



# **A UNIFYING PLAN FOR THE LOWER BOARDMAN RIVER**

DRAFT PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

MAY 28, 2019

**This public participation plan is a living document. The following is a record of revisions.**

April 29, 2019 Draft

May 9, 2019 Revised

May 16, 2019 Revised

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# INTRODUCTION

**Civic Engagement:** “The process of helping people be active participants in building and strengthening their communities. At its best, civic engagement provides personal fulfillment and builds trust. It is a personal and values-oriented experience.”

## Philanthropy for Active Citizen Engagement A Primer

The Lower Boardman River Leadership Team (LBR Leadership Team), under the direction of the Traverse City Downtown Development Authority (DDA), has prepared a DRAFT civic engagement strategy to complete a definitive, unifying plan for the Lower Boardman River.

### WHAT IS A PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN?

Just as the Lower Boardman River has a personality that takes on many forms and shapes depending upon the season, its flow and location, the unifying plan for the Lower River will reflect differing values, perspectives and uses of the River. What is essential is that this process, much like that of the process to determine the fate of the Boardman River Dams, must include and welcome through civic engagement all of the many interests in the Boardman to develop a plan that is truly unifying and has the backing and consensus to be implemented.

This Public Engagement Plan outlines how all interests can and will be engaged throughout the process to complete the unifying plan. This engagement plan provides a guide for the project Leadership Team, defining the who, what, when, where, why and how all interests will be engaged during the process. It is a tool for accountability and transparency. It is a tool that is flexible and can be modified to meet needs as they arise.

### HOW WE DO THIS TOGETHER

The framework for this civic engagement plan was developed by the LBR Leadership Team with the support of a consultant, the Smith Group, who specializes in downtown and waterfront planning and design. The public and other interests will be asked to

provide feedback on the engagement strategy online and at an open house prior to its adoption and a project kick-off meeting in June 2019. By reviewing this DRAFT plan, all interests will be introduced to the approach and methods for outreach and engagement that are planned and will have the opportunity to contribute their comments, ideas and proposals and adjust the course of civic engagement as conditions evolve. They will be asked to provide feedback and given the opportunity to identify other engagement approaches and their desired level of individual involvement moving forward.

#### The Leadership Team

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The DDA and Lower Boardman River Leadership Team are committed to ensuring that this unifying plan is by, for and about all interests to the extent feasible, to create strategies that will ensure successful implementation.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

We need to know what all interests think about the Lower Boardman River.

- What are your questions about the River and about the planning process itself?
- What do you value about the River?
- What are your concerns about the future of the River?
- What do you think should be done to ensure access and shared enjoyment of the River? What do you think should NOT be done?
- What do you think should be done to protect the natural beauty and integrity of the River? What do you think should NOT be done?
- What role would you like to have in making sure the River is wisely used as a community asset and effectively protected as a natural River?

By asking what people think about the River and its future, our goal is to use every meeting, forum or street corner discussion to listen and keep track of what you and your neighbors say. Your answers to your own questions will be the heartbeat of a community-based unifying plan for the Lower Boardman River and the implementation of that plan. Get ready. You'll be asked!

## SIGN UP!

All interested persons are encouraged to join in the project kick-off meeting on June 12, 2019 at 4:30pm to 6:00pm at Parking Lot B on the Boardman River (commonly referred to as the Farmer's Market lot) to provide feedback on the civic engagement strategy and sign-up to be part of the process.

## THE PROCESS WILL EVOLVE

We know the planning process and the plan itself will evolve. The LBR Leadership Teams' goal at every event will be to stimulate ideas and creative thinking about the Lower Boardman and to provide continuing opportunities for everyone to provide feedback about ideas and about the plan and about the River as those things unfold. The Team's intention is that community members promote public meeting dates, encourage access and use of the project website, and share information with other community members.

The LBR Leadership Team will follow-up after engagement events with an evaluation to identify adjustments that should be made to the engagement strategy, information that needs to be added to the website or additional interests that need to be engaged.

Significant revisions to the engagement strategy will be reported to engaged interests, including use of our web site

**[www.dda.downtownc.com/projects/lower-board-man-river-unified-plan/](http://www.dda.downtownc.com/projects/lower-board-man-river-unified-plan/)**

## WHAT IS THE PROJECT?

The Traverse City DDA established the LBR Leadership Team as an ad hoc group with diverse interests to encourage and foster development of a Unified Plan that protects, restores, and preserves access and wise use of the 1.6 miles of the Boardman River that is located downtown. This includes identifying policies, facilities, amenities, programs, and other considerations that should be implemented to encourage balanced/wise/sustainable/reasonable use and enjoyment of this natural resource in Downtown Traverse City.



This plan is to be developed with the engagement of all interests to take advantage of expertise and input. Just as the plan may identify priorities for recreational, educational and interpretive initiatives, so should it identify projects involving land/water management policies and projects to address stormwater management and control, habitat protection and enhancement.

The Unified Plan will include our collective vision for the lower Boardman, the desired outcomes and the policy recommendations, guidelines and priority projects to attain the vision and outcomes.

## EXISTING PLANS

For over ten years, Traverse City has been part of a precedent setting regional initiative that has garnered national and international attention to restore the Boardman River, including the removal or modification of four dams on the river. The fruits of this initiative will all come to bear in the downtown vicinity.

