transit, pedestrian access, and wayfinding. The study concluded that although the corridor is a commercial thoroughfare surrounded by historic residential neighborhoods, the corridor itself is in a state of transition between its manufacturing past and, as yet unknown, vision for the future.

## South Saginaw Task Force

The South Saginaw Task Force (SSTF) is a group of business owners, residents, and stakeholders in the South Saginaw Corridor and surrounding neighborhoods that have collaborated to prepare an action agenda for improvement of the South Saginaw Corridor and the surrounding neighborhood (published September 2013). Some of the key targets for improvement in this area are: 1) McKinley Park; 2) South Saginaw; and 3) the neighborhoods to the east and west of Saginaw. In addition, the group has collaborated to complete a grant application to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) for recreational improvements to McKinley Park. The creation of the task force was spearheaded by the CEO of Diplomat Specialty Pharmacy Phil Hagerman with the aim to improve the South Saginaw Corridor from I-69 to Hemphill Road.

The task force includes local representatives from the International Academy of Flint, Word of Life Christian Church, Flint Golf Club, Applegate Chevrolet, Walker Electric, Metro Community Development, Genesee County Habitat for Humanity, Flint & Genesee Chamber of Commerce, the City of Flint, and the Flint Area Reinvestment Office (FARO).

In December 2013, the SSTF was awarded \$225,000 by the (MNRTF) for an improvement project at McKinley Park on Thread Lake that was detailed in the South Saginaw Task Force Project Report. The funds will finance the following improvements and amenities in McKinley Park on the west side of Thread Lake (*Figure 12*): improve boat launch on northwest tip of Thread Lake, repair fence, sidewalk ramp, and sidewalk to McKinley Park, new soccer field and goals, upgrade baseball outfield, new playground equipment, reconstruct tennis courts, restripe basketball courts, improve parking lot, improve community center (Vista Center), add fishing deck on east side of Vista Center, add accessible floating kayak/canoe launch, add new pavilion and an accessible path with exercise stations heading south from the community (Vista) center.



*Figure 12 – Proposed improvements to the sports and playground facilities at McKinley Park as described in the South Saginaw Task Force plan and recommended by this Vision.*

A second site redevelopment plan being considered by the SSTF is on the southeast corner of Saginaw and Atherton (Figure 7). The property is owned and managed by the RACER Trust. The SSTF in collaboration with the International Academy of Flint (IAF) has proposed a recreational facility consisting of two soccer fields, a baseball diamond and a basketball court to be used by students at the school and the surrounding neighborhoods. The desired use by the SSTF is in conflict with the Flint Master Plan adopted in October 2013, which has planned the corner as a commerce and employment center (Figure 9). The Racer Trust site (11 acres) and adjoining land to the north in the railroad right of way are large and presently represent a big vacant redevelopment opportunity. There is potentially space for both options as well as mixed-use residential if it's planned appropriately in coordination with the Word of Life Church and in short, medium, and long-term phases.

#### Short-term (0-10 years)

The SSTF desires recreational facilities at this site which is close to the IAF and will meet part of its need for athletic fields. Recreation is an improvement considering the current blighted condition of the property. To accommodate other uses, recreational fields should be designed to leave space for mixed-use development on S. Saginaw Street and the development of a civic corner on Saginaw and Atherton.

Under this approach, the SSTF would be responsible for planning the recreation on the site, obtaining funds for acquisition and development, managing construction, and maintaining the athletic facilities. The City of Flint should take the lead in acquiring the parcel from the RACER Trust and then engaging in a short-term, 8-to-10 year lease, with the SSTF and IAF to use the parcel for athletic fields. It should be clearly noted that as market demands shift, the parcel can be converted to its planned use as a commercial and employment center as stated in the Master Plan.

#### Medium-term (10-15 years)

The transition of the site from primarily recreation use will depend on market trends and the demand for development at the site. A Target Market Analysis is necessary to determine whether a mixed-use development is feasible along S. Saginaw Street. If the market is there, the site should be marketed to developers as a potential mixed-use site with a civic corner. The new development will attract residents and increase density along the South Saginaw Corridor.

#### Long-Term (15-plus years)

The Saginaw/Atherton corner is surrounded by anchors such as Diplomat Pharmacy, Word of Life Church and the International Academy of Flint and is in close proximity to downtown Flint to the north and the suburbs of Burton and Grand Blanc to the south. Considering its strategic location, long-term, the site is best suited as a mixed-use or commercial/employment center. However, the development of this site is dependent on market forces and rate of growth in Flint and its surrounding suburbs. If the market responds positively, all stakeholders must agree that development should continue north of Atherton Road along S. Saginaw Street even it means transitioning the athletic facilities to commercial or other employment uses. That would mean finding an alternative location nearby for athletic fields, but there is more than a decade likely available to do that. In the meantime the athletic fields would dramatically improve the appearance and utility of most of the site.

## **City of Flint Parks and Recreation Department**

The City of Flint Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for managing McKinley Park to the west of Thread Lake and Thread Lake Park north of Thread Lake. The department is also responsible for the Vista Center which currently serves as a community and mental health counseling center for area residents. The park system will benefit from capital improvements at McKinley Park courtesy of the MNRTF grant and can build off of those improvements by adding programming and educational opportunities at the park. However, the department is severely underfunded and little maintenance is being performed at its parks. Community-wide park partnerships may be necessary to help coordinate such programming that promotes more activity in city parks and restores them to their natural beauty. The Master Plan emphasizes the need for these continued partnerships with organizations such as The Crim Fitness Foundation, The Ruth Mott Foundation (RMF), and Keep Genesee County Beautiful (KGCB). Further collaborations with other local stakeholder groups such as neighborhood associations, non-profit organizations, and nearby state and private universities can greatly assist the City of Flint Parks and Recreation Department with the daunting task of tending to the vast public park grounds throughout the City.

## **Flint River Watershed Coalition**

The Flint River Watershed Coalition (FRWC) is a 501 c(3) non-profit organization located in Flint, which advocates for clean water resources by engaging local community members and stakeholders through recreational and educational opportunities associated with the Flint River. The FRWC is a partner in this visioning process as they have engaged local neighborhood organizations around issues of water quality in Thread Lake, Flint Park Lake, and are planning on doing the same around Kearsley Reservoir in 2014. The FRWC is committed to engaging urban and rural populations in the greater Flint area with the common goal of increasing community and political investment in the natural water assets in the Flint River Watershed. As a local stakeholder, the FRWC is committed to assisting with the implementation of both the short- and long-term action steps in this Vision.

**Current condition**



*(Photo: FRWC)*

**What is your vision for Thread Lake?**



*(Image: J. Spry)*

## **POTENTIAL FUTURE VISION/OPPORTUNITIES**

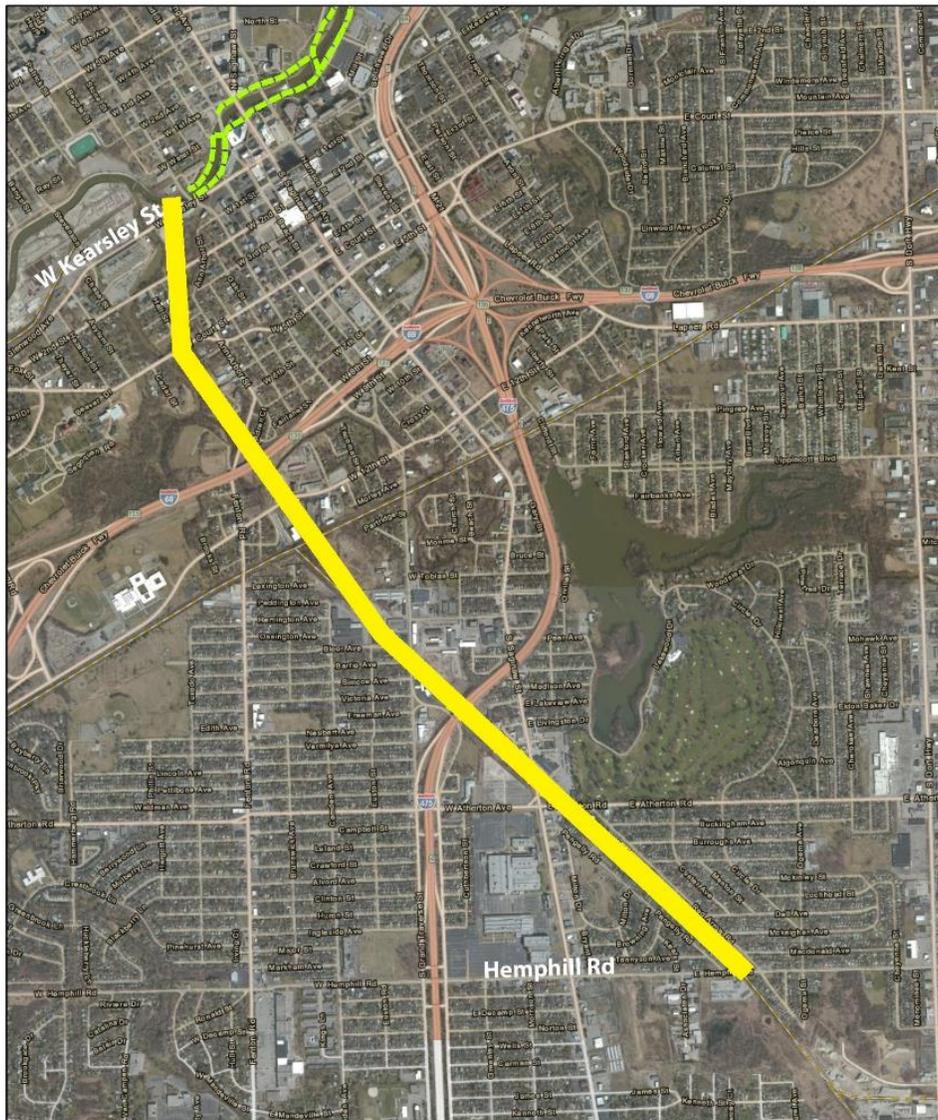
In addition to current planning and redevelopment efforts in the neighborhoods surrounding Thread Lake and the South Saginaw Corridor, many other efforts are being considered for funding and implementation in the future. These efforts involve stakeholders investing time and resources into realizing a common vision while also committing to the neighborhood for many years in the future. Below is a summary of additional future key opportunities in the Thread Lake neighborhoods and the South Saginaw Corridor.

### **PlacePlan – Grand Traverse Greenway Trail**

The SSTF action plan outlines the development of a rail trail on the current Grand Traverse Greenway (a former CSX rail line). The Greenway runs southeast to northwest and crosses South Saginaw north of Atherton Road before connecting to the Flint River Trail in the center of Flint.

In 2008, the Genesee County Metropolitan Planning Commission completed an engineering plan for the Grand Traverse Greenway from Hemphill Road to Kearsley Street. In 2009, the City was awarded grant funding from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to acquire the 3-mile stretch of rail line from CSX. As of 2014, the City is negotiating a purchase of the rail line. *Figure 13* illustrates the proposed location of the Grand Traverse Greenway Trail.

# GRAND TRAVERSE GREENWAY PATH CONNECTION, FLINT, MI



## Legend

- Flint River Trail
- Grand Traverse Greenway Path

0 1,100 2,200 4,400 Feet



Figure 13 - Proposed Grand Traverse Greenway Trail with connection to the Flint River Trail.

While negotiations are ongoing during the drafting of this Vision, the SSTF and City of Flint also collaborated on an application to the Michigan Municipal League to prepare a PlacePlan for development of a 3-mile segment of the rail trail. The application was approved, the work is ongoing, and a final report is pending in June 2014.

Michigan State University faculty and students in the School of Planning, Design, and Construction will be producing the PlacePlan. This plan assesses the existing facilities and attributes of the greenway while gathering resident input to map out a strategy to maximize the Grand Traverse Greenway as a vibrant pathway for the City. The trail will be a major asset for the neighborhoods on South Saginaw and around Thread Lake, as well as for the rest of the city. The greenway trail is a leading strategy within the transportation and mobility section of the Master Plan, as well as a priority project for the Genesee County Trail Plan.

### **International Academy of Flint**

The International Academy of Flint (IAF), located on the South Saginaw Corridor (*Figure 7*), is an advocate for and is invested in the redevelopment of Thread Lake and the surrounding neighborhoods. The IAF is a K-12 charter school that emphasizes community engagement, beautification, and neighborhood redevelopment in its immediate vicinity. Re-investment in recreation resources at McKinley Park and/or the corner of Saginaw/Atherton (*see page 24 for options*) will provide facilities and resources for IAF students, staff, and faculty. As a result, the Academy is a key stakeholder and advocate for investment in the South Saginaw Corridor and Thread Lake. Since the students that attend the Academy hail from across the city, they bring positive attention to this area and its potential after improvement.

### **Genesee County Land Bank**

The Genesee County Land Bank is a large stakeholder in the neighborhoods surrounding Thread Lake as it holds numerous blighted properties in the neighborhoods to the north and west of Thread Lake (*Figure 14*).

As a large property owner in the area, the land bank has an opportunity to assist in helping to shape the redevelopment efforts in the neighborhoods and assist in implementing this Vision. The large land bank property just northeast of Thread Lake provides a significant opportunity for improvements to public park lands as well as to the Thread Lake ecosystem itself. This key property could align with the Sustainability and Social Equity guiding principle of the Master Plan by creating a natural green space that further unites surrounding neighborhoods and attracts more city residents to Thread Lake. The proximity of such a natural amenity to downtown Flint is an asset that all residents should be allowed to enjoy and come together to share.

## THREAD LAKE, FLINT, MI



### Legend

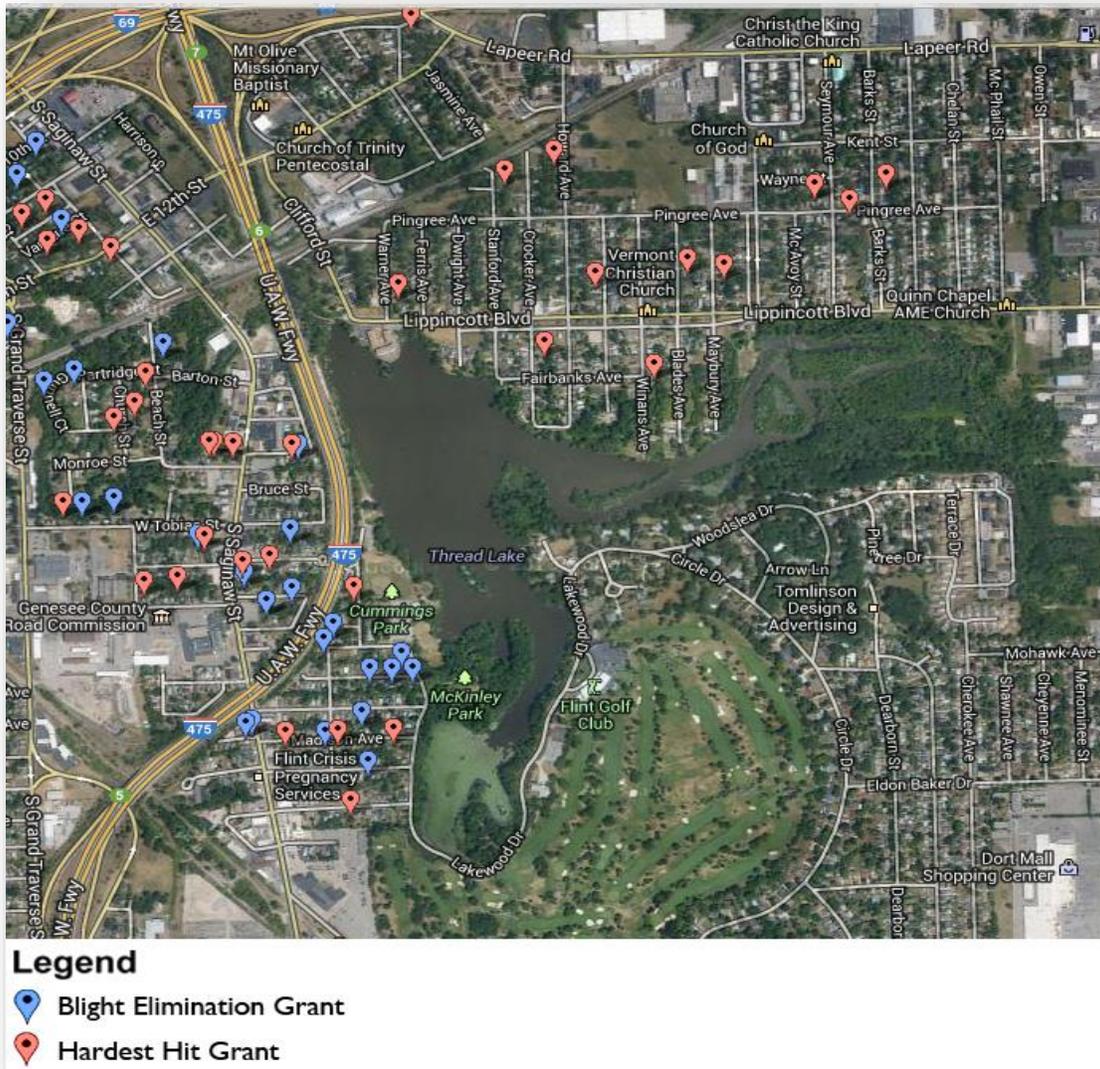
- Genesee County Land Bank
- Public Parcels

0 500 1,000 2,000 Feet



*Figure 14 – The Genesee County Land Bank is a large stakeholder in the Thread Lake Community as it owns vacant parcels on all sides of the lake.*

In August 2013, the Land Bank received nearly \$24 million in federal funds to demolish blighted structures across the city. The funding could demolish approximately 1,900 structures in Flint including many in the neighborhoods surrounding Thread Lake. *Figure 15* illustrates the properties scheduled for demolition in the neighborhood north and west of Thread Lake. The demolition of blighted properties around Thread Lake creates opportunities for redevelopment in accordance with this Vision, the City's Master Plan, and in collaboration with current and future efforts of other stakeholders in the corridor.



*Figure 15 – Blighted structures in the South Saginaw Neighborhood that have been scheduled for demolition as of September, 2013. (South Saginaw Task Force)*

## **Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission**

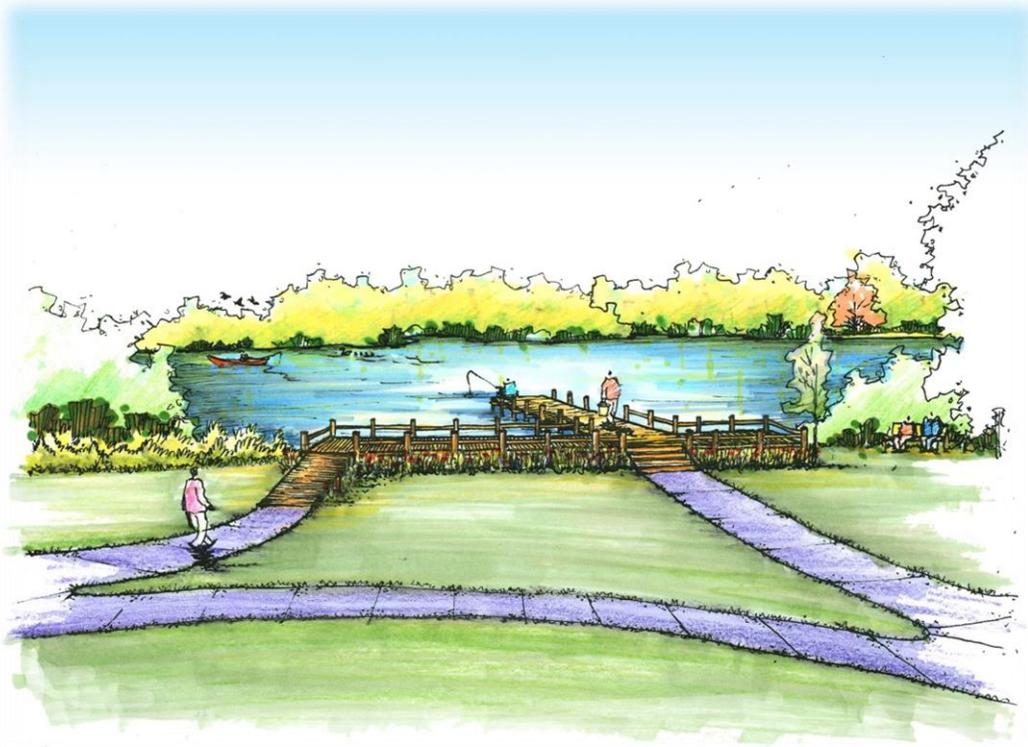
Two parks surround Thread Lake – McKinley Park to the west and Thread Lake Park to the north (*Figure 11*). Due to budget constraints, neither park has received adequate maintenance for a number of years. McKinley Park has benefited from mowing by maintenance staff at the Flint Country Club, but Thread Lake Park has not had a similar benefactor. Given the planned and approved upgrades to McKinley Park funded by the MNRTF, along with the Master Plan objectives of marketing Flint water bodies as city-wide and regional recreational amenities, the park may have appeal and opportunities that extend beyond the needs and desires of the Thread Lake Community and the City of Flint. An improved boat launch, fishing deck, and an accessible floating kayak/canoe launch could be marketed county-wide. As discussed in the Master Plan, larger City parks that attract visitors from the greater region could be passed to regional agencies such as the Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission or the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. As a potential stakeholder, Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission may have more of a capacity to better maintain both Thread Lake and McKinley Parks than the City of Flint Parks and Recreation Department currently has, the goal being that park maintenance would be consistent for several years to ensure proper management. It may therefore behoove stakeholders around Thread Lake to court the Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission to be a major player in future park improvements and operational maintenance. The City of Flint Parks and Recreation Department, (possibly in coordination with the Citizen Parks Advisory Board proposed in the Master Plan) may also want to establish a metric for the park system that would indicate the conditions under which a park would necessitate this shared responsibility agreement between the City and a partner agency such as the Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission.

***Current condition***



(Photo: MSU Planning & Zoning Center)

***What is your vision for Thread Lake?***



## VISION, GOALS, AND ACTION STEPS

Thread Lake is an environmental asset to surrounding neighborhoods and the City of Flint. Currently, it's an asset that has not been maximized or well maintained. Water quality is poor, but it has many fish species, and as with most water bodies, is very visually appealing. This aesthetic feature is enhanced by the high bank around half of the lake which provides a beautiful viewing perspective from many angles. Public ownership of most of the land abutting the lake greatly enhances its recreational value, but lack of safe access, poor or little maintenance, and a lack of neighborhood advocacy has further diminished its usefulness as a natural amenity. Apart from water quality, much of the land immediately surrounding Thread Lake has not been maintained or developed into a usable asset for residents and recreationalists. If maximized in accordance with the community's vision and aligned with the goals and objectives of local stakeholders, Thread Lake has the potential be to a keystone asset that not only enhances daily quality of life but which could also spur neighborhood redevelopment, attract new households to the area, and provide economic, recreational, and educational opportunities for current and future residents. The Master Plan promotes Social Equity and Sustainability as one of its guiding principles, with the aim of ensuring policies and practices give proper attention to residents of all backgrounds, while enhancing community connections to the natural environment. The Thread Lake Vision can align with this goal through concerted efforts to revitalize the lake and surrounding land into active public park space for the entire community to share.

This Vision imagines an improved and redeveloped Thread Lake centered on three principal Goals: 1) Recreation improvements; 2) Neighborhood stabilization and targeted redevelopment; and 3) Water quality improvements (*Figure 16*). Each of three Goal categories are interrelated and actions must be targeted sequentially, and sometimes simultaneously, in order to thoroughly and completely achieve this Vision. Improving the water quality of Thread Lake is a concern that requires long-term planning, collaboration, and funding that probably extends beyond the means of city and county government. Despite the desire and need for improved water quality as the foundation of this Vision, there are recreation and neighborhood redevelopment actions that can be pursued immediately to improve the existing conditions around Thread Lake and establish a springboard for water quality improvements in the future. The action steps and objectives in this Vision are categorized as either short- or long-term, and initial stakeholder responsibility for accomplishing each task is identified at the end in **Tables 2-5** on pages 63-65. No action will occur without a commitment by all of the stakeholders who care about Thread Lake.

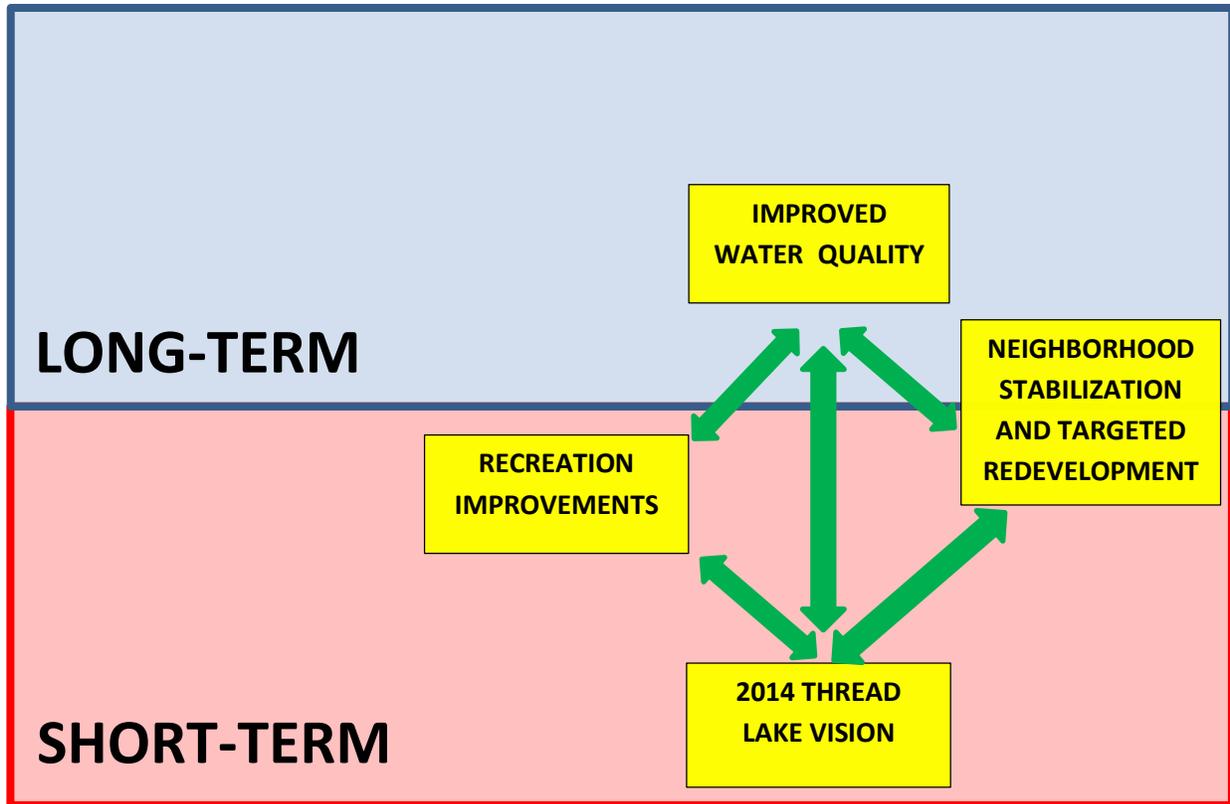


Figure 16 – This Vision focuses on recreation improvements, neighborhood stabilization and targeted redevelopment, and water quality improvements. All three elements are interconnected and should be pursued in order to maximize Thread Lake as an asset to the surrounding neighborhoods.

Each of the Goals, action steps (and in some cases more refined objectives) that follow appear in the general order that offers the most synergistic benefits. However, it is unlikely they will be able to be implemented smoothly or even in the order proposed for a variety of reasons. As a result, it is very important to periodically revisit this Vision and reprioritize based on changing circumstances.

## A Vision for Thread Lake & Surrounding Neighborhoods in 15 Years

Following is a description of Thread Lake and surrounding neighborhoods at the point in time all the short- and long-term actions recommended in the next section have been implemented. This Vision is offered to describe a future quite different than the present in order to illustrate what could be, as well as to motivate stakeholders to take responsibility for implementation of the actions that follow. Without a clear description of what the outcomes of all the proposed actions are, it is hard for many people to “see” the future in their minds eye, and to commit to taking steps to help make that future a reality.

*By 2029, a child born in 2014 will have experienced a transformation of the land and neighborhoods around Thread Lake. This fifteen year old won’t appreciate everything that has been done, but her parents and grandparents will remember. It began with a Vision built on the recognition that*

*polishing the **family jewel** known as **Thread Lake** would create a **beacon of light** that would shine on a series of broader improvements, each building on the last.*

*In 2029, Thread Lake will be ringed with a trail system that is heavily used by nearby residents and visitors. There will be picnicking and active recreation underway in the parks around the lake and on kayaks and canoes on the lake surface. Water quality will be improved to the point that the lake is swimmable at the new public beaches. Homes in all three neighborhoods around the lake will be in good to great condition, and businesses along South Saginaw will be revitalized; but there will be far fewer of them, as some of the land will be reused for multi-family dwellings, often of mixed-use (residential/commercial) design. Signs of renewed prosperity will be everywhere and vitality will have returned to the area. There will be many activities targeted to children, teens, adults, and seniors alike. Education quality will be higher, and all children educated in the area will have a basic understanding of how to protect water quality and how lake and river system ecosystems function. The South end of Flint will be viewed as a model of urban revitalization, and it will be centered around Thread Lake whose water quality has been restored after a major drainage, dredging, and dam replacement project was completed. These long-term improvements help unite over time the diverse neighborhoods that all have a stake in the renewed public land around the lake, while promoting sustainability principles that lead to a cleaner, healthier natural environment for residents to appreciate together.*

The action steps to achieve this Vision fit into three Goal categories: 1) *Recreation Improvements (REC)*; 2) *Neighborhood Stabilization and Targeted Redevelopment (NSTR)*; and 3) *Water Quality (WQ)*. Action steps are prioritized below chronologically, followed by the corresponding Goal category abbreviation.

**Table 1** enumerates each of the action steps by Goal category, with the subsequent section retaining the numbering system from the prioritized list of action steps below.

**Short-Term: Years 1-2**

1. *Create a Friends of Thread Lake organization, comprised of representatives from each surrounding neighborhood organization and other interested stakeholder groups, to help guide implementation of the actions below. The organization would meet as needed and annually work with the Flint River Watershed Coalition to hold a lake clean-up day (REC).*
2. *Restore full recreational functions to McKinley Park and Thread Lake Park; including continued maintenance of the grounds and facilities with assistance of state, county, and private resources (REC).*
3. *Hold a major kickoff event to celebrate park improvements that attracts thousands to the restored parks and enlists support and assistance for all the actions that follow (NSTR).*
4. *Demolish targeted substandard/structurally deficient buildings and incorporate low-maintenance reseeding. (NSTR).*
5. *Establish a mechanism to regularly mow vacant lots in all neighborhoods (NSTR).*
6. *Neighborhood safety is improved by stakeholder design of a new neighborhood watch system and implementation of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (NSTR).*
7. *Prepare detailed Thread Lake Trail Plan (including all the bike and pedestrian bridges) and the next step recreation improvement plans and financing (REC).*
8. *Provide incentives to homeowners to invest more in exterior home improvements (NSTR).*

9. *Based upon a traffic study associated with the area, implement simplest Complete Streets improvements to South Saginaw, including shifting to a three-lane configuration (NSTR).*
10. *Develop best management practices for stormwater run-off on Thread Creek and around Thread Lake to stabilize and maintain current water quality (WQ).*
11. *Gather water quality data in Thread Lake and upstream on Thread Creek, and conduct a thorough analysis of options for draining, dredging and replacing the dam; as well as options for financing these improvements (WQ).*
12. *Begin preparation and distribution of educational materials on protecting water quality to stakeholders and households, and assist schools with curriculum development on water quality protection and monitoring based around Thread Lake and Thread Creek (WQ).*

**Short-Term: Years 3-5**

13. *Begin aggressive paint-it/fix-it program for targeted houses and businesses in all three neighborhoods (NSTR).*
14. *Implement expanded Complete Streets improvements to South Saginaw including new decorative lighting and landscaping for at least the Atherton St. intersection area for two blocks in each direction (NSTR).*
15. *Build boulevard entrances to McKinley Park and Thread Lake Park (NSTR).*
16. *Complete paving of Grand Traverse Greenway Trail, and build and pave the trail that encircles Thread Lake (REC).*
17. *Improve wayfinding to key assets along South Saginaw and around Thread Lake (NSTR).*
18. *City initiates neighborhood stabilization program with aggressive code enforcement (NSTR).*
19. *The City of Flint Planning Department teams with Habitat for Humanity and Thread Lake neighborhoods in planning and development of more infill housing on vacant lots in Traditional Neighborhood place types around Thread Lake. (NSTR).*
20. *Neighborhoods work with outside stakeholders on plan for new passive solar homes, perhaps to be built on vacant lots along the new boulevard entrances to McKinley Park and Thread Lake Park (NSTR).*
21. *New mixed-use development (3-4 stories of residences above commercial) is built on the South Saginaw Corridor especially between I-475 and Atherton (NSTR).*
22. *Secure funding for the water quality improvements to Thread Lake and the dam replacement (WQ).*
23. *Schools begin implementation of water quality protection curriculum (WQ).*

**Long-Term: Years 6-10**

24. *Continue neighborhood stabilization and home improvements (NSTR).*
25. *Continue urban residential infill projects in targeted locations, if not yet completed (NSTR).*
26. *Continue increasing residential density along South Saginaw and improving the quality of commercial establishments (NSTR).*
27. *Implement the preferred plan for draining Thread Lake, dredging, and properly disposing of the dredged material, re-contouring the lake bottom, replacing the dam, refilling the lake, and restocking fish in the lake. Or, in the event this is infeasible, begin annual aquatic weed harvesting or use of aquatic herbicides in targeted locations and consider reestablishing a swimming pool at McKinley Park (WQ).*
28. *Make additional recreational improvements to the parks around the lake and expand trail connections to the lake (REC).*

- 29. *Improve the Vista Center building in McKinley Park and enhance the quality and appearance of the building (REC).*
- 30. *Hold a giant 10 year celebration (NSTR).*

**Long-Term: Years 11-15**

- 31. *Continue urban infill and densification along South Saginaw (NSTR).*
- 32. *Complete commercial redevelopment along South Saginaw (NSTR).*
- 33. *Install Bus Rapid Transit/Arterial Rapid Transit line along South Saginaw and further enhance landscaping, lighting, and aesthetic improvements along the corridor (NSTR).*

<b>Table 1: Breakdown of Thread Lake Vision action steps by category</b>	
<b>Goal category:</b>	<b>Action steps:</b>
Recreation Improvements	1-2, 7, 16, 28-29
Neighborhood Stabilization and Targeted Redevelopment	3-6, 8-9, 13-15, 17-21, 24-26, 30-33
Water Quality	10-12, 22-23, 27

The recommended improvements above will require a substantial investment by present and future landowners in the study area, as well as by nearby stakeholder organizations, and by city, county, and state entities. Only by cooperatively working together to achieve common objectives will this Vision become a reality. The following sections provide more refined descriptions of the action steps and objectives within each Goal category that will lead to the implementation necessary to achieve this Vision. These actions are compiled on **Tables 2-5** on pages 63-65.

**Goal: RECREATION IMPROVEMENTS**

Improved recreational facilities and infrastructure provide public health and economic development benefits to communities while enhancing the quality of life of individuals. Access to walking and bike trails, a comprehensive park system, and recreational programming are assets that attract and retain residents to a community. The creation of quality recreation facilities is a component of the MIPlace Partnership Initiative which focuses on attracting talented and creative individuals to Michigan cities by fostering a positive live and work environment. Therefore, improved recreational amenities can be a vehicle for economic development. Recreational enhancements can also improve public health as more opportunities for exercise and outdoor activities create a culture and atmosphere of physical fitness and community interaction.

Thread Lake is one of three lakes within the city boundaries of Flint and has the natural amenities and assets to become a recreation hub for not only the city, but for the entire county as well. Improving recreational opportunities around Thread Lake is both a short- and long-term project that can be integral to neighborhood revitalization and redevelopment around Thread Lake. It is also strongly correlated with future water quality improvements. Recreational enhancements will maximize Thread Lake as an asset in order to improve the quality of life for existing residents, attract users from across

Genesee County, and provide the opportunity to build more advocates for broader improvements to water quality. Thread Lake will also be used as an asset for economic redevelopment in the South Saginaw Corridor.

***Short-Term: Years 1-2***

***ACTION STEP 1:*** Create a Friends of Thread Lake organization, comprised of representatives from each surrounding neighborhood organization and other interested stakeholder groups, to help guide implementation of the actions below. The organization would meet as needed and annually work with the Flint River Watershed Coalition to hold a lake clean-up day (REC).

Citizen groups such as Friends of Max Brandon Park enable a community to embrace its natural assets such as parks and lakes and give them the proper attention they require. Current conditions in public parks illustrate the lack of resources and limited funding available at the city level to address these needs. Organizations such as Friends of Max Brandon Park coordinate clean-up initiatives, charity drives, health-oriented events such as 5K runs, and other community functions that capitalize on the presence of such a unique natural amenity. A stable organization comprised of engaged residents and invested stakeholders would help raise awareness and attract the help necessary to begin implementing these action steps and objectives for Thread Lake. The formation of such a group also provides an opportunity for the multiple neighborhood organizations around the lake to unite and invest their energy and resources towards a shared cause. A Friends of Thread Lake organization could act as a key facilitator in coordinating the steps necessary to implement this Vision. An immediate activity could be an annual clean-up coordinated with the Flint River Watershed Coalition.

***ACTION STEP 2:*** Restore full recreational functions to McKinley Park and Thread Lake Park; including continued maintenance of the grounds and facilities with assistance of state, county, and private resources.

The feedback received from the visioning process at Thread Lake aligns well with the recreational enhancements encouraged in the South Saginaw Task Force Report as well as the South Side Neighborhood Plan. The SSTF report prioritized improvements to McKinley Park west of Thread Lake while the South Side Neighborhood Plan focused on improvements in Thread Lake Park to the north of Thread Lake. The specific desired recreation improvements on Thread Lake are outlined below.

*Action Step 2, Objective 1: Improve docks and boat access for fishing and boating on west and north side of the lake:* Current conditions in McKinley Park and Thread Lake Park do not permit convenient access to water. Improved docks and boat access is required at both McKinley and Thread Lake Park in order to restore recreation opportunities on Thread Lake. *Figure 17* illustrates a potential vision for Thread Lake Park which includes renovations to the dock that facilitates lake access, a boat and canoe rental and storage shelter, and improved signage and lighting. All elements of this vision were expressed in the South Side Neighborhood Plan. Additional future opportunities on Thread Lake Park could include a public beach (after water quality has improved), a picnic pavilion, and playground equipment for children.



*Figure 17 – Envisioned improvements to one of the docks in Thread Lake Park on the north side of Thread Lake. The improvements also include public seating, improved signage and lighting, and a shelter for boat and canoe rentals.*

The SSTF plan that was awarded funding from the MNRTF in November 2013 also includes an improved boat launch on the northwestern tip of Thread Lake and an accessible floating kayak/canoe launch at McKinley Park.

***Action Step 2, Objective 2: Improve sports facilities in McKinley Park:*** McKinley Park features two tennis courts, a basketball court, and a baseball field. These facilities are all in dire condition due to lack of maintenance. Improvements to all athletics amenities as well as the addition of soccer goals are currently diagrammed in the SSTF plan for the park, which is consistent with the community's vision (Figure 12). Other outdoor recreational opportunities that can be explored for future improvements include a disc golf-course in the peninsula jutting into Thread Lake, and possibly bathroom facilities. Improved facilities provide opportunities for both organized and informal recreational opportunities for current residents in the adjacent neighborhoods.

*Action Step 2, Objective 3: Improve children’s playgrounds and picnic facilities in McKinley Park:*

The current playground in McKinley Park requires improvements in order to be a safe and welcoming environment for children. These improvements will provide recreational opportunities for children in the surrounding neighborhoods as well as students at the International Academy of Flint. An improved McKinley Park would also provide leisure space for family gatherings as well as outdoor meeting places for neighborhood and other stakeholder organizations. Upgrades to the playground equipment and picnic facilities are a part of the funded SSTF plan.

*Action Step 2, Objective 4: Utilize naturalization techniques in the parks around Thread Lake in coordination with the park maintenance system devised by Thread Lake stakeholders:*

The Master Plan discusses the need to embrace naturalization in selected parks and natural spaces in the city, allowing parkland to transition to native vegetation in targeted areas. These areas fall primarily in Green Innovation, Green Neighborhood, and Community Open Space place type designations detailed in the land use plan. With the limited operating expenses of the Parks and Recreation Department, naturalization practices help reduce maintenance costs while creating greater biodiversity around the lake ecosystem. Such practices must be in coordination with the established park maintenance system to ensure naturalization is focused on the areas around Thread Lake that most benefit nearby residents and park patrons.

***ACTION STEP 7: Prepare a detailed Thread Lake Trail Plan (including all the bike and pedestrian bridges) and the next step recreation improvement plans and financing.***

*Action Step 7, Objective 1: Plan a walking/bicycle path around Thread Lake:* A comprehensive walking and bicycle trail system around Thread Lake is outlined in *Figure 18* on the following page. The proposed trail system encircles Thread Lake and contains an inter-connected network on the northeast portion of the lake. The inter-connected network will require pedestrian bridges at multiple locations in order to maximize connectivity and walking/biking routes around the lake. A new connection parallel to the reconstructed dam is a critical link in this Vision and may need to be pursued separately from dam improvements if they are not possible until a long time into the future.

# THREAD LAKE, FLINT, MI



Figure 18 – A proposed bicycle and walking path around Thread Lake. The trail would also connect with the proposed Grand Traverse Greenway Trail to the south west of Thread Lake (purple line) and then to the Flint River Trail. The path around the lake would require several pedestrian bridges which may delay connections as various permits are obtained and replacement of the dam is determined.

The proposed trail around Thread Lake will also connect with the Grand Traverse Greenway Trail in the southeast corner of Thread Lake. The proposed Grand Traverse Greenway Trail was awarded PlacePlan funding by the Michigan Municipal League in November 2013. The rail trail will permit an improved non-motorized connection between the South Saginaw Corridor and the Flint River Trail.

Action Step 7, Objective 2: Determine funding opportunities to develop the Grand Traverse Greenway Trail: The City of Flint is currently in negotiations to acquire the rail trail from the CSX railroad company that currently owns the property. Upon acquiring the property the SSTF aims to seek funding to develop a 10-foot wide, 3-mile long trail from Hemphill Road to Kearsley Street (*Figure 13*). Potential funding sources for the rail trail include private contributions as well as state and federal agencies investing in recreational opportunities. Beyond financing for the rail trail, a financial plan to maintain the trail is also necessary in order to preserve and promote its utility. The City of Flint Parks and Recreation Department, Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission and local neighborhood groups should all collaborate to coordinate maintenance efforts of the trail.

### **Short-Term: Years 3-5**

**ACTION STEP 16:** *Complete paving of Grand Traverse Greenway Trail, and build and pave the trail that encircles Thread Lake.*

Action Step 16, Objective 1: Complete construction of the trail that encircles Thread Lake: Constructing the proposed Thread Lake Trail as outlined in *Figure 18* enhances Thread Lake as a natural asset by providing recreational opportunities for area residents. The trail around Thread Lake will also enhance connectivity between surrounding neighborhoods and provide non-motorized access to services and amenities on South Saginaw to the west and Dort Highway to the east of the lake.

Action Step 16, Objective 2: Construct pedestrian bridges: A comprehensive trail network around Thread Lake is outlined in *Figure 18* and in order to implement this vision, pedestrian bridges must be constructed to complete the trail and improve connectivity around Thread Lake. These bridges will parallel the dam and include several crossings in the northern portion of Thread Lake.

Action Step 16, Objective 3: Connect proposed Grand Traverse Greenway Trail to trail envisioned around Thread Lake: Linking the envisioned Thread Lake Trail with the proposed Grand Traverse Greenway Trail will connect Thread Lake and its surrounding neighborhoods to the Flint River Trail and other parts of central Flint. A PlacePlan for the Grand Traverse Greenway Trail is currently being created by faculty and students at Michigan State University. Three community meetings have been held in recent months to gain further public input on the future plans for the greenway. The PlacePlan should include a connection to Thread Lake branching off of South Saginaw (*Purple line Figure 18*).

Action Step 16, Objective 4: Complete paving of Grand Traverse Greenway Trail: Proper paving of the greenway trail will enhance pedestrian usage while promoting accessibility for all members of the community, thereby further enhancing connectivity and outdoor recreational opportunities in the area (Figure 19).

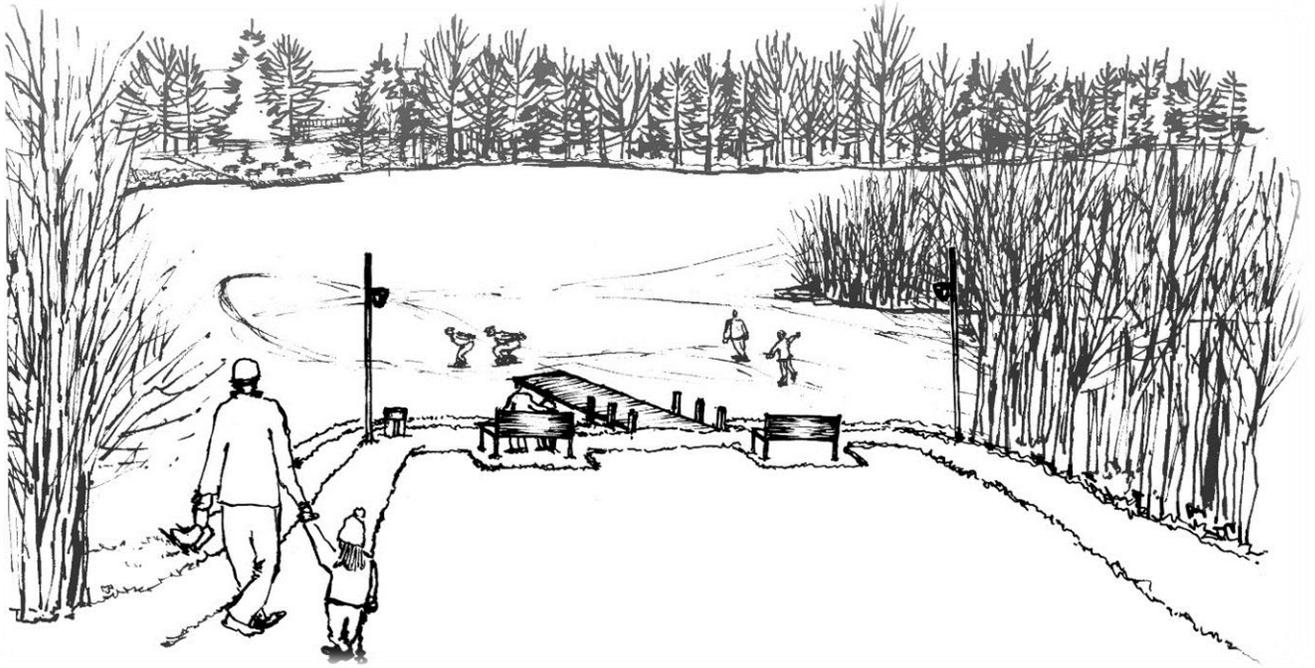


Figure 19 – The Grand Traverse Greenway Trail would connect with the bicycle path around Thread Lake south and around the Flint Golf Club.

### **Long-Term: Years 6-15**

**ACTION STEP 28:** Make additional recreational improvements to the parks around Thread Lake and expand trail connections to the lake.

The long-term recreational possibilities for Thread Lake are many and varied. The lake provides opportunities for both summer and winter recreational activities on and around the lake. Skating on the lake during the winter months and canoeing during the summer are all possible with appropriate planning (Figure 20). Long-term, the Thread Lake Trail can serve as a non-motorized transportation route for individuals traveling from downtown Flint south to the suburbs of Burton and Grand Blanc. The addition of bike lanes on Lippincott Blvd. can connect the trail system with the shopping centers on Center Road and I-69. Similar non-motorized transportation opportunities on Dort Highway could connect the Flint Golf Club with Southmoor Golf Course to the south in Grand Blanc. Based on its natural beauty and geographical location, Thread Lake has the opportunity to be a regional recreation hub for the City of Flint and the surrounding suburbs.



*Figure 20 – The long term recreational opportunities at Thread Lake include both winter and summer activities on the lake and in the surrounding neighborhoods.*

**ACTION STEP 29:** *Improve the Vista Center building in McKinley Park and enhance the quality and appearance of the building.*

The Vista Center is currently an under-utilized asset on the shore of the west side of Thread Lake in McKinley Park that can become a common hub for the surrounding neighborhoods in the near future. Access to the Vista Center is currently limited to the west side of Thread Lake off of South Saginaw, however, with an improved trail system around Thread Lake, connectivity and utility of the Vista Center will improve. The back side of the Vista Center overlooks Thread Lake and currently has an unmaintained wooden patio. With the appropriate improvements, this space can serve as a site for community gatherings, celebrations, and even weddings.

## **Goal: NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION & TARGETED REDEVELOPMENT**

The north and west neighborhoods surrounding Thread Lake have been devastated by property abandonment and population loss over the past several decades. In partnership with key stakeholders, neighborhood stabilization is a crucial step to revitalizing the neighborhood and making it more functional for existing residents and attractive to new residents. It will also help introduce new users to the area who wish to use the recreation improvements around Thread Lake.

Neighborhood redevelopment will occur over a longer period of time. The immediate steps in redeveloping neighborhoods on the north and west sides of Thread Lake require ancillary improvements, programs, and blight removal while the long-term projects address new residential construction. Lakefront property is an attractive asset to potential investors, and the neighborhoods around Thread Lake are fortunate to be in such close proximity to Thread Lake. The action steps and objectives in this section aim to harness that asset to create a safe and positive family environment for both residents and visitors to Thread Lake.

### ***Short-Term: Years 1-2***

***ACTION STEP 3: Hold a major kickoff event to celebrate park improvements that attracts thousands to the restored parks and enlists support and assistance for all the actions that follow.***

A primary goal of this vision is to bring stakeholders together to create a structured and unified plan for the Thread Lake Community. Funding for the implementation of a portion of this vision pertaining to McKinley Park has already been granted to the SSTF and this accomplishment should be celebrated by bringing residents and stakeholders together to explore the future transformation of the Thread Lake neighborhoods. The kickoff will serve to invest residents in the planning and implementation process while soliciting assistance and community action and engagement to ensure that all aspects of this Vision are implemented. This Vision has been created with significant input from the residents of the Thread Lake neighborhoods and the stakeholders on the South Saginaw Corridor, and its implementation is also dependent on these groups.

***ACTION STEP 4: Demolish targeted substandard/structurally deficient buildings and incorporate low-maintenance reseeding.***

The Genesee County Land Bank is a large stakeholder in the Thread Lake Community and is currently in the process of demolishing 1,900 structures in the City of Flint (*Figures 13-14*). Funding for demolition has been granted by state and federal resources with the aim of removing blight in distressed cities. Blight removal in the Thread Lake neighborhoods provides opportunities to reseed lots with appropriate low-maintenance vegetation which will beautify the neighborhoods while also making them safer. Removing unwanted structures is the first step in redeveloping the neighborhoods and creating a welcoming environment for residents and visitors to Thread Lake. Further blight removal efforts will be needed in the future as well.

***ACTION STEP 5: Establish mechanism to regularly mow vacant lots in all neighborhoods.***

Unmaintained lots in the Thread Lake neighborhoods are eyesores that are detrimental to neighborhood morale and the overall safety of the area. The neighborhood organizations, in partnership with the City of Flint, must coordinate a system to mow and maintain these vacant and unkempt lots that pose aesthetic and safety problems. Maintenance of vacant lots is a positive step forward for neighborhood stabilization and beautification. The City of Flint Planning Department is currently working on a blight elimination framework to form a coordinated strategy in addressing the various levels of blight in the city. Such a framework could be incorporated into the plans devised by the Thread Lake Community in dealing with vacant lots in the area.

***ACTION STEP 6: Neighborhood safety improved by stakeholder design of new neighborhood watch system and implementation of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design.***

Residents expressed concerns about safety in the Thread Lake neighborhoods. Residents tied the lack of maintenance of public property in general and park maintenance, in particular, to the unsafe environment around Thread Lake. Short-term steps can be taken to combat the reality and perception of safety around Thread Lake and the adjoining neighborhoods.

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) is the idea that the built environment can significantly impact the activities in a neighborhood and, when applied with specific intent, can limit and decrease crime in an area. The principles making up CPTED are: 1) Natural Surveillance by lighting and landscape architecture; 2) Natural Access Control via walkways, fences, lighting and signage; 3) Territorial Reinforcement that distinguishes public and private spaces; 4) Maintenance to preserve properties and the integrity of the neighborhood.

*Action Step 6, Objective 1: Create a collaborative neighborhood watch organization:* A neighborhood watch organization made up of residents from each of the neighborhood groups serves to collectively create and enforce expectations and rules for the area. The neighborhood watch organization should be an action-orientated group that monitors behavior while also engaging in positive outcomes outlined in Objective 3 and 4 in this section. Related existing efforts in the area such as the Southside Neighborhood Code Red Crime Watch could be recruited to share insight and strategies to help create a more extensive neighborhood watch system that addresses all of the Thread Lake Community.

*Action Step 6, Objective 2: Establish, display and enforce rules in McKinley Park and Thread Lake Park:* Residents in the neighborhoods surrounding Thread Lake desire structure and enforcement of public use rules in order to ascertain a sense of order in their neighborhood. The neighborhood watch organization in partnership with the City of Flint Parks and Recreation Department (and the Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission if it becomes involved) should come together to establish and display rules for each park. Enforcing the established rules would be a collective community effort with individuals holding each other accountable in partnership with City of Flint Parks and Recreation Department (and the Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission if it becomes involved).

*Action Step 6, Objective 3: Remove trash and prevent future dumping in the Thread Lake*

*Neighborhoods:* Litter and dumping is another concern for residents of the Thread Lake neighborhoods. An annual lake-wide cleanup is necessary to beautify the area and keep it clean. To prevent future dumping, signage should be placed in key spots around Thread Lake to indicate dumping is prohibited and must be enforced by City of Flint Police Department.

*Action Step 6, Objective 4: Remove brush and dead trees along shoreline to restore clear shoreline vistas:*

Unmaintained shorelines have resulted in an overgrowth of vegetation, especially along the north and west side of Thread Lake, as well as in key points on the east side. The overgrowth is limiting visual and physical access to the water and shoreline. Removing brush and dead vegetation will enhance accessibility and visibility of the lake which will improve safety and the quality of lake views in the surrounding neighborhoods.

*Action Step 6, Objective 5: Increase lighting in parks around Thread Lake:* The neighborhoods surrounding Thread Lake currently lack adequate lighting that would enhance safety and deter unwanted activity in the parks. Lighting needs to be improved in each of the streets and parks surrounding Thread Lake (and ultimately also along the proposed walking/bicycle path in this Vision).

***ACTION STEP 8: Provide incentives to homeowners to invest more in exterior home improvements.***

Many cities have successfully instituted housing façade improvement programs as a way to improve the value of housing stock, as well as creating more visually appealing neighborhoods. Often, communities seek Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), or receive state funding for assistance in projects such as façade improvement programs. In 2007, Flint participated in a facade improvement program through a Community Development Block Grant from HUD for revitalization of the storefronts in the central business district in downtown Flint. The grants were for up to \$25,000, but had to have matching funds from the building owner. Improvements that were covered under the grant were signs, canopies, awnings, and other general façade improvements.

***ACTION STEP 9: Based upon a traffic study associated with the area, implement simplest Complete Streets improvements to South Saginaw, including shifting to a three-lane configuration.***

Complete Streets are street and sidewalk designs that are aimed at making pedestrian and bicycle travel safer and more efficient. Another design element of Complete Streets is the “road diet,” which reduces a typical four-lane road down to three lanes for automobile travel, with the leftover space turned into dedicated bike lanes. Using Complete Streets design elements, Flint could create an environment in which pedestrian and bicycle travel is encouraged, safe and easy to use. Based on population loss and reduced traffic numbers, South Saginaw should be considered for a road diet from two lanes in each direction to one lane with a third turning lane in the center. The road diet will have a traffic calming effect in the South Saginaw Corridor which will make the streets safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. A detailed traffic study associated with the International Academy should be conducted to ascertain the

best alternatives for safe loading and unloading of students, with these findings properly applied to any possible road diet or lane reconfiguration along South Saginaw.

### ***Short-Term: Years 3-5***

***ACTION STEP 13:*** *Begin aggressive paint-it/fix-it program for targeted houses and businesses in all three neighborhoods.*

Neighborhoods with dilapidated or aged housing stock have been successful in using “paint-it/fix-it” programs which provide a small amount of money (usually less than \$1,000) to neighborhood groups for exterior paint and small repairs on houses of persons unable to pay for such improvements. This type of project would be ideal for harnessing volunteer work forces, such as churches, community or neighborhood groups, schools, or others. Painting and making exterior improvements to neglected homes can not only improve the houses involved, but also the block and neighborhood in which they are located. This can be repeated year after year with the amounts available tied to local need.

The City of Flint may be able to support this program through the federal HOME Investment Partnerships Program administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The HOME program funds a wide range of activities including building, buying, and/or rehabilitating affordable housing for rent or homeownership or providing direct rental assistance to low-income persons. Another avenue for implementing this initiative is Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from the State of Michigan which could be applied for and accessed by the City of Flint.

***ACTION STEP 14:*** *Implement expanded Complete Streets improvements to South Saginaw including new decorative lighting and landscaping for at least the Atherton Street intersection area for two blocks in each direction.*

Longer term, Complete Streets improvements should be further considered in an effort to enhance the vitality of the South Saginaw Corridor from Atherton to I-69 (south end of downtown Flint). Infrastructure improvements like improving and expanding sidewalks, paving shoulders, enhancing handicap accessibility, and creating a median separating bike lanes from automobile lanes will all enhance South Saginaw and make it a more attractive place for commercial investment and urban living.

***ACTION STEP 15:*** *Build boulevard entrances to McKinley Park and Thread Lake Park.*

Current access to Thread Lake is awkward and unwelcoming for pedestrians, cyclists, and automobiles. Part of the problem involves I-475 splitting the west side of the Thread Lake neighborhood. Another problem is the “hidden” aspect of the lake due to vegetative overgrowth. Several different improvements would not only improve access, but also create a welcoming environment for neighborhood residents and visitors. Currently there is no direct entrance to McKinley Park or the Flint Golf Club from South Saginaw beyond the underutilized and obscured pedestrian overpass that crosses over I-475. A gateway from South Saginaw will improve access while providing aesthetic value to Thread

Lake and the South Saginaw Corridor. A boulevard would also beautify the neighborhood while providing alternative uses for vacant parcels owned by the Genesee County Land Bank. One example of possible future uses involves new pilot passive solar home construction.

*Action Step 15, Objective 1: Transform Madison Avenue into a western Gateway entry for Thread Lake:* Madison Avenue was selected as the proposed gateway because it features eastbound access from South Saginaw after crossing I-475, and a large number of houses on the avenue are scheduled for demolition as part of the Genesee County Land Bank’s blight removal funding received in August 2013 (Figure 21 and 22).



*Figure 21 – Madison Avenue off of South Saginaw Street (left side going under I-475) could serve as a gateway to McKinley Park on the west side of Thread Lake.*



*Figure 22 – A closer street view of Madison Avenue off of South Saginaw Street as a gateway to McKinley Park on the west side of Thread Lake.*

The boulevard would divide the widened pedestrian and bicycle sidewalk on the south side of the street and the two-way traffic lanes by a landscaped median. The vehicle lanes will be on the north side of the boulevard, and permit traffic to flow south en route to the Flint Golf Club and the residences around Circle Drive (Figure 23). The bicycle lanes will connect to the envisioned trail around Thread Lake to the north in McKinley Park and to the south to either connect to the Grand Traverse Greenway Trail or the trail looping around the lake, past the Flint Golf Club.

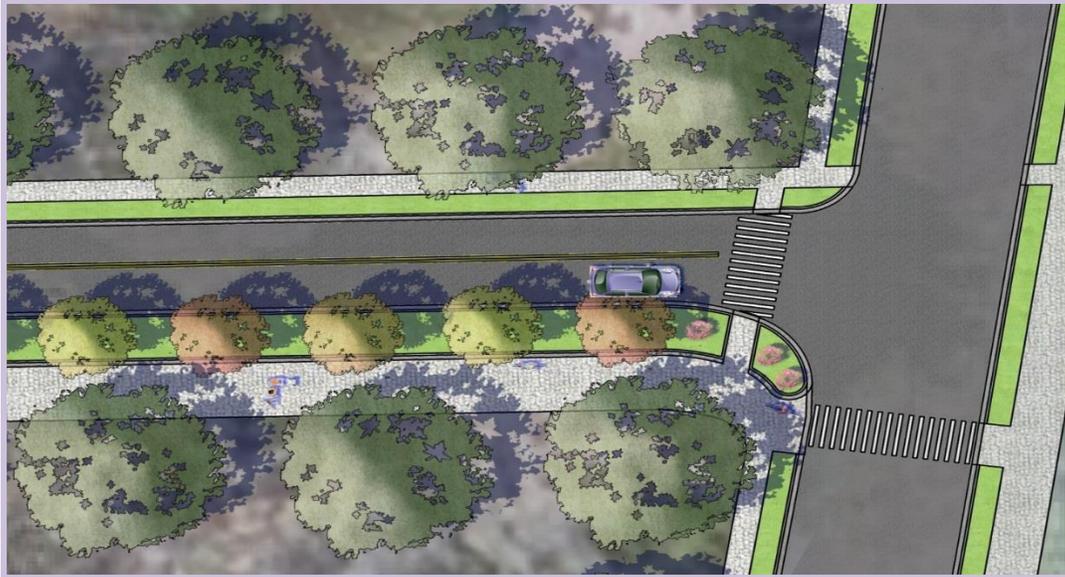


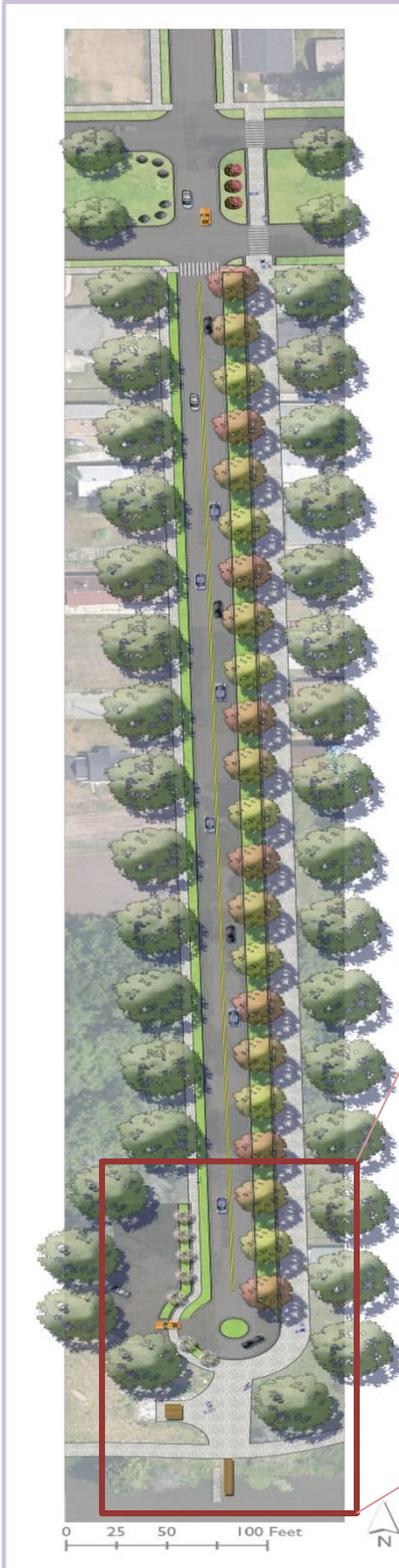
Figure 23 – Madison Avenue connects with Collingwood Parkway which goes around the south end of Thread Lake.

Another possible vision for the Madison Avenue gateway is illustrated in Figure 24. In this alternative design, Madison Avenue is transformed into a winding road that splits to the north and south at Collingwood Parkway. The elevated garden at this intersection offers opportunities for landscaping and signage that welcomes visitors to Thread Lake.



Figure 24 – An alternative vision for the Madison Avenue gateway to Thread Lake.

*Action Step 15, Objective 2: Transform Winans Avenue into a western and northern gateway entry for Thread Lake:* The same boulevard concept applied to Madison Avenue will be replicated on Winans Avenue off of Lippincott Blvd. to the north of Thread Lake. This boulevard will provide an entry way to Thread Lake Park and preferred access to Thread Lake from the north (Figure 25 and 26).



*Figure 25 – A boulevard on Winans Ave. can end at Thread Lake Park in a cul-de-sac connected to a parking lot.*



*Figure 26 – Close up of cul-de-sac at end of Winans Ave.*

As shown in *Figure 27*, the boulevard extends north to Lippincott Blvd. and include crosswalks and sidewalk upgrades which will allow for safer entry into Thread Lake Park for pedestrians and cyclists.



*Figure 27 – A boulevard on Winans Ave. could extend south from Lippincott Blvd. and include crosswalks for pedestrians.*

***ACTION STEP 17: Improve wayfinding to key assets along South Saginaw and around Thread Lake.***

The South Saginaw Corridor is a major entryway to south Flint from Interstate-69 and connects the city to nearby suburbs of Burton and Grand Blanc. The corridor is a major route to key anchor institutions such as Diplomat Specialty Pharmacy and the International Academy of Flint, yet it lacks directional and marketing signage that can assist with wayfinding and give the corridor an identity. Signage is needed on South Saginaw that directs individuals to McKinley Park and the Flint Golf Club through the Madison Avenue Gateway. Directional and park signage and mile-markers are also required on the Thread Lake trail to enhance recreational opportunities and the identity of Thread Lake. Educational signage for area students, IAF, and other visitors should also be installed in order to highlight the history and ecology of Thread Lake and its surrounding tributaries.

Wayfinding could also be utilized to increase awareness of the I-475 pedestrian overpass that provides access to Thread Lake from S. Saginaw. The walkway is located at the end of E. Linsey Blvd. (just off S. Saginaw) and carries pedestrians over the interstate into McKinley Park, near the Vista Center. The entrance to the walkway from the Thread Lake side can be easily overlooked due to its location setback at the north end of Orville St., which is further obscured by dense foliage along the perimeter of the park. Improved signage and clearer access to the pedestrian bridge could attract more visitors to Thread Lake while providing connection to the International Academy along S. Saginaw.

***ACTION STEP 18:*** *City initiates neighborhood stabilization program with aggressive code enforcement.*

The Genesee County Land Bank is currently in the process of removing 1,900 blighted properties which will reduce the housing stock in Flint but also make it easier for code enforcement on existing residential and commercial structures in the City. Code enforcement is a neighborhood stabilization initiative that will maintain the quality of individual houses, streets, and neighborhoods. Holding owners of property residents in the Thread Lake neighborhoods accountable for their properties will assist in upholding and potentially increasing property values in the area.

***ACTION STEP 19:*** *The City of Flint Planning Department teams with Habitat for Humanity and Thread Lake neighborhoods in planning and development of more infill housing on vacant lots in Traditional Neighborhood place types around Thread Lake.*

The demolition of blighted structures in the Thread Lake neighborhoods provides opportunities for infill housing development. Infill development targets cleared or underutilized parcels within a neighborhood with the aim of stabilizing and improving the housing conditions for residents in the area. The types of infill housing constructed should be consistent with area market studies, and relevant to the targeted locations of the place type designations in the Master Plan. Infill housing is an opportunity to attract new residents to the area while also experimenting with unique architecture and design elements. Infill housing should target streets that have adequate and redeemable housing structures in order to continue to expand on existing assets in the area. The residential areas to the southeast of Thread Lake are described in the Master Plan as Traditional Neighborhood place types, with any infill development in the area primarily focused here.

***ACTION STEP 20:*** *Neighborhoods work with outside stakeholders on plan for new passive solar homes to be built on vacant lots, perhaps along the new boulevard entrances to McKinley Park and Thread Lake Park.*

At least some of the new infill homes in neighborhoods on the west side of Thread Lake should be the site of new passive solar homes. These modern homes have the benefit of being so energy efficient that they require no furnace. Such designs would help to bridge the gap between old existing homes and modern sustainability principles. It would put the Thread Lake Community “on the map” in terms of application of modern homebuilding technology. This would not only support the Sustainability principles of the Master Plan, but also attract a new breed of prospective residents to these neighborhoods.

***ACTION STEP 21:*** *New mixed-use development (3-4 stories of residences above commercial) is built on South Saginaw Corridor especially between I-475 and Atherton.*

A possible scenario for the site on the corner of E. Atherton Rd. and S. Saginaw involves building a mixed-use high density development around a town square on the site to strengthen the node and encourage build-out to the north and south to enhance residential and commercial opportunities in the corridor. The Master Plan envisions this area as a Commerce and Employment Center place type designation. The Saginaw/Atherton node acts as a core for this corridor, and a town square may serve as a foundation for future development to the north towards Thread Lake.

***Long-Term: Years 6-10***

***ACTION STEP 24:*** *Continue neighborhood stabilization and home improvements.*

The paint-it/fix it program, providing home improvement incentives to homeowners, and the City's code enforcement initiatives should continue in order to facilitate neighborhood stabilization efforts. Each of the programs and initiatives should be amended over time depending on their individual successes and funding available from local, county, and state resources.

***ACTION STEP 25:*** *Continue urban residential infill projects in targeted locations, if not yet completed.*

Based on market demands, the City, in partnership with Habitat for Humanity, should continue to provide affordable infill housing opportunities in the Thread Lake neighborhoods in accordance with place type designations in the Master Plan's place-based land use map. The revitalization of the S. Saginaw Corridor could help promote infill in nearby neighborhoods targeted in the Master Plan as Traditional Neighborhood place types. Creative and unique architecture should be utilized on infill lots to encourage private investment and attract experimental designers to the area.

***ACTION STEP 26:*** *Continue increasing residential density along South Saginaw and improving the quality of commercial establishments.*

The South Saginaw Corridor is anchored by Diplomat Pharmacy to the South and commercial development of downtown Flint to the north, and aligns with the Master Plan place type designation of Commerce and Employment Center. New residential and commercial development should continue to be encouraged between I-475 and Atherton Rd. on South Saginaw to the west of Thread Lake. Increasing residential density all along South Saginaw will also support new commercial development and better connect downtown Flint with the Thread Lake neighborhoods.

***ACTION STEP 30:*** *Hold a giant 10 year celebration.*

The 10 year celebration should be a time to reflect back on the successes and challenges of the work completed in the previous decade while looking ahead to the completion of the Vision. The celebration will serve to strengthen already existing collaborative relationships while encouraging the formation of new partnerships that will assist in completing the Vision. The celebration is a time for renewal and reinvestment in the Vision.

### *Long-Term: Years 11-15*

***ACTION STEP 31:*** Continue urban infill and densification along South Saginaw.

***ACTION STEP 32:*** Complete commercial redevelopment along South Saginaw.

***ACTION STEP 33:*** Install Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)/Arterial Rapid Transit (ART) line along South Saginaw and further enhance landscaping, lighting, and aesthetic improvements along the corridor.

*Action Step 33, Objective 1: Install BRT/ART along South Saginaw:* Many cities have developed BRT projects as a way to provide an efficient public transit system, without the exorbitant cost of subway and light-rail systems. BRT is often a set of dedicated bus lanes that are not open to other types of vehicular traffic, therefore increasing efficiency and reducing the risk of traffic congestion and accidental crashes.

After learning about successful BRT projects in other communities, the people of Flint may find that this type of transit system would be successful in Flint. Initially, a BRT system would connect downtown Flint with Burton and Grand Blanc along South Saginaw with key stops at main points of interest such as the Madison Avenue gateway at Thread Lake, the International Academy, and Diplomat Pharmacy. Long-term, other key nodes and connections could be considered for the BRT, such as connecting downtown to Bishop International Airport.

The Flint Master Plan specifically suggests an Arterial Rapid Transit (ART), which is a version of a BRT that accounts for right-of-way constraints, existing traffic patterns, and other factors that might limit a traditional BRT. The ART may utilize Transit Signal Priority (TSP) and Jump By-pass to proceed along its route rather than dedicating a full lane to a BRT.

*Action Step 33, Objective 2: Enhance landscaping, lighting, and aesthetic improvements along the BRT/ART route:* Part of constructing a BRT/ART system would include improve lighting, landscaping, and signage along the BRT/ART route and at its stops. Many communities are converting their old and outdated municipal street light systems to light emitting diodes (LED) lights. LED lights reduce the amount of energy that is required to provide lighting, and they also target the illumination to specific areas, so less illumination is lost as ambient light. LED lights are also a long-term cost saving measure. In addition to LED street lights, landscaping improvements and other aesthetic changes could provide the BRT/ART line with a modern look and feel. Landscaping improvements and public art and sculpture displays could set the South Saginaw Corridor apart from the rest of Flint and create a positive distinct feel to the area. The combination of a BRT/ART line, LED lighting, and landscaping improvements could attract new businesses to the area and be a catalyst for growth in other regions of the City.

## Goal: WATER QUALITY

The method ultimately adopted to improve the water quality in Thread Creek and Thread Lake will be determined by extensive water sampling over time, then by an evaluation of nutrients and other contaminants currently flowing into the lake. This must be followed by development and analysis of options for dredging and disposal of the waste sediment, along with options for replacing the Thread Lake dam. Improving the water quality in Thread Lake is not an isolated endeavor as the water quality of the lake is greatly determined by run-off from nearby properties that surround the lake, properties surrounding Thread Creek, and by drainage from nearby farmland. Therefore, the water quality in Thread Lake cannot be examined in a vacuum, but needs to be viewed as a whole system. The entire subwatershed must be considered holistically in order to determine appropriate courses of action to improve water quality. Options for improving the water quality in Thread Lake must be examined for their financial cost, and must be carefully developed and analyzed, prior to the selection of the preferred method. The amount of public land around Thread Lake, particularly the large parcel north of the lake owned by the Land Bank, provides vast opportunities for educational outreach and focused improvements related to water quality, stormwater management and sustainability practices.

### *Short-Term: Years 1-2*

***ACTION STEP 10:*** *Develop best management practices for stormwater runoff on Thread Creek and around Thread Lake to stabilize and maintain current water quality.*

Applying best management practices for stormwater runoff cannot improve the current water quality, but it can stabilize and maintain the current conditions. Stabilizing nutrient flow is a crucial first step to improving water quality in both the long- and short-term. Large scale capital projects such as draining and dredging should only be considered once the sources of nutrients are identified and once it is determined how to stabilize the nutrient flows into Thread Lake.

***ACTION STEP 11:*** *Gather water quality data in Thread Lake and upstream on Thread Creek, and conduct a thorough analysis of options for draining, dredging, and replacing the dam; as well as options for financing these improvements.*

*Action Step 11, Objective 1: Measure and examine nutrient run-off and their contaminants flowing into Thread Lake:* The first step in improving water quality is to test and measure the current health of the watershed by determining the nutrients that are flowing into the streams, that feed into Thread Creek, and ultimately flow into Thread Lake. Data over time at various locations is critical to obtain.

*Action Step 11, Objective 2a: Once it is determined how to stabilize the nutrient flows into Thread Lake, develop options to drain and dredge Thread Lake to improve water quality:* Water quality improvements are possible by draining and dredging Thread Lake, however, this practice is very expensive. A study is required to determine the feasibility and degree of dredging required. Is it necessary to dredge the entire lake? If not, what parts of the lake need to be

dredged? Other questions will need to be explored related to the best option for replacing the Thread Lake Dam.

Action Step 11, Option 2b: Improve Water Quality via Periphery Surface Level Techniques: If draining and dredging is not an option, ancillary techniques can be employed to improve the appearance and surface use of Thread Lake by aquatic weed destruction. This process involves harvesting aquatic vegetation from the bottom of the lake and/or by application of a marine herbicide. The neutralization of aquatic weeds will not reduce sedentary toxins or nutrients in Thread Lake, but will clear weeded areas and permit more extensive use of the water surface.

***ACTION STEP 12: Begin preparation and distribution of educational materials on protecting water quality to stakeholders and households, and assist schools with curriculum development on water quality protection and monitoring.***

Action Step 12, Objective 1: Develop an educational curriculum focused on water quality: Develop a broad-based curriculum that will educate area students and stakeholders about water quality and sediment contamination in Thread Lake and its tributaries. This will help individuals without a formal education in Environmental Sciences to understand the level of contamination in Thread Lake and what can be done to mitigate it. Education on the existing conditions in Thread Lake invests stakeholders in the immediate challenges related to water quality and will assist in developing a collective solution. The curriculum can be piloted at the International Academy of Flint and then applied to the Flint Public School system.

Action Step 12, Objective 2: Work with the International Academy to hold workshops and educate students and their parents about the current water quality of Thread Lake and the ongoing efforts to remediate the pollution in the lake: Workshops will help residents and other community members understand the current level of contamination in the lake and the steps that are being taken to lessen the contamination levels. This helps individuals stay engaged in the process, become informed about what is happening, and provide input on future land use and improvement decisions.

Action Step 12, Objective 3: Provide training workshops on best management practices for use of household and outdoor chemicals and stormwater management for area stakeholders: This knowledge is for the individual to consider his/her own practices at home and at their work. The education that would be provided would be based on practical activities, such as proper chemical application to private lawns, as well as learning the challenges of stormwater run-off.

### ***Short-Term: Years 3-5***

***ACTION STEP 22:*** *Secure funding for the water quality improvements to Thread Lake and the dam replacement.*

Improving the water quality of Thread Lake is a capital project that extends beyond the scope of the City of Flint and Genesee County. Private, non-profit, and public stakeholders in the South Saginaw Corridor must collaborate to target and secure funding from state and federal resources in order to make impactful improvements to water quality in Thread Lake. Potential funders for water quality improvements include: United States Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Natural Resources, and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, among others.

***ACTION STEP 23:*** *Schools begin implementation of water quality protection curriculum.*

Continuous environmental education about water quality issues is critical to attaining sustainable improvements in Thread Lake and all the water bodies in Flint. After piloting a water quality curriculum for students at the International Academy, the program should be modified and applied to the Flint Public School system at the middle school level.

### ***Long-Term: Years 6-15***

***ACTION STEP 27:*** *Implement the preferred plan for draining Thread Lake, dredging and properly disposing of the dredged material, re-contouring the lake bottom, replacing the dam, refilling the lake, and restocking fish in the lake. OR, in the event this is infeasible, begin annual aquatic weed harvesting and/or use of aquatic herbicides in targeted locations.*

IF DRAINING AND DREDGING THREAD LAKE IS THE PREFERRED PLAN:

*Action Step 27, Objective 1: Work with water quality professionals after dredging to retest the lake water and sediment and establish new post-dredging pollutant levels for Thread Lake:* After environmental clean-up has been completed, it will be necessary to retest the water and sediment to establish new base levels for monitoring future contaminants in Thread Lake. Once new monitoring levels have been established, repeat testing in the future can indicate whether or not pollution coming into the lake has stopped, slowed, or whether or not the lake is being contaminated at the pre-dredging rate.

*Action Step 27, Objective 2: Determine appropriate mechanism to dispose of sediment:* The disposal method for lake sediment will be determined by the chemical composition of the material. If levels of nitrogen and phosphates exceed threshold levels, the sediment may have to be disposed of in a landfill which is an additional cost to the project. Another option may be to re-use the sediment for development purposes.

*Action Step 27, Objective 3: Re-stock fish in Thread Lake:* Draining and dredging Thread Lake will create recreational opportunities that extend beyond the periphery activities envisioned in the short-term. Fishing is one such recreational activity that residents and stakeholders desire. Once

the lake is drained and dredged, it is important to engage local fish and recreational organizations to determine desired species for recreation purposes. Local ecologists should also be consulted to help foster a lake ecosystem that preserves the health and opportunities in Thread Lake.

IF DRAINING AND DREDGING THREAD LAKE IS INFEASIBLE:

Action Step 27, Objective 1: Determine annual schedule for aquatic weed harvesting or use of aquatic herbicides: The schedule of aquatic weed harvesting would be determined by the funding available. Ideally, aquatic harvesting would be an annual activity. This would improve opportunities for surface usage of the lake.

Action Step 27, Objective 2: Install a public swimming pool: For many years there was a public swimming pool at McKinley Park. If water quality cannot be restored at a level adequate for full body contact, and density in the neighborhood rose, and there was a means for continued adequate maintenance, then reestablishing a public swimming pool should be considered.

***Current conditions***



(Photo: MSU Planning & Zoning Center)

***Vision for the future***



## IMPLEMENTATION

**Tables 2-5** summarize the action steps that need to be taken to implement the vision described in this plan, as well as the time frame that indicates which stakeholders need to be involved to make it happen. The table is organized sequentially; however, action steps within each timeframe are encouraged to be addressed simultaneously.

There is no single entity responsible for implementing this or any other vision of Thread Lake. The ideas in this Vision document will become a reality only if those stakeholders with a stake in the proposed outcomes decide to devote time, energy, and resources to make it happen. That is a tall order for any community, but especially so in a community like Flint that is facing such serious fiscal challenges. That said, the ideas in this Vision are no more expansive than those in hundreds of other communities around the nation where the Vision became Reality by the hard work of stakeholders who cared.

**TABLE 2: SHORT-TERM (Years: 1-2) IMPLEMENTATION & ACTIONS – INVOLVED/RESPONSIBLE STAKEHOLDERS**

<b>ACTION STEPS</b>	<b>Friends of Thread Lake</b>	<b>South Saginaw Task Force</b>	<b>South Side Business &amp; Resident Association</b>	<b>South Parks Neighborhood Association</b>	<b>Circle Drive Neighborhood Association</b>	<b>International Academy</b>	<b>Flint River Watershed Coalition</b>	<b>City of Flint Parks/Rec Dept.</b>	<b>City of Flint Planning Dept.</b>	<b>Genesee County Land Bank</b>	<b>Genesee County Parks/Rec Commission</b>	<b>Other</b>
1. Create Friends of Thread Lake organization		X	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>			X	X	X	X?	
2. Recreation Improvements to McKinley/Thread Lake Parks		<u>X</u>						X	X	X	X?	
3. Kickoff Event	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>						
4. Demolish targeted buildings & incorporate low-maintenance reseeded	X	X	X	X					X	<u>X</u>		
5. Mow vacant lots	<u>X</u>	X	X	X	X	X				<u>X</u>		
6. Neighborhood safety watch system, implement CPTED methods	X		X	X	X	X			X			
7. Thread Lake trail plan	X	X	X	X	X		X	X			X?	
8. Home improvement incentives	X	X	X	X	X				<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>		
9. Simple complete streets, traffic study		X							<u>X</u>			FSM
10. BMP for stormwater runoff in Thread Creek/Lake							<u>X</u>		X			PZC
11. Assess water quality in Thread Lake/Creek. Consider options for draining/dredging, replacing dam, & financing	X	X	X	X	X		<u>X</u>	X	X	X	X?	
12. Create/distribute education curriculum on protecting water quality	X					<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>		X			Local Schools

X—Indicates major responsibility

FSM—City of Flint Street Maintenance Department

PZC—Planning & Zoning Center at MSU

?—No formal role now, Vision identifies possible future roles

**TABLE 3: SHORT-TERM (Years: 3-5) IMPLEMENTATION & ACTIONS – INVOLVED/RESPONSIBLE STAKEHOLDERS**

<b>ACTION STEPS</b>	<b>Friends of Thread Lake</b>	<b>South Saginaw Task Force</b>	<b>South Side Business &amp; Resident Association</b>	<b>South Parks Neighborhood Association</b>	<b>Circle Drive Neighborhood Association</b>	<b>International Academy</b>	<b>Flint River Watershed Coalition</b>	<b>City of Flint Parks/Rec Dept.</b>	<b>City of Flint Planning Dept.</b>	<b>Genesee County Land Bank</b>	<b>Genesee County Parks/Rec Commission</b>	<b>Other</b>
13. Paint-it/fix-it program	X	X	X	X	X				X	X		
14. Implement complete streets on S. Saginaw	X	X	X	X	X				<u>X</u>			FSM
15. Boulevard entrances to McKinley Park/Thread Lake	X	X	X	X	X			X	<u>X</u>	X	X?	
16. Pave Grand Traverse Greenway Trail, build trail around Thread Lake	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	<u>X</u>	X	X	<u>X?</u>	
17. Improve wayfinding along S. Saginaw and Thread Lake	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	<u>X</u>	X	X?	
18. Neighborhood stabilization w/ code enforcement	X	X	X	X	X				<u>X</u>			
19. Infill housing on targeted vacant lots	X	X	X	X	X				X			
20. Build passive solar homes on boulevards	X	X	X	X	X				X			PSA
21. Mixed-use development between I-475/ Atherton Rd.		<u>X</u>							<u>X</u>			
22. Secure funding for water quality improvements and dam replacement							<u>X</u>	X	<u>X</u>	X	X?	
23. Schools begin to implement water quality protection curriculum	X	X	X	X	X	<u>X</u>						Local schools

**FSM**—City of Flint Street Maintenance Department

**PSA**—Passive solar advocates in Flint

**TABLE 4: LONG-TERM (Years: 6-10) IMPLEMENTATION & ACTIONS – INVOLVED/RESPONSIBLE STAKEHOLDERS**

ACTION STEPS	Friends of Thread Lake	South Saginaw Task Force	South Side Business & Resident Association	South Parks Neighborhood Association	Circle Drive Neighborhood Association	International Academy	Flint River Watershed Coalition	City of Flint Parks/Rec Dept.	City of Flint Planning Dept.	Genesee County Land Bank	Genesee County Parks/Rec Commission	Other
24. Continue neighborhood stabilization & improvements	X	X	X	X	X				X	X		
25. Continue urban residential infill projects in targeted locations, if not already completed	X	X	X	X	X				X			PD
26. Continue increasing density along S. Saginaw & improve commercial establishments		X				X			<u>X</u>			PD
27. Implement preferred water quality improvement plan	X	X	X	X	X		<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	X	<u>X?</u>	
28. Additional recreational improvements, expand trail connections							<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	X	<u>X?</u>	
29. Improve Vista Center	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	X	X	X	X	X	<u>X?</u>	
30. Hold 10- year celebration	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X?	

**TABLE 5: LONG-TERM (Years: 11-15) IMPLEMENTATION & ACTIONS – INVOLVED/RESPONSIBLE STAKEHOLDERS**

31. Continue urban infill & densification along S. Saginaw	X	X				X			<u>X</u>			PD
32. Complete commercial redevelopment along S. Saginaw	X	X							<u>X</u>			PD
33. Install BRT/ART along S. Saginaw w/ aesthetic improvements	X	X							<u>X</u>			PD

PD—Private developers

## CONCLUSION

The comprehensive and thorough implementation of this Vision will stabilize and restore Thread Lake to an earlier more prominent and vibrant state. Thread Lake once held a regional significance with the presence of Lakeside Amusement Park along its western shore in the early 1900s (*Figure 28*). This park drew large crowds to the area and is still remembered as an important part of the city's heritage. The intensive use and activity that Thread Lake once experienced illustrates the opportunities that such a natural amenity can bring to a community. The lake's past glory as a cherished park should serve as motivation for a concerted effort to revitalize the area and restore its importance to both the surrounding neighborhoods and the region as a whole.



*Figure 28 – Historic photograph of Lakeside Amusement Park, date uncertain.*

Implementing and expanding on the Vision in this document is not an easy task. Carrying out the short- and long-term action steps described in this Vision is difficult work that will require sustained effort from all the governmental, commercial, and residential stakeholders. Despite the challenges and difficulties ahead, the opportunity is too great not to act. Thread Lake is an invaluable natural asset that provides opportunities for recreation, neighborhood beautification, and both a magnet for and anchor for future development. This Vision prioritizes short- and long-term action steps related to recreation, neighborhood stabilization and targeted redevelopment, and water quality as it pertains to Thread Lake

and surrounding neighborhoods. Each of these topics is crucial for the successful implementation of this Vision but when all three are tackled collaboratively the synergistic benefits will be exponential.

This Vision was created after receiving input from residents, businesses, and other stakeholders in the Thread Lake Community and reviewing other documents that have received broad public input. It represents the desires and opinions of the community during one period in time. The presentation of this Vision does not mean residents and area stakeholders stop envisioning and imagining a better Thread Lake Community. The hope is that this Vision spurs even more creative ideas and solutions to the immediate and long-term challenges facing Thread Lake. But more important is agreeing to act and then acting on what was agreed. By cooperating and committing to act on those ideas around which there is support, there will only be winners—today and in the future.

Thread Lake is a strong asset for stakeholders that are intensely invested in transforming their neighborhood into a vibrant recreational and community hub. This Vision subscribes their passion, enthusiasm, and hard work into a single document that can propel forward the hopes and wishes of area stakeholders to once again return Thread Lake to a prominent and keystone status.

