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NORTH MAIN

The current plan for North Main Street development includes:

- Landscaping, beautification, and uniform facade treatments for existing businesses along North Main Street.
- Bikeways and pedestrian paths along the entire study area, with links to downtown and adjacent neighborhoods.
- A pedestrian/bike bridge crossing the river near Argo Dam.
- A 20-acre park on bluffs on west side of North Main Street.

With the exception of the extension of Huron River Drive through Randm idea Park — the most controversial element of the consensus plan — most task force members expressed delight with the process and the outcome.

"I have been tremendously impressed with the amount of public input," said Andy Crawford, a task force member who owns property along North Main. Crawford said he was initially worried that he and other existing landowners would be forced off their property by new development interests, but he noted that Dzienko and the task force responded to public sentiment against such a change at this time.

But at least one citizen who attended the meeting this week was outraged by the task force decision.

"Basically what they've done is they have commandeered Howard (Dzienko) to come up with a plan that is very much unlike what the public wanted," said John Russell, a longtime Ann Arbor resident who lives near Argo Dam.

Russell said that development interests "commandeered" the task force, pushing their own interests at the expense of public opinion.

"I don't think we got the parks in the plan they originally wanted because of public opinion. I think we got them because of logistics," Russell said, explaining that both the Hawkins property and the western bluffs are suitable for development.

Russell, who attended some of the small group discussions at public meetings earlier this month, added that citizens clearly did not want to see a busy road running through Randm idea Park, a 20-acre natural area identified for passive recreation under the consensus plan.

Six of eight small discussion groups at the public meetings recommended the idea of the road, Dzienko said. One group like the idea and the other was divided about it.

Dziennk said he had received more than 100 letters on the proposed roadway, and that he was "well over 90 percent satisfied" with the consensus plan. But he added:

"I think we should have taken a stronger line from the public. I don't buy that you go through the public process and then make decisions based on what you want."
Consultant to unveil North Main plans this week

By JANET COHEN
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

A land use consultant studying Ann Arbor's North Main Street corridor plans later this week to unveil three approaches to improving the area.

Howard Deardorff, president of Deardorff Design Resources Inc., will present his "first draft" ideas for the alternatives when the North Main Task Force meets 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 14, in Council Chambers at Ann Arbor City Hall.

Deardorff has scheduled a follow-up public meeting at the Ann Arbor Inn for 7:30, Wednesday, Jan. 27, at which time he will present a refined set of alternatives.

The alternatives will focus on three directions, according to a summary Deardorff prepared for task force members:

- A scheme that emphasizes an all park land approach with an emphasis on creating long-term private development opportunities on the west bluffs and inviting pedestrian and vehicular routes to downtown.
- A scheme that minimizes public acquisition but maintains open space and walkways and sidewalks through the area, thus encouraging development or the status quo of existing businesses and industries, or both.

- A scheme that creates a public/private partnership and attempts to balance public access and park amenities with private development.

Those directions are based on a two-month information gathering process, in which team members learned that significant physical constraints restrict the type and location of development, that the community won't accept high-density development north of Argo Dam, that low-density development along the Huron River isn't economically feasible, and that all alternatives must include riverfront park linkages such as bike and sidewalk paths that extend the length of the corridor.

Deardorff's company won a $50,000 contract from the city last fall to study the hodgepodge industrial corridor that borders Argo Pond. The study area also includes the slope on the west side of North Main Street, the city-owned Sandiefer Park, and parcels southeast of Argo Dam that are now owned and occupied by the Detroit Edison and Michigan Consolidated Gas companies.

The goal is to seek consensus around an achievable, short and long-term scheme to enliven what many consider to be under-used, riverfront property.

The alternatives Deardorff will present represent the second stage in a four-part process. At a public

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meeting this month, team members presented results of the first stage of the inter/intrastate gathering places. The

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See PLANS, A7
Public forum to weigh 3 North Main strategies

By JANET COHEN
NEWS HERALD REPORTER

Ann Arbor residents soon will be presented with three possible alternatives for the redevelopment of unsightly North Main Street, one of the major corridors into and out of the city.

Consultant Howard Deardorff has designed plans intended to improve North Main's appearance, provide public access to the Huron River and stimulate economic development in that part of Ann Arbor.

A public meeting to discuss the plans was scheduled for this week, but it has been postponed to give members of the city's North Main Task Force more time to review the proposed alternatives.

Deardorff, president of Deardorff Design Resources, Inc., presented three general proposals for the North Main area when the task force met Jan. 14.

Highlights of those alternatives are outlined below.

Alternative 1: Maximum Public Acquisition

- Use all riverfront parcels for public park space. This would create more than 60 acres of continuous parkland between the M-14 overpass, including Barton, Bird Hills, Fitch, and Wheeler.
- Extend Huron River Drive east from its current route, abolishing the intersection with North Main Street near M-14. Instead, the road would curve along the river, under the M-14 overpass, through Bandemer Park and intersect with North Main Street.
- Make North Main Street a boulevard for about 800 feet between the former Lansky junkyard and the freeway ramp by moving the inbound traffic lanes to the west.
- Build a river sports center and parking lot south of Bandemer Park.

Alternative 2: Public-Private Partnerships

- Sell the north end of Bandemer Park for low-density development such as office or retail space, and use the money to buy the nearby Hawkins property, which could house a parking lot, water sports center and ice skating rink. The Bandemer development would require a 150-foot setback from the river.
- Develop access to the Bandemer and Hawkins properties by extending the old Main Street from

Alternative 3: Minimum Public Acquisition

- Convert the entire length of North Main Street into a boulevard, which would mean demolishing six private houses and two businesses now located on the west slope of North Main.
- Develop the Michigan Consolidated Gas and Bottled Water Company property into a park. The building could be used as an amphitheater in the summer.
- The re-routing of Huron River Drive provides opportunities for major, long-term economic development at the north end of North Main Street by allowing for access and parking in the future.

Alternative 2:
Minimum Public Acquisition

- This "status-quo" alternative calls for public space along the river to be obtained through easements from private developers. The Michigan Consolidated Gas and Bottled Water Company property, which would be used for medium-density office or residential development, would require 60-foot easements and 100-foot building setbacks from the river. A 65-foot easement would be requested for the Hawkins property, which would likely remain in its current light industrial use.
- A ferry would shuttle visitors across Argo Pond.
- The alignment of major roads does not change, but aesthetic improvement of the North Main corridor could be achieved through landscaping and beautification of existing buildings.

Alternative 3:
Public-Private Partnerships

- Sell the north end of Bandemer Park for low density development such as office or retail space, and use the money to buy the nearby Hawkins property, which could house a parking lot, water sports center and ice skating rink. The Bandemer development would require a 150-foot setback from the river.
- Develop access to the Bandemer and Hawkins properties by extending the old Main Street from

Alternative 1:
Maximum Public Acquisition

- Use all riverfront parcels for public park space. This would create more than 60 acres of continuous parkland between the M-14 overpass and the Overlook. (Gallup Park is 63 acres, by comparison.) In addition, these parcels would be directly linked by bicycle and pedestrian pathways to about 60 acres of existing parks, including Barton, Bird Hills, Fitch, and Wheeler.
- Extend Huron River Drive east from its current route, abolishing the intersection with North Main Street near M-14. Instead, the road would curve along the river, under the M-14 overpass, through Bandemer Park and intersect with North Main Street.
- Make North Main Street a boulevard for about 800 feet between the former Lansky junkyard and the freeway ramp by moving the inbound traffic lanes to the west.
- Build a river sports center and parking lot south of Bandemer Park.

See NORTH MAIN, A9
PARK PLANS

Bandemer is great nature area that will dress up North Main

The development of Bandemer Park, 28 acres along the Huron River, not only has potential as one of Ann Arbor's best natural recreation areas but also is a keystone in the beautification of the city's entryway along North Main Street.

Thus, it is with relief that the Ann Arbor Parks Advisory Commission has finally approved Phase I of the development plan. Because of resistance from some members of the Bandemer citizens task force, the plans have been moving slowly, and we have been worried that the construction season might come and go and the state grants lapse before a decision was reached.

We believe strongly that Bandemer should be developed as a nature park, with its vegetation and wildlife preserved as much as possible. We also believe that it should be built to serve the entire community, which means including paved trails accessible to the handicapped, river overlooks, adequate parking, sheltered picnic areas and paths for walking, biking and running.

We don't think it should become a heavy-access park with slides and swings, but some task force members have been overly zealous in their efforts to limit access, trails, disturbance of the "natural" weeds and tangled underbrush. Some even went so far as to question the need for removing debris, which includes broken concrete, old tires, box springs, etc. Their concern was that by removing the debris some of the natural vegetation might be disturbed. The trade-off might have been someone stumping over rubble near a nature trail and breaking a leg.

We are pleased with the plan for Phase I in final form and believe that it answers the major concern of naturalists without sacrificing the goal of building a park for all members of the community to enjoy.

Phase I calls for development of the northern third of the park, which abuts M-14 and has a half mile of frontage on Huron River. It would include a parking lot for a maximum of 40 cars and sets a goal of having no structures visible from the river by persons in canoes. It calls for only one river access point/canoe landing, which will enable the parks staff to evaluate the need for more access points in future phases.

Disturbance to existing vegetation and wildlife will be minimized under Phase I, but the final plan does not prevent the use of large-sized equipment to remove debris, as some had proposed. The restored wetlands under the M-14 bridge will be preserved.

As part of the compromise, task force members will still be involved in overseeing construction to ensure that the backhoe drivers are careful. That is reasonable, especially if the continuation of the committee enables more public input.

The Phase I development plan will be financed with $430,000 from the Mary Couper Bandemer estate and a $380,000 grant from the state's Quality of Life Renovation Bond. The dream of Bandemer Park has been in the making for over 10 years. When it goes to City Council next month, we hope it wins speedy approval. Bandemer Park will enhance the North Main area and offer a place of tranquility for Ann Arbor residents.