There have been several interconnected initiatives designed and employed to develop concepts for use and protection of the river and watershed as it unites through Traverse City, including:

- “Your Bay, Your Say” (2007)
- “Boardman River Plan - A Comprehensive Vision for the Future of Traverse City’s River” University of Michigan Student Project, 2013 (approved in concept by DDA Board, Approval by Planning Commission as a general guide, but not approved by the City Commission)
- Boardman Water Trail Development Plan (October 2016)
- Boardman River Prosperity Plan (2016)

## VISION AND VALUES

The following guiding values have been identified by the Leadership Team as a framework for the Unified Plan.

- Reflect the City's commitment to the River as a public resource and asset to be passed to residents and visitors in perpetuity.
- Contain public goals for the River and City, in keeping with the community's visions about what the River is and can become as a centerpiece for downtown identity and ethos.
- Use the natural and cultural values of the River as a guide for decisions about the commercial, economic or utilitarian values to be leveraged for the public good.
- Be explicit to the commitment to improve, restore and protect the health and integrity of the Riparian ecosystem of the lower River.
- Provide that the recommended initiatives contained in the Plan will account for the impact of those initiatives on residents, habitats and the ecological status of the River.
- Serve to foster and sustain partnerships with shared responsibilities among public and private stakeholders who share the value that the Boardman is a "common resource" that connects everyone.
- Identify/prioritize opportunities for multi-modal access to the River.
- Enhance ecological and aesthetic River conditions, take advantage of and integrate iconic structures and identify new sites and structures that serve as destination or centers of programming to attract year-round access.
- Integrate existing river walks and pathways with new connections between sites and destinations that link the River to the city in ways that are physical, visual, aesthetic and psychological.
- Be consistent with best riparian and aquatic science, best water and land management practices and must be harmonious with the River.
- Make nature-based stormwater best management practices (BMP's) a priority.
- Help ensure that new or rehabilitated developments along the River are compatible with the City's renewable energy goals.
- Establish that development sites, destinations and structures must protect the health, aesthetics, accessibility and health of the relationship between the river and residents/visitors.
- Manage invasive vegetation and protect and retain existing native vegetation and add native vegetation where possible.
- Prohibit further hardening of the shorelines that are inconsistent with the Plan.
- Ensure that the natural flow of the River is enhanced and not curtailed or impeded by any element of the Plan.

## WHY IS ENGAGEMENT IMPORTANT?

The Lower Boardman River holds immense ecological, recreational, economic, spiritual and cultural values for a wide spectrum of interests and is integral to the well-being and quality of life of downtown Traverse City and the greater community.

Civic engagement and the reflection of these and other values is essential to the development of this Unified Plan. All interests should see themselves and their role in this Plan to the extent possible.

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT GOALS

The following goals provide the framework for the unifying strategy:

- Through engagement, identify the values in the River by all interests.
- Align values and plan goals with the values and goals of engaged interests
- Provide educational and information opportunities during plan development and implementation
- Recognizing the strength of diversity, engage and acknowledge a rich mix of interests to help establish the unifying plan for the Lower Boardman that, because of unity, will be implemented.

## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Ultimately, this process is about implementing a unifying plan for the Lower Boardman. With the engagement and unity of all interests, we will be in a sound position to achieve implementation and celebrate the results together. In framing the implementation steps, we will identify roles and responsibilities to achieve goals, including opportunities for volunteerism.

**Our work does not end with the completion of the Plan.** The DDA and LBR Leadership Team recognize that a willing and supportive community is critical to the implementation of the Unified Plan. As such, the plan will identify potential opportunities for volunteerism and collaboration with students, schools and other educational interests to promote and encourage learning and understanding throughout the implementation of the project.

# OUTREACH

The following provides a framework for identifying interests that should be engaged, as well as methods and opportunities for outreach and communicating progress.

## TYPES OF INTERESTS

Because of the significance of the project, we will ensure that efforts to engage all interests and gather and respond to the **“What do you think?”** and related questions involve people and entities that are:

- Directly affected by the implementation of the Plan.
- Impacted by the Plan’s goals and recommendations.
- Interested and aware of the project for a variety of reasons.

### AFFECTED

interests may include residents, property owners, neighborhood associations, DDA Board members, other local government bodies, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Businesses within the City, user groups or individuals, conservation organizations and others.

### IMPACTED

interests may include utilities, government agencies at all levels, regional bodies and others.

### INTERESTED

people and entities that may have a stake in the plan for a variety of reasons.

### AWARE

interests that want to keep informed about the Project such as the media, researchers, academic institutions and others.

All interests in the project will be engaged and invited to participate and contribute.

## OUTREACH METHODS

The LBR Leadership Team will use a variety of civic engagement approaches throughout the planning process, including:

- Open sessions to as “what do you think” and stimulate free-flowing discussion about the Lower Boardman
- Website
- E-mail distribution
- Press releases
- Social media
- Farmers’ Market pop-up
- Public meetings/events
- River Celebration 2019
- Others that may be identified by the Leadership Team and/or engaged parties.

### WEBSITE

All information will be made available at:

[www.lowerboardman.downtowntc.com](http://www.lowerboardman.downtowntc.com)

### E-MAIL DISTRIBUTION

Interested individuals may sign up to receive e-mails regarding upcoming events, updates and calls for assistance and to volunteer to help.

### NEWS RELEASES

News releases will be issued to promote the kick-off meeting in June 2019 as well as future public meetings and the status of the project.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media will remain an important outreach tool throughout the process:

**Facebook:** @LowerBoardmanRiver

Instagram: [downtown\\_tc](https://www.instagram.com/downtown_tc)

#### FARMERS MARKET POP-UP

To meet people where they are, volunