



Master Planning on a Shoestring: Big Results, Small Budget

Bath Nature Preserve
Bath Township



Meet your
Speakers



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PLA, ASLA
Associate Director



Tom James
Park Development Specialist



Matt McGrath
PLA, ASLA, LEED AP
Associate Director

Today's Discussion

- 1 Master Planning 101
- 2 Case Studies
- 3 Make it Simple – Make it Fundable
Planning + Funding Go Hand in Hand
- 4 Closing: What to Take Home

Intro: Master Planning 101

What is a *Master Plan*?



Types of Planning

Strategic Planning

Programs, Staffing, Financials
Organizational Priorities

Land Use Planning

Parks, Trails, Riverfronts
What Gets Built & Where

*A strategic plan sets direction for organizations,
while a land use plan sets direction for physical places*

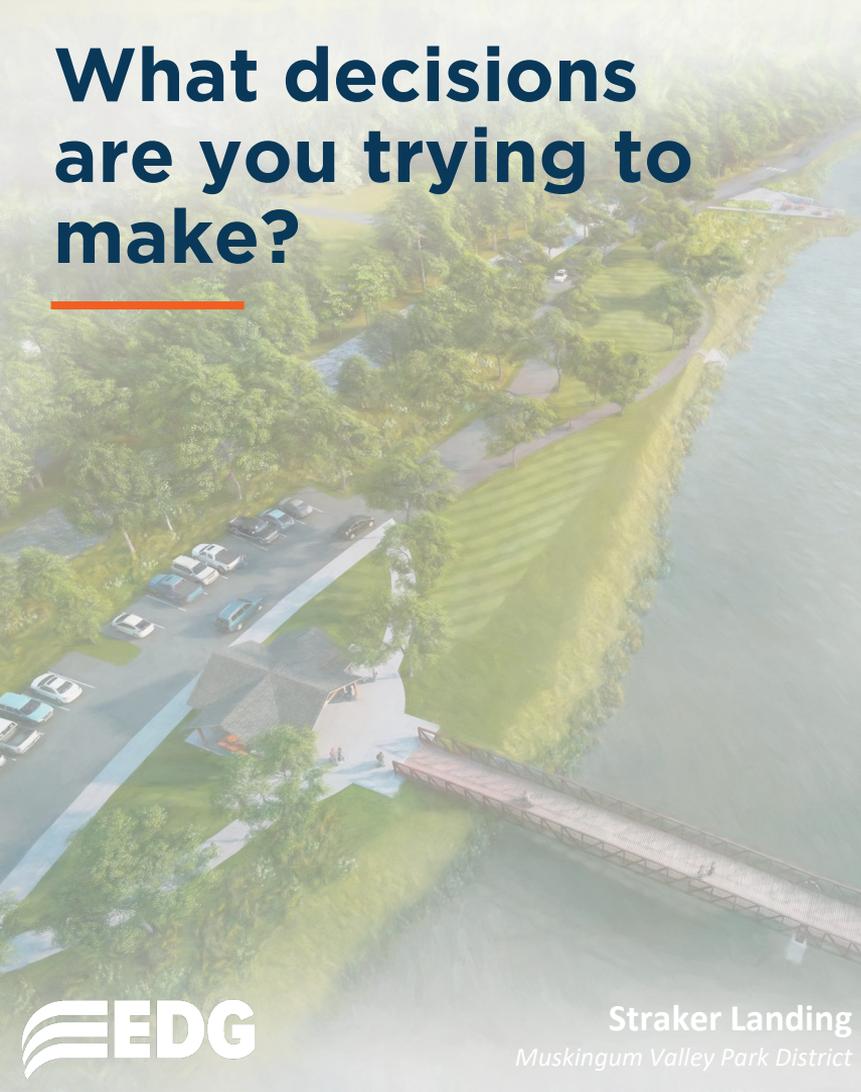
What is a Master Plan?



- A master plan helps decide what to do next – and how to get there.
- It provides a vision and roadmap for decision making.

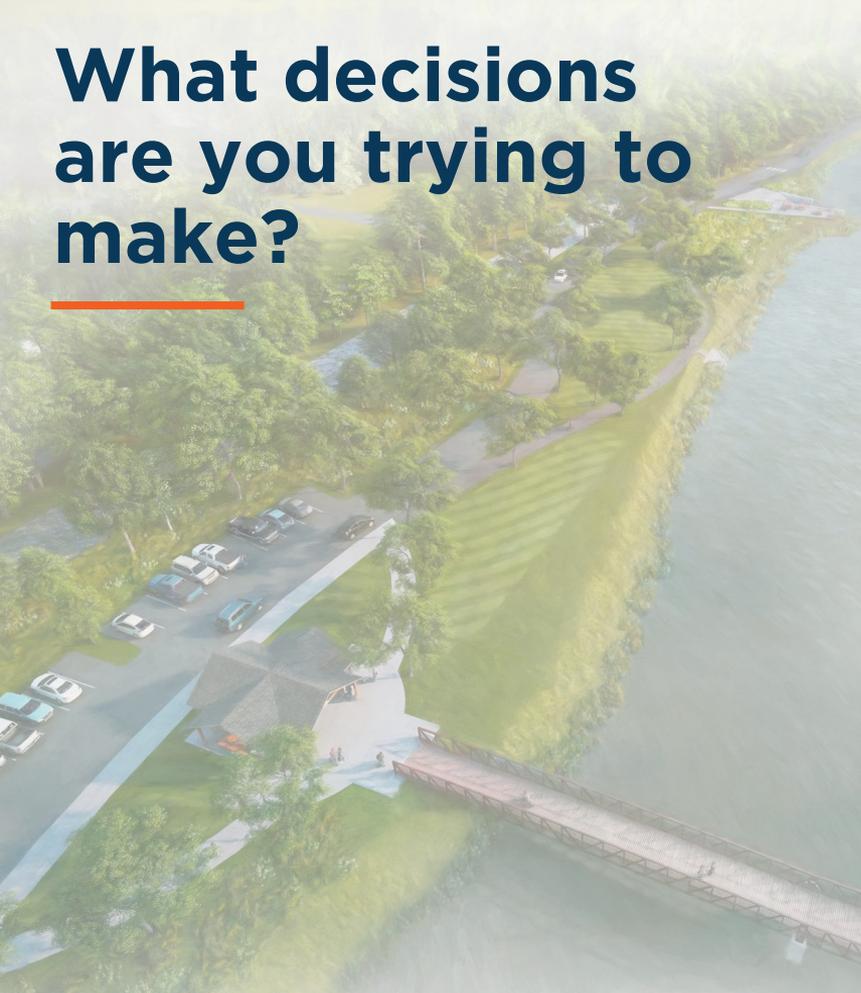
What decisions are you trying to make?

- What priorities should guide our decisions?



Straker Landing
Muskingum Valley Park District

What decisions are you trying to make?

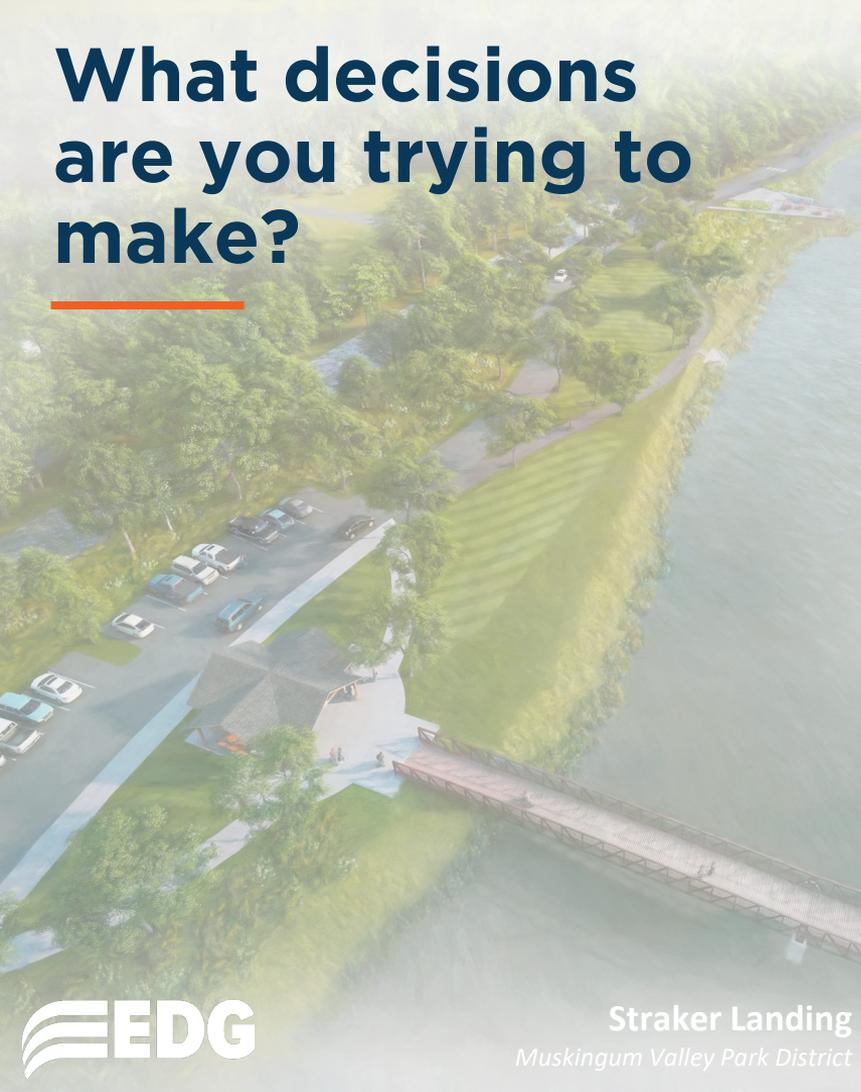


- What priorities should guide our decisions?
- Where should we invest?



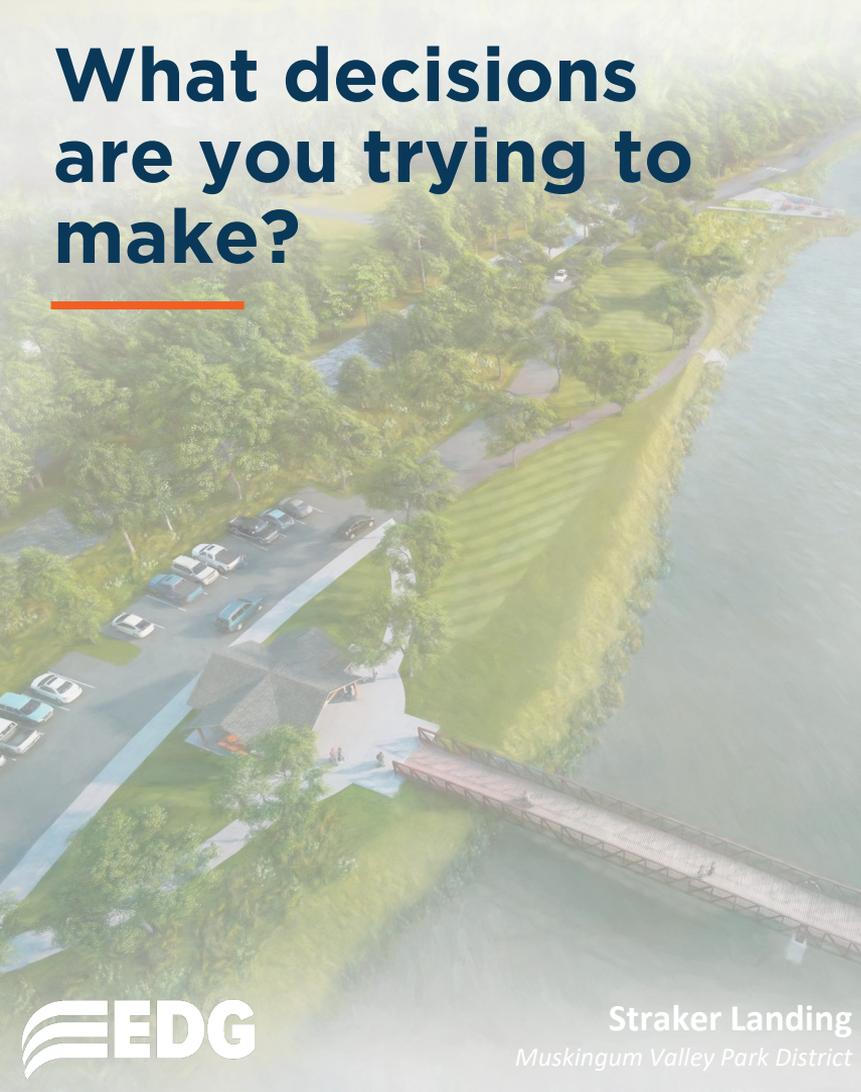
Straker Landing
Muskingum Valley Park District

What decisions are you trying to make?



- What priorities should guide our decisions?
- Where should we invest?
- What answers do we need to move forward?

What decisions are you trying to make?



- What priorities should guide our decisions?
- Where should we invest?
- What answers do we need to move forward?
- Master Plans serve as tools – not products

Intro: Master Planning 101

Planning Can Occur at Different Scales

**Not every planning
effort needs to look
the same.**

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL!



Landing Park
Sandusky, Ohio



Broad Scale System Wide Planning

Example:

A comprehensive master plan that establishes

- Long-range Priorities
- Funding Strategies
- A roadmap for investments.

Focused on....

- Long Range Priorities
- Policy + Vision
- Funding & Phasing Framework
- Longer Process (+/-12-18 months)

Mid-Scale Place-Based Planning

Example:

A riverfront master plan that coordinates

- Open Spaces & Access
- Connectivity & Trails
- Amenity Improvements

Focused on....

- A single area not an entire system
- Identifies improvements (trails, park, public space)
- Can be independent of a system wide master plan

Small-Scale Targeted Planning

Example:

A small-scale park plan focused on developing near term improvements

- Realistic & Achievable Projects
- Cost Ranges
- Next Steps for Implementation

Islander Woods
Park District of Ottawa County

Focused on....

- Addresses a site-specific need
- Just enough planning to move forward
- Focuses on near-term funding
- Speed + Efficiency (+/- 4-6 months)

Small-Scale Targeted Planning

What it DOES NOT do....

- Revisit system wide issues
- Require extensive data collection
- Attempt to solve unrelated long-term challenges

BOARDWALK

NEW TREES

WETLAND

West Harbor Preserve
Park District of Ottawa County



Intro: Master Planning 101

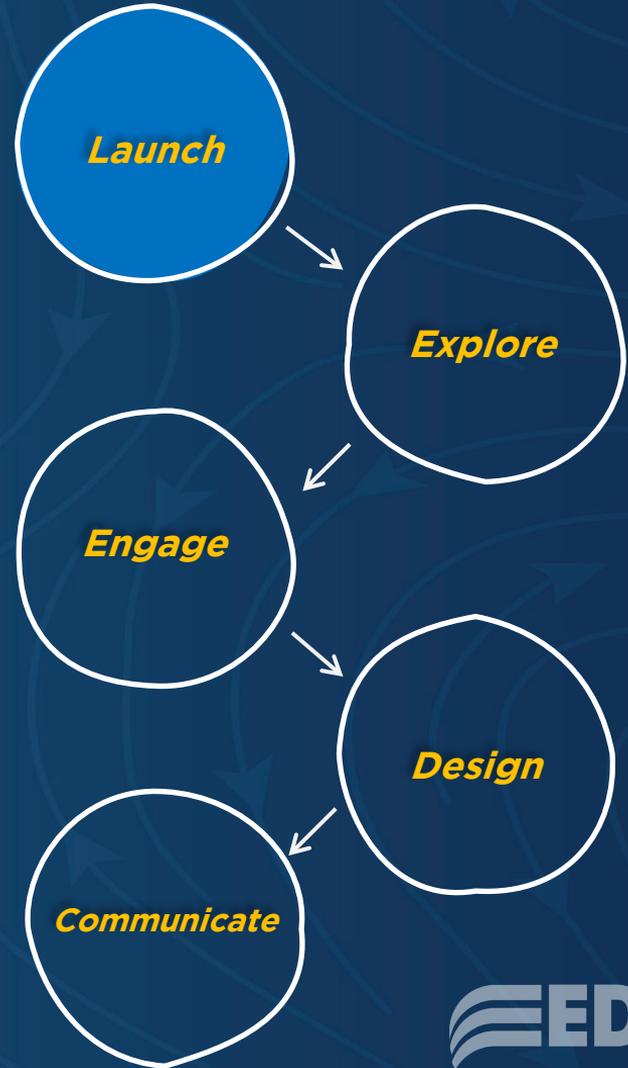
What is the Planning Process?



Planning Process

Launch: Set the Framework

- Establish decision-making process
- Align scope with budget and schedule
- Define “*What Does Success Look Like*”



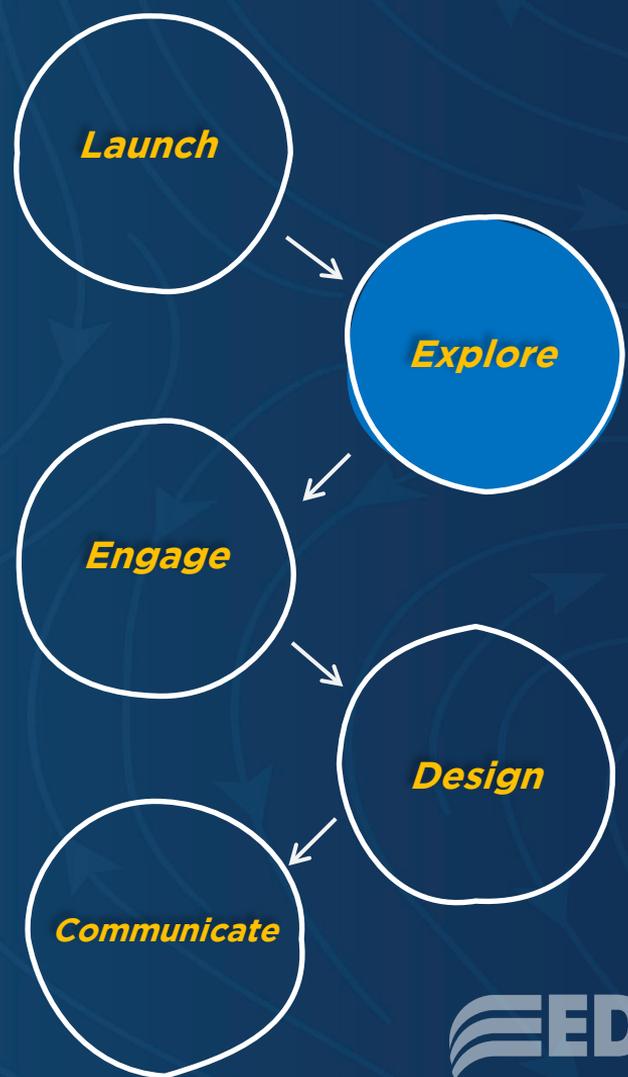
Planning Process

Launch: Set the Framework

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- Define “*What does Success look like*”

Explore: Background, Inventory & Analysis

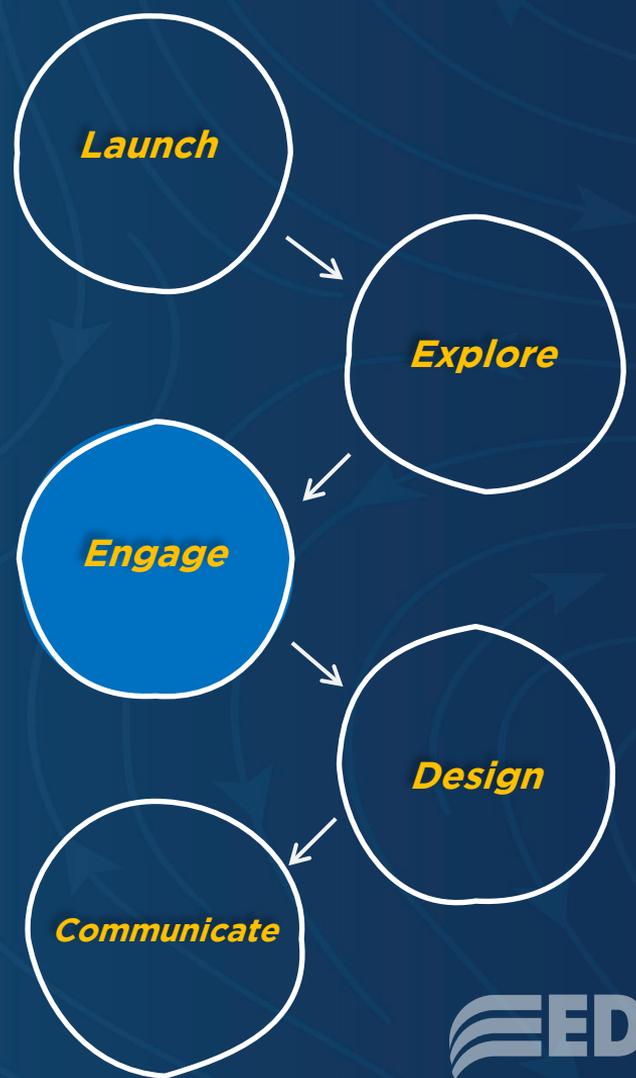
- Existing Conditions & Mapping
Opportunities + Constraints
- Facilities Assessments
Structure + Amenities
- Benchmarking
What are peer park systems doing?



Planning Process

Engagement: Build Project Ownership

- Intentional & Meaningful Engagement
Surveys - Workshops - Pop-up events
- Observing, Listening & Asking Questions
Understanding before designing
- Scale to Meet Project Needs
Staff-led, consultant-led or hybrid



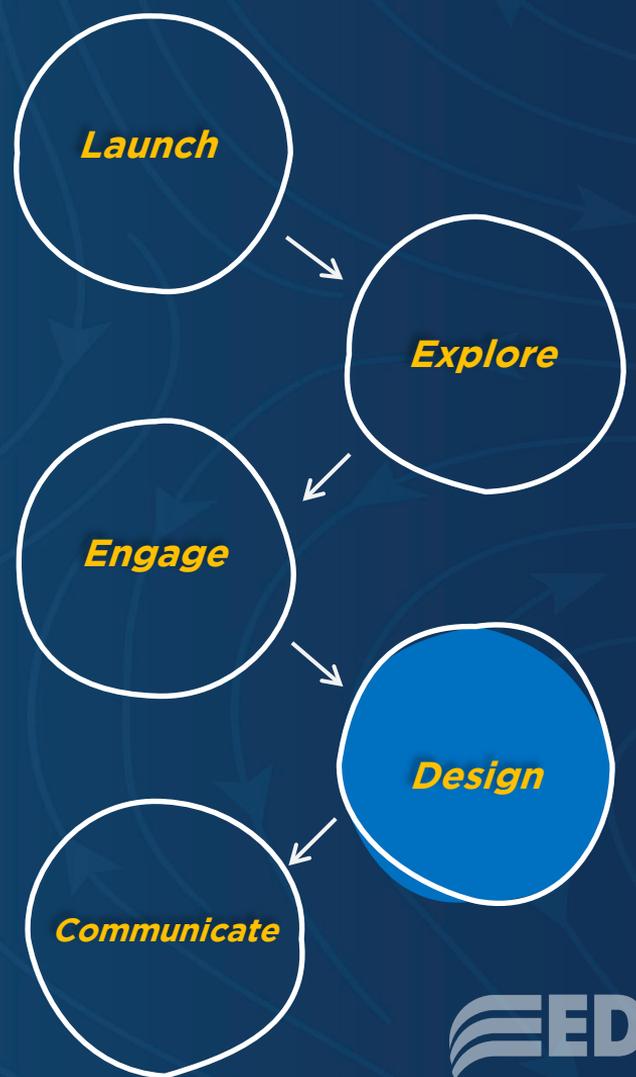
Planning Process

Engagement: Build Project Ownership

- Intentional & meaningful engagement
Surveys / workshops / pop-up events
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Design

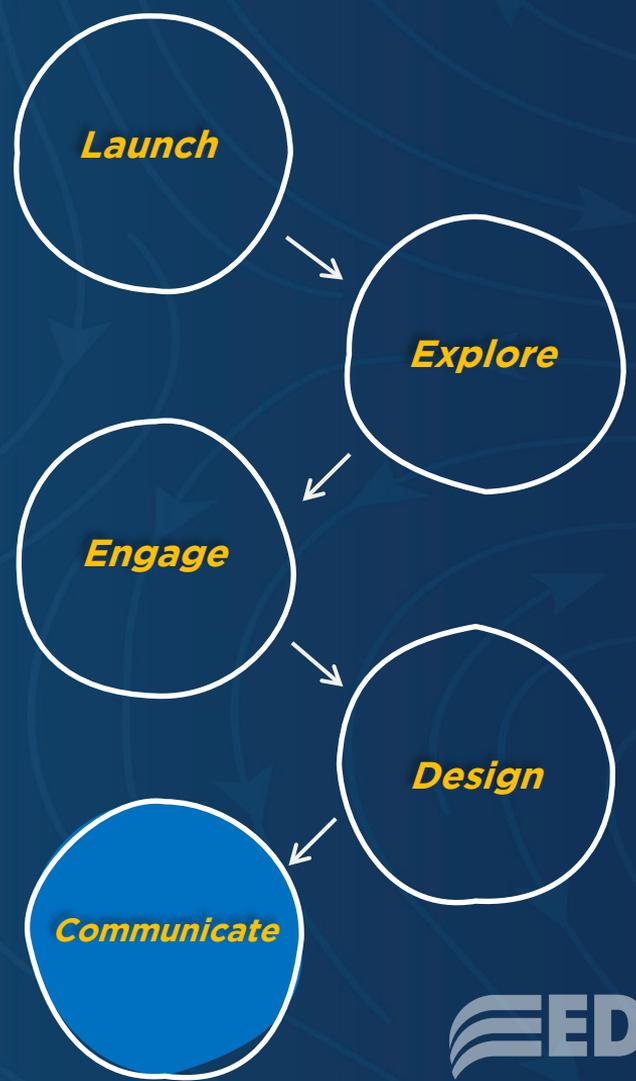
- Big Ideas & Concept Diagrams
- Alternate Scenarios & Test Fits
- Collaboration with Staff & Stakeholders



Planning Process

Finalize & Communicate:

- Phasing & Priorities
- Cost Estimate
- Grant Support Materials
- Final Summary & Graphics



How much planning do I need?

“Right-size” the Process

Start with the Decision and not the Deliverable

Decision → Scope → Process → Deliverable

Limit the Planning Horizon

Use 2-5 years instead of 20-25 years

“Scale” Engagement (Staff Led?)

Design to Build – Not for Shelf Life

Grant-aligned deliverables

How much planning do I need?

“Right-sizing a master plan isn’t about doing less — it’s about doing what matters most, with the resources available.”

Case Studies

Case Study

Spartan Trail

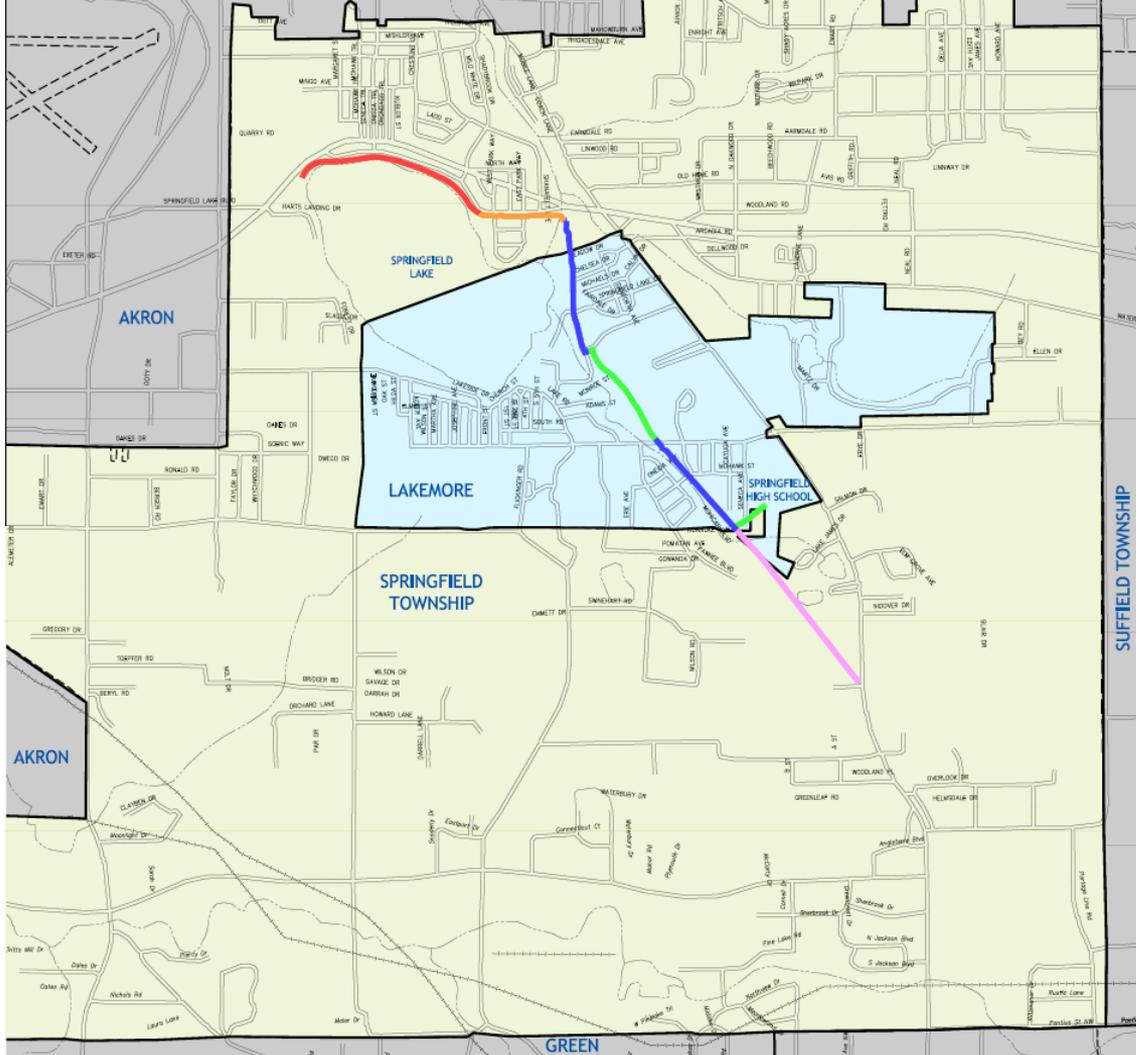
Springfield Township

Under \$25K

Feasibility Study

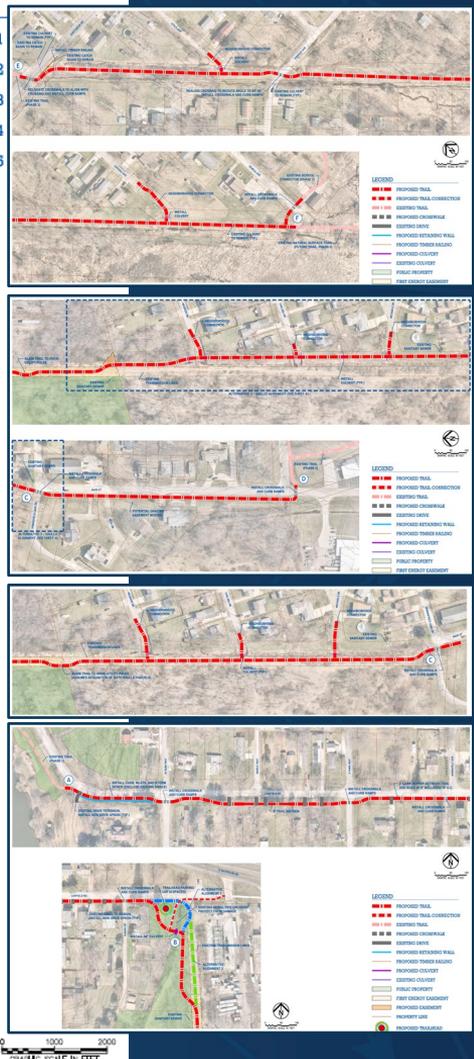
- Included simple plans
- Field review
- Phased cost opinion
- 10-question public survey





LEGEND

- SPARTAN TRAIL PHASE 1
- SPARTAN TRAIL PHASE 2
- SPARTAN TRAIL PHASE 3
- SPARTAN TRAIL PHASE 4
- SPARTAN TRAIL PHASE 5



SUFFIELD TOWNSHIP

GREEN

0 1000 2000
GRAPHIC SCALE IN FEET

Case Study

New Park

Huron County Park District

Under \$15K

- Created a master plan for the development of land to be donated to the park district
- Park Board proposed that donor sell the property to the park district
- Donor will give local match for grant purposes
- Donor will donate the majority of the proceeds to the park district for construction and initial operation of the park
- Strategic plan developed to encourage passage of a levy to support the park district



BAUMAN RD (RT 99)

STATE ROUTE 99

POND

POND

UNCOVERED/FILLED
WELLS

EXISTING OLD
RT. 99 BRIDGE

PRIVATE DRIVE

PRIVATE BARN

EX MONUMENT

POND

PRIVATE
RESIDENCE

PAWPAW
TREE GROVE



Case Study

Marshallville Trail

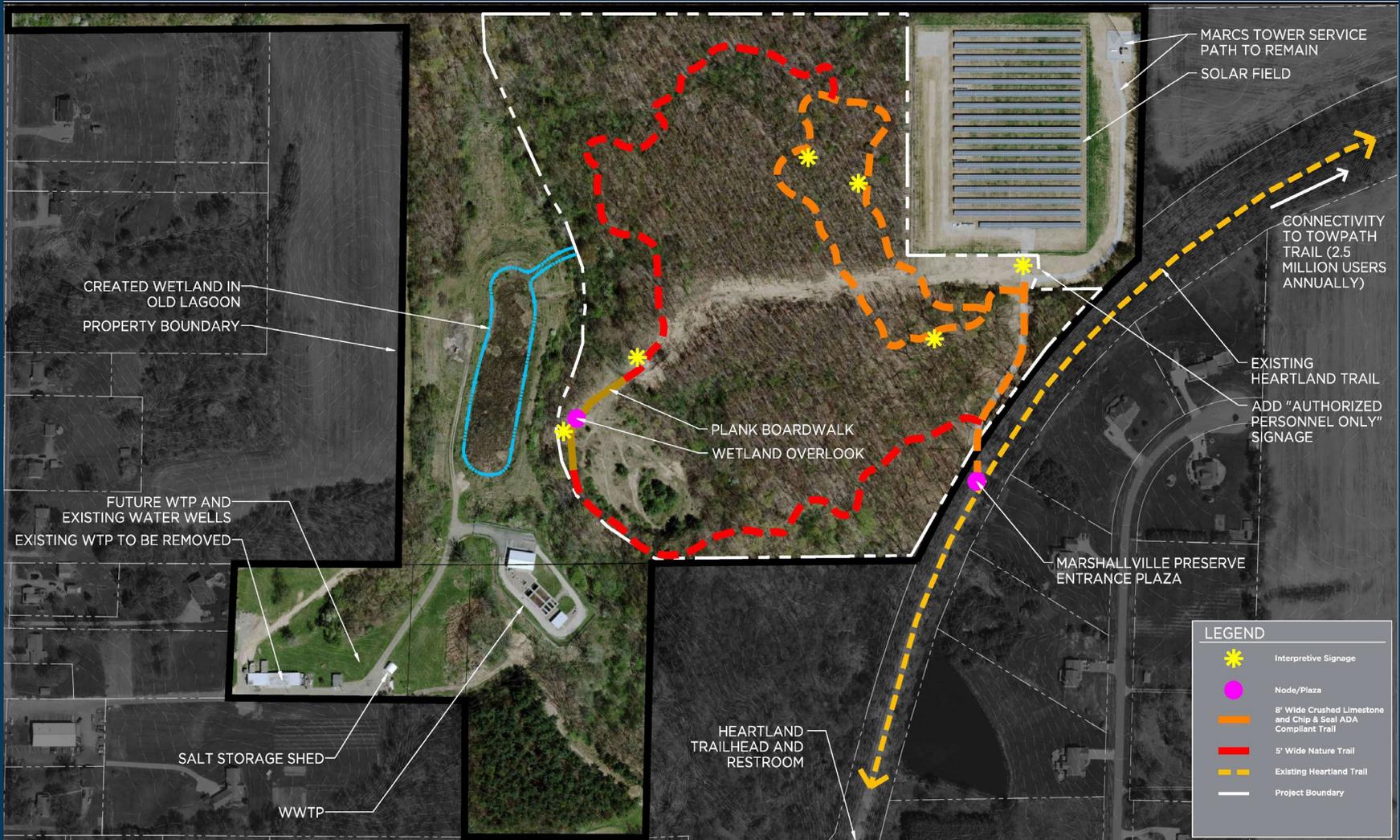
Robert Brooker Nature Preserve

Under \$15K

Nature Preserve Park Master Plan

- Master plan map
- Field review
- Cost opinion
- Detailed Design
- Construction followed MP





LEGEND	
	Interpretive Signage
	Node/Plaza
	8' Wide Crushed Limestone and Chip & Seal ADA Compliant Trail
	5' Wide Nature Trail
	Existing Heartland Trail
	Project Boundary

Case Study

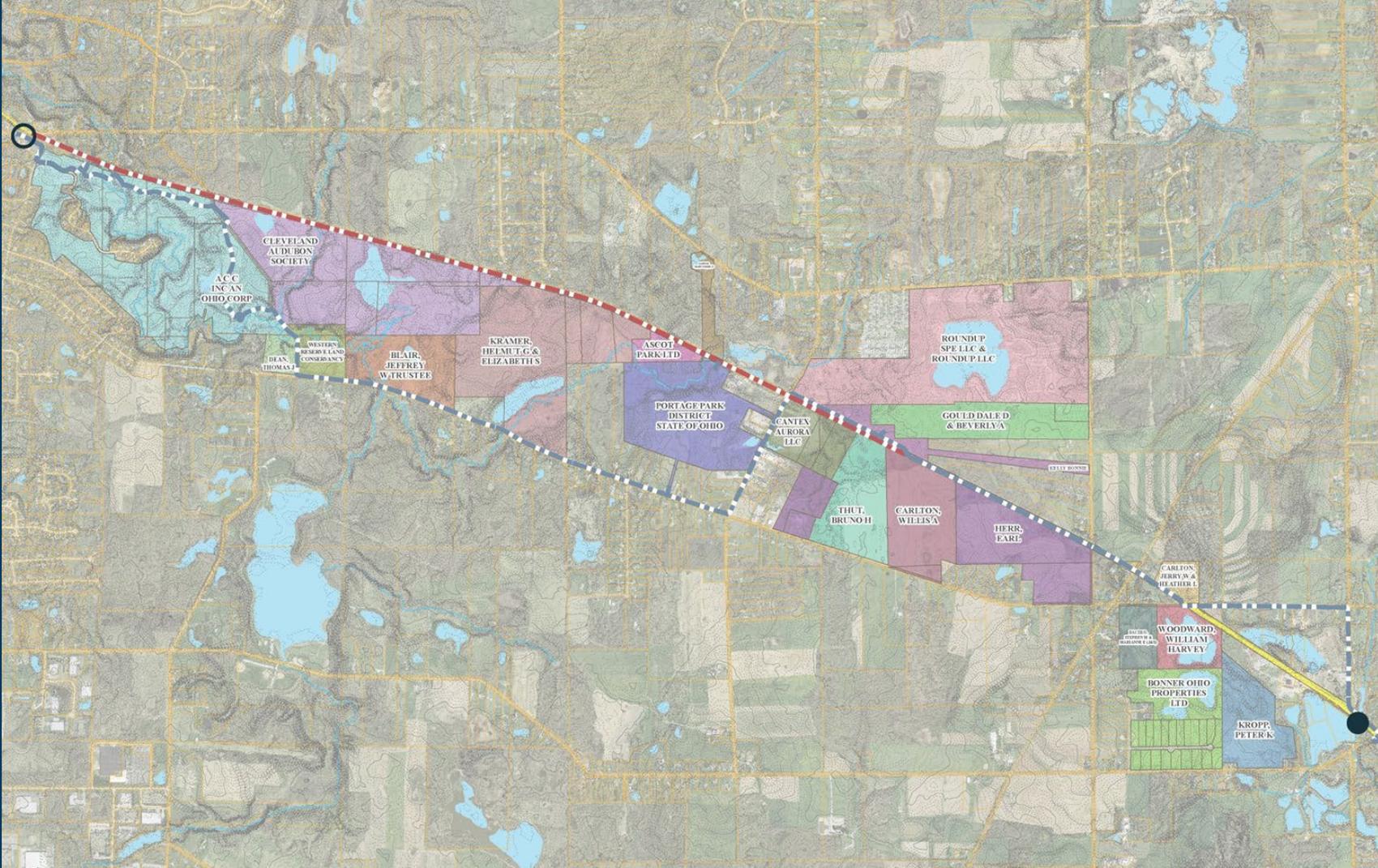
Aurora Trail Headwaters Trail

Under \$25K

Feasibility Study

- City of Aurora, Mantua Township & Portage Parks, Portage Country, Ohio
- Updated City of Aurora portion under (under \$10k) in 2022
- Detailed Design & Construction followed Update
- Currently studying an extension (under \$15k)





- - - Alternate Trail
- - - Preferred Alignment
- Existing Railroad Corridor
- Parcels
- Lakes
- Streams
- 10ft Contours
- 2ft Contours
- Beginning of Trail Route
- End of Trail Route

ACC INCAN
OHIO CORP

CLEVELAND
AUDUBON
SOCIETY

DEAN
THOMAS

WESTERN
RESERVE LAND
CONSERVANCY

BLAIR,
JEFFREY
W. KRUSTEE

KRAMER,
HELMUT G.
&
ELIZABETH S.

ASCOT
PARK LTD

PORTAGE PARK
DISTRICT
STATE OF OHIO

CANTON
AURORA
LLC

THUT,
BRUNO H.

CARLTON,
WILLIS A.

HERR,
EARL

GOULD DALE D
& BEVERLY A

ESTATE BONNER

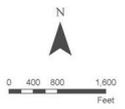
ROUNDUP
SPE LLC &
ROUNDUP LLC

CARLTON,
JERRY W. &
HEATHER L.

WOODWARD,
WILLIAM
HARVEY

BONNER OHIO
PROPERTIES
LTD

KROPP,
PETER K.



Case Study

Kingston Township

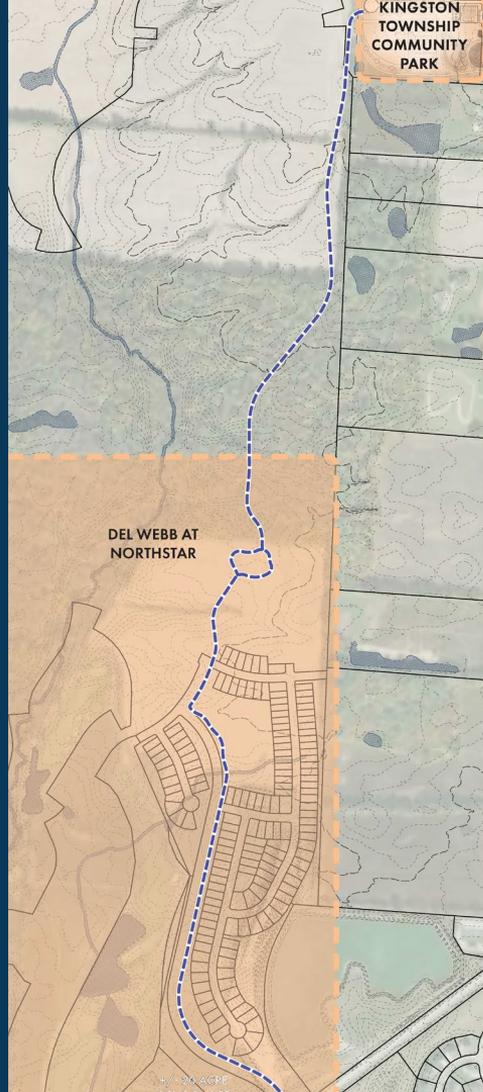
Under \$15K

Park Master Plan

- 25-acre site surrounding the Kingston Township municipal building
- Neighborhood trail connector
- Kickoff Meeting
- Site Visit
- Focus Group Interview
- Conceptual Site Plans
- Implementation Plan & Cost Estimate
- Final Color Master Plan



KINGSTON TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY PARK



Case Study

Pymatuning Greenway Valley Trail

Under \$10K

- 13+ Miles of Trail
- 5 Phases (1.0, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 & 1.4)
- Rural Farming Community
- Village of Andover (972 population, circa 2020)
- Pymatuning State Park
- High-level plan map
- No field review (desktop review only)
- Phased cost opinion



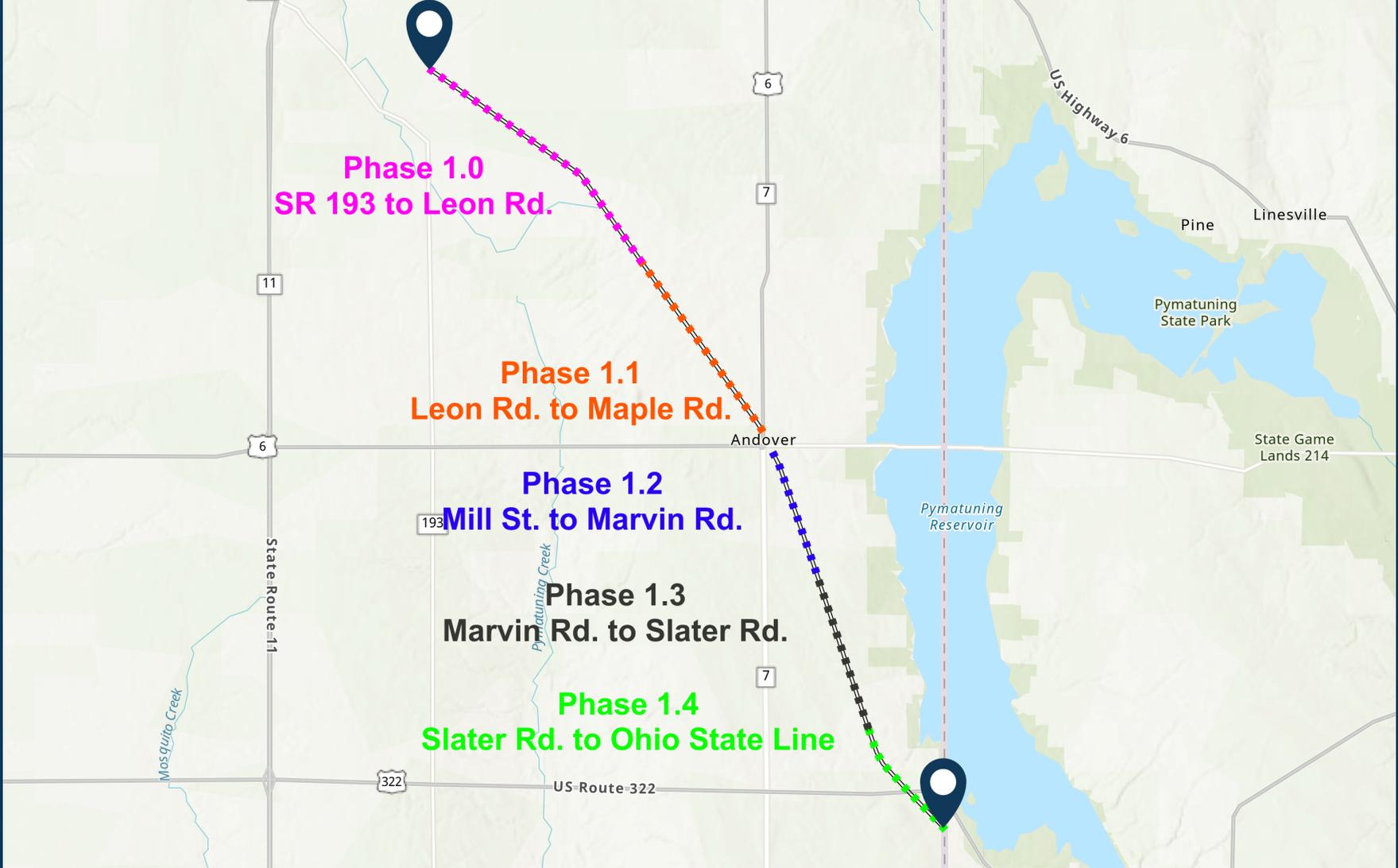
Phase 1.0
SR 193 to Leon Rd.

Phase 1.1
Leon Rd. to Maple Rd.

Phase 1.2
Mill St. to Marvin Rd.

Phase 1.3
Marvin Rd. to Slater Rd.

Phase 1.4
Slater Rd. to Ohio State Line





Stacked Funding

Ashtabula County Civic Development Corporation

- provided \$250,000 for Phase 1.1 & 1.2

Phase 1.1

- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) = \$1,124,998
- ODNR Clean Ohio Trail Fund (COTF) = \$500,000

Phase 1.2

- TAP = \$1,200,000
- COTF = \$500,000

Phase 1.3

- COTF = \$500,000
- TAP = \$4,000,000 (*recent award*)



Case Study

Red Horse Bend Park

Sandusky County Park District

Under \$15K

- Developed a master plan for a new park site
- Used the master plan for discussions with an adjacent landowner in an industrial park for donations toward the construction of the new park site that will enable employees to access the site during breaks





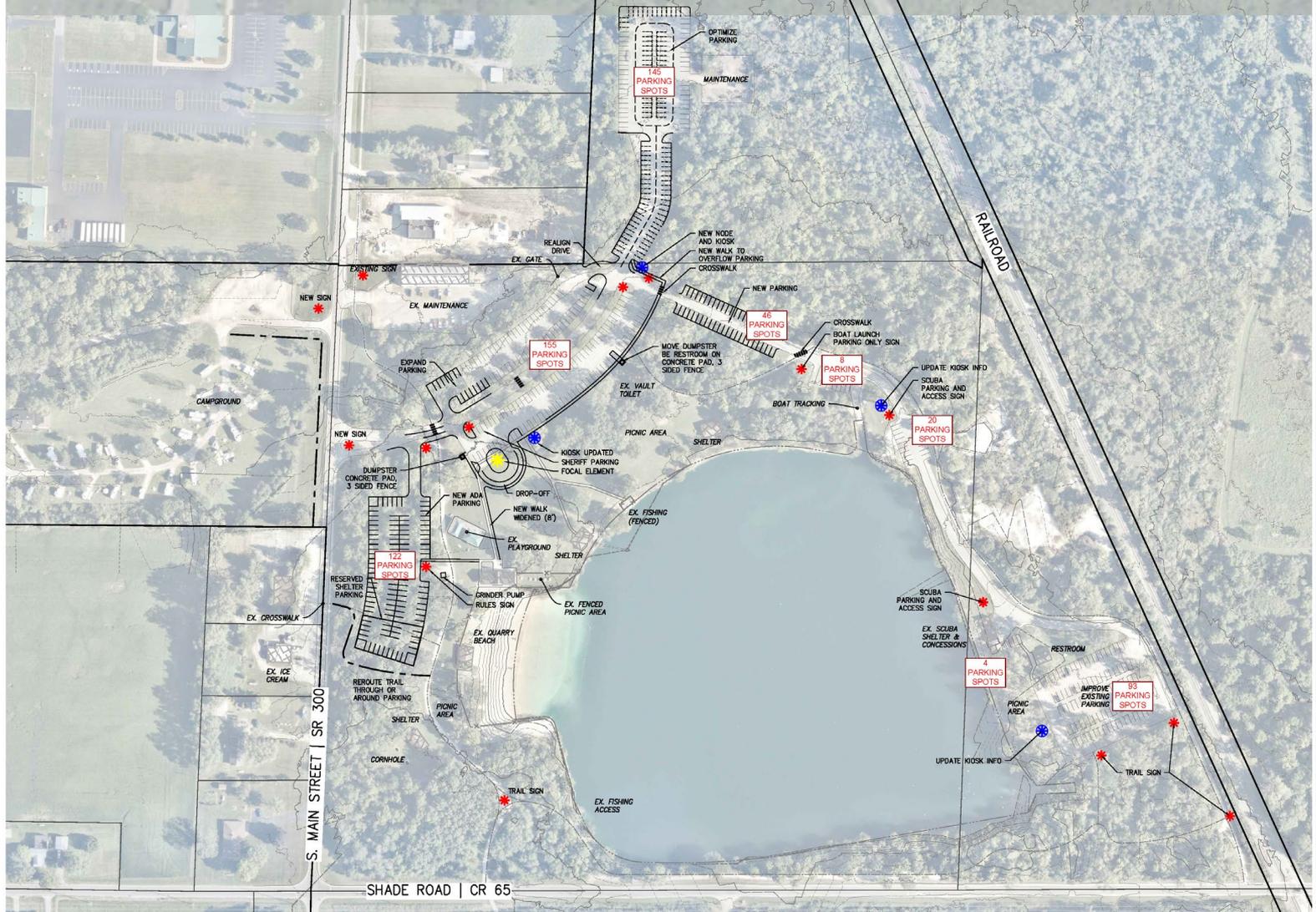
1
H2OHIO INFOGRAPHIC SIGNS AND MONITORING PEDESTAL



2
H2OHIO INFOGRAPHIC SIGN



3
SANDUSKY RIVER VIEWING PLATFORM



Case Study

Riverfront Trail

Under \$30K

- 4.5+ Miles of Trail
- 6 Phases (1.0, 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1 & 3.2)
- Urban Industrial Community
- City of East Liverpool (9,958 population, circa 2020)
- Ohio River
- Simple plans
- Field review
- Phased cost opinion
- Public involvement
- Graphic renderings





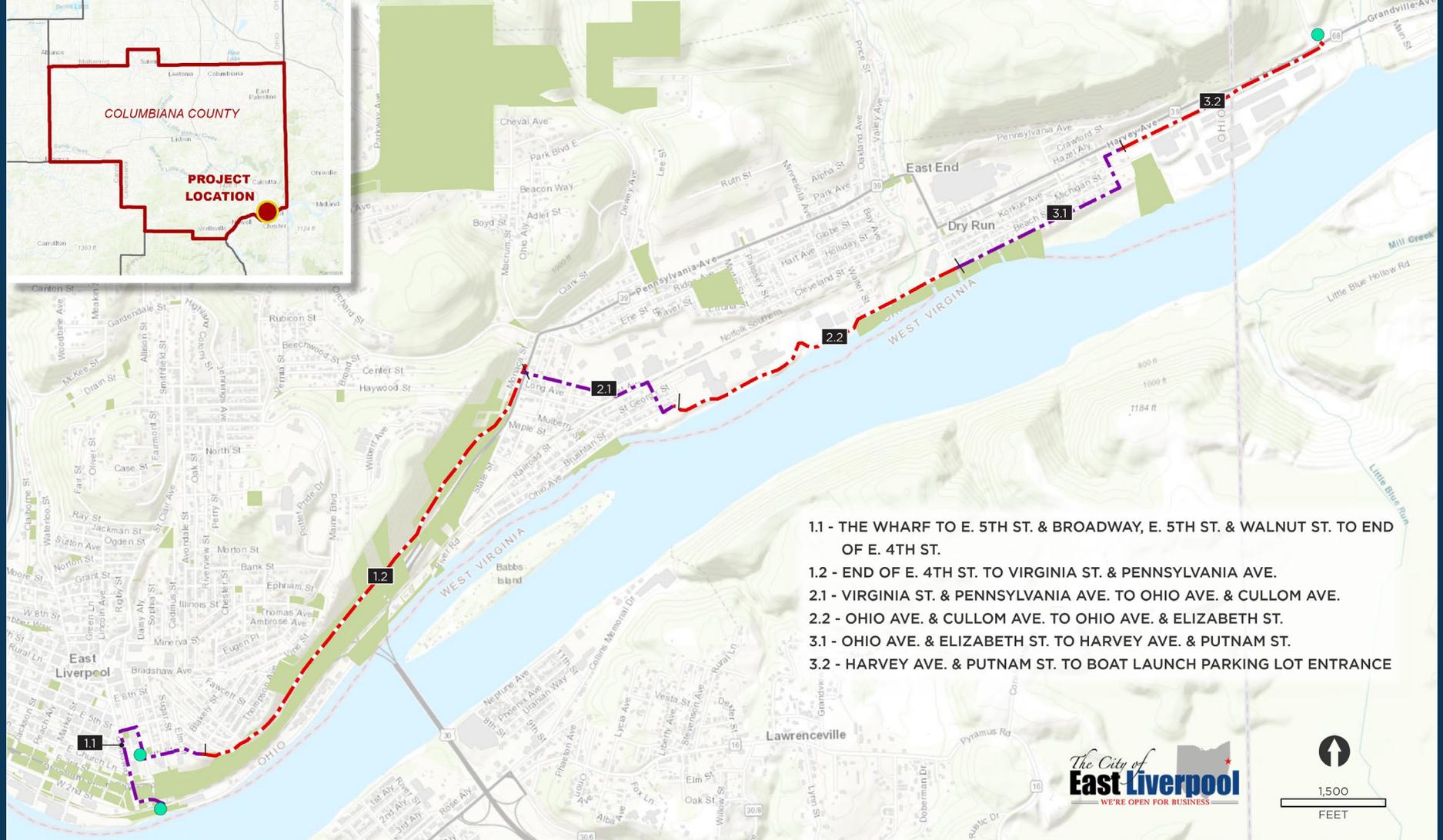
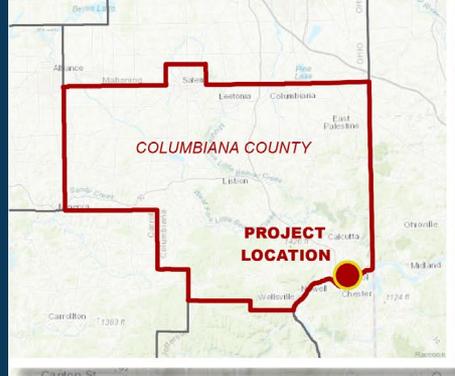
Stacked Funding

Phase 1.1

- Transportation Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association (OMEGA), Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPO), Capital Allocation Funding Grant = \$221,921
- Alternatives Program (TAP) = \$920,545
- Local City = \$175,350

Phase 1.2

- Federal Appropriation (Earmark) = \$1,000,000
- ODNR Clean Ohio Trail Fund (COTF) = \$375,000
- OMEGA RTPO, Capital Allocation Funding Grant = \$300,000
- TAP = \$ 3,300,000 (*recent award*)



- 1.1 - THE WHARF TO E. 5TH ST. & BROADWAY, E. 5TH ST. & WALNUT ST. TO END OF E. 4TH ST.
- 1.2 - END OF E. 4TH ST. TO VIRGINIA ST. & PENNSYLVANIA AVE.
- 2.1 - VIRGINIA ST. & PENNSYLVANIA AVE. TO OHIO AVE. & CULLOM AVE.
- 2.2 - OHIO AVE. & CULLOM AVE. TO OHIO AVE. & ELIZABETH ST.
- 3.1 - OHIO AVE. & ELIZABETH ST. TO HARVEY AVE. & PUTNAM ST.
- 3.2 - HARVEY AVE. & PUTNAM ST. TO BOAT LAUNCH PARKING LOT ENTRANCE







Case Study

Tom Kruse Park

Ashland County Park District

Under \$10K

- Leveraged master planning to expand funding opportunities
- Began a private fundraiser for nature education center
- Developed a site plan for the balance of the site to improve access
- Fundraiser was successful, generated over \$500,000 in private funding
- Private funds leveraged over \$1,000,000 for site improvements (Clean Ohio, State capital budget & the one-time state grant program)





EX BRIDGE
(CONDITIONS TO BE
REVIEWD, POTENTIALLY
RAILINGS TO BE ADDED)

EX. FOREST

EX. CULVERT CROSSING
TO BE REPLACED

MEADOW
HABITAT

EX. FOREST

ACCESS STEPS
TO TRAVERSE
STEEP SLOPE

EX. FOREST

CRUSHED
GRAVEL PATH

OVERLOOK

FOREST
RESTORATION
AREA

EX. FOREST

FOREST
RESTORATION
AREA

MEADOW
HABITAT

SUNFLOWERS PATCH

GRAND ALLÉE

PAVED TRAIL

EX. FOREST

MEADOW
HABITAT

PAVED TRAIL

REMOVAL OF INVASIVE
SPECIES THIN UNDERGROWTH
TO IMPROVE VISIBILITY

NATURE PLAY WITH
SPLIT RAIL FENCE

FIRE PIT

EDUCATION
SHELTER

MEADOW HABITAT
WITH STRATEGIC
TREE GROUPINGS

MEADOW
HABITAT

STATE ROUTE 50

EX. FOREST

8' PREMANUFACTURED
BOARDWALK (56 FT)

EX. POND

EX. FISHING
DOCK

BUFFER

EX. GAZEBO

PARKING LOT
LIGHTING

8' STICK-BUILT
BOARDWALK (24 FT)

EX. WETLAND

EX. PARKING LOT TO
BE DESIGNATED AS
ADA PARKING ONLY

ASHLAND COUNTY ROAD

CEMETERY

EX. FOREST

TO BYERS
WOODS PARK

BYERS WOODS

Case Study

Don W. Miller Memorial Park

Sandusky County Park District

Under \$5K

- Needed a professional drawing to obtain funding for a paddle craft launch site
- Professional drawing created finalizing the process to obtain grant funding, small-scale project, but very important to the client





EXISTING PARKING LOT

10' WIDE AGGREGATE DRIVE

EXISTING MOWN PATH

6' WIDE AGGREGATE PATH

BOAT LAUNCH ENLARGEMENT

RIFLE ZONE

599

600

603

602

601

Make it Simple - Make it Fundable

Planning + Funding Go Hand in Hand



Make it Simple-Make it Fundable

Planning +
Funding Go
Hand in Hand

Why many plans fail

- Too expensive / not realistic
- Not implementable
- No cost clarity
- No funding logic

Make it Simple-Make it Fundable

Planning +
Funding Go
Hand in Hand

Better approach

- Think in phases
- Align projects with likely funding sources
- Use planning to **unlock money**, not just ideas

Closing:
What to Take Home

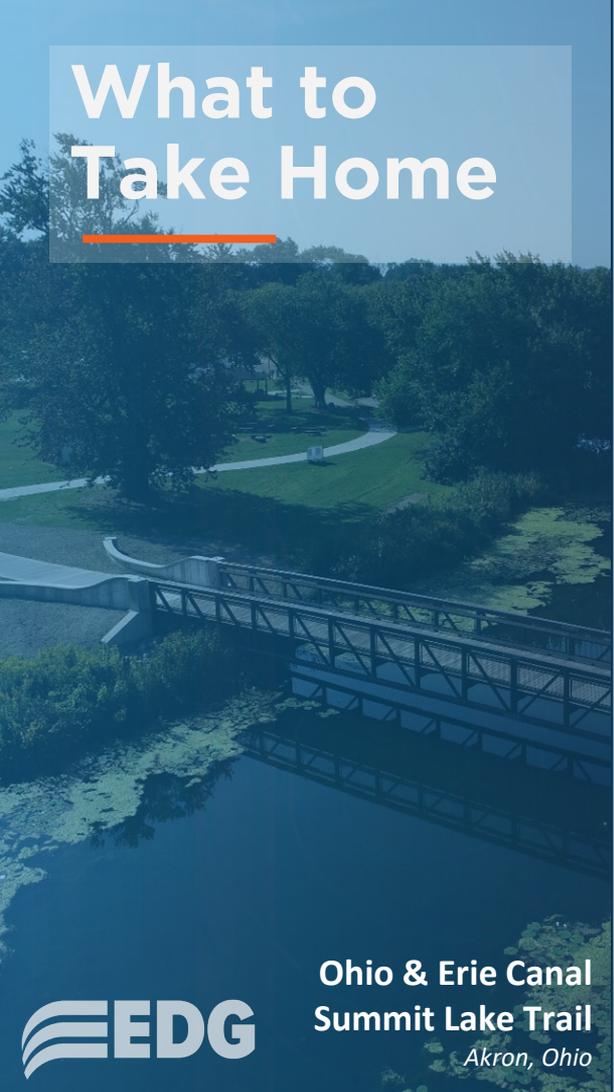
What to Take Home

- There is no “one size fits all” master plan

Ohio & Erie Canal
Summit Lake Trail
Akron, Ohio



What to Take Home

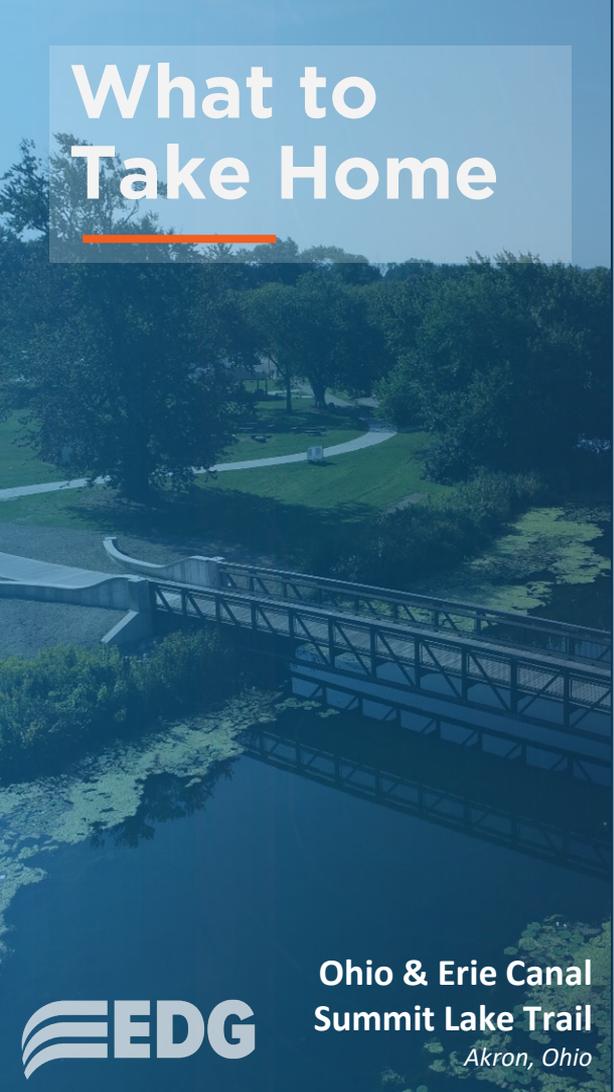
An aerial photograph of a park area. In the foreground, a metal truss bridge spans across a canal. The water in the canal is dark and reflects the bridge. To the left of the bridge, there is a paved path that curves through a grassy area with several trees. The background shows more trees and a clear sky. The overall scene is a well-maintained park environment.

- There is no “one size fits all” master plan
- Smaller scopes can still deliver big value think Lean + Strategic

Ohio & Erie Canal
Summit Lake Trail
Akron, Ohio



What to Take Home

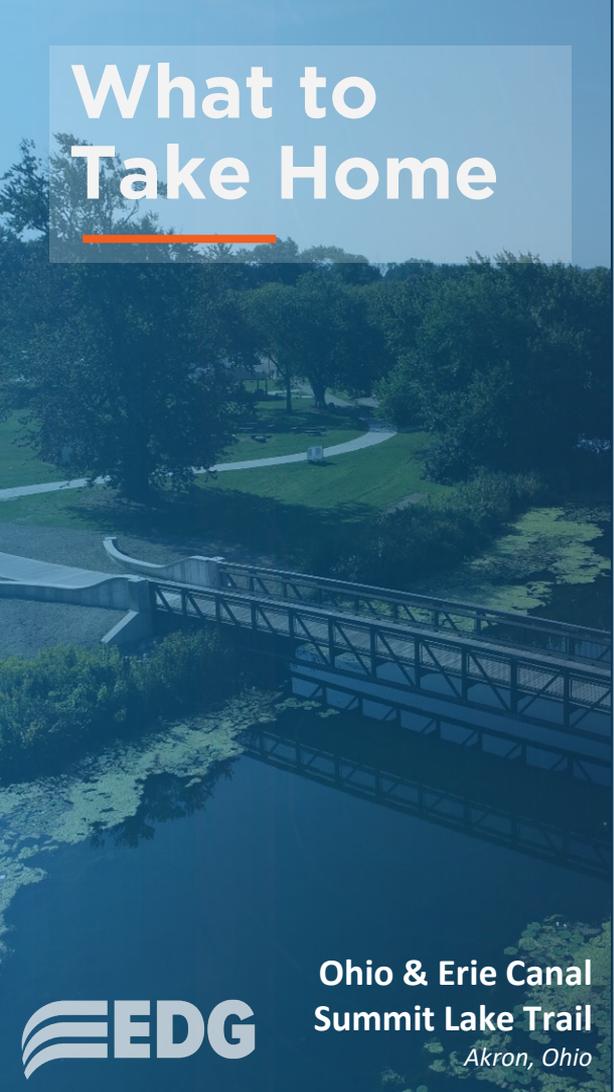
A scenic view of a canal with a bridge and lush greenery. The canal is filled with water and has a bridge crossing it. The surrounding area is green with trees and grass. The sky is blue.

- There is no “one size fits all” master plan
- Smaller scopes can still deliver big value think Lean + Strategic
- **Clarity beats complexity**

Ohio & Erie Canal
Summit Lake Trail
Akron, Ohio



What to Take Home

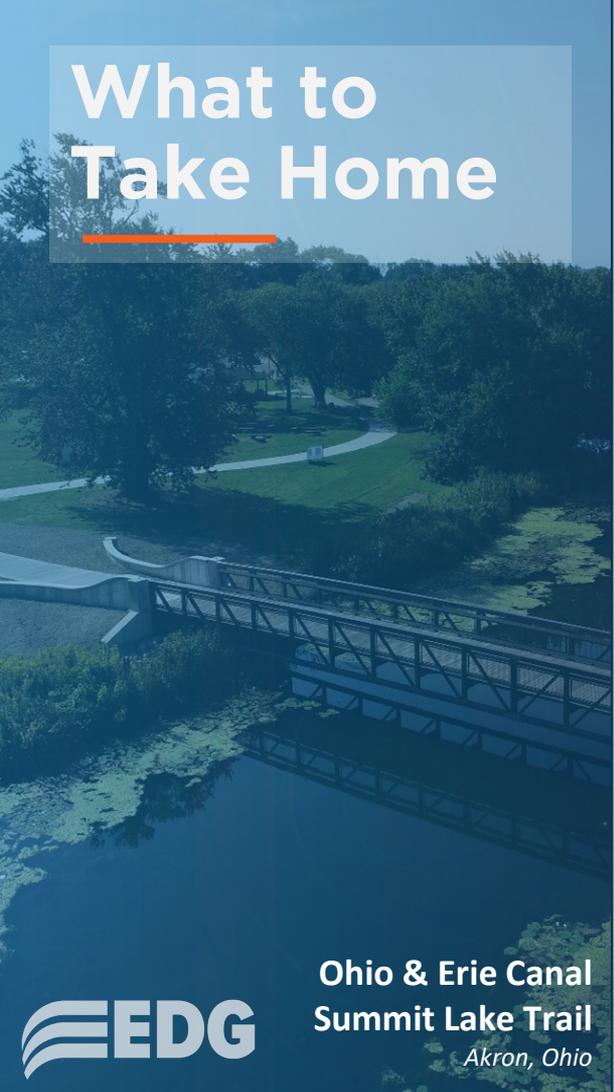


- There is no “one size fits all” master plan
- Smaller scopes can still deliver big value think Lean + Strategic
- Clarity beats complexity
- **Good planning is an investment – not an expense**

Ohio & Erie Canal
Summit Lake Trail
Akron, Ohio



What to Take Home



- There is no “one size fits all” master plan
- Smaller scopes can still deliver big value think Lean + Strategic
- Clarity beats complexity
- Good planning is an investment – not an expense
- **Aligning deliverables with the actual need and funding requirements**

Ohio & Erie Canal
Summit Lake Trail
Akron, Ohio





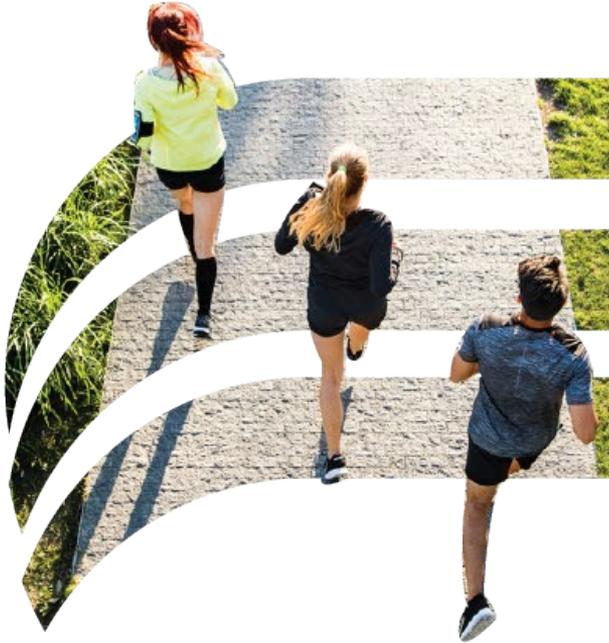
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Contact

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Matt McGrath, PLA, ASLA, LEED AP
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Questions?



Scan Me!

← Please Scan for
Evaluation Form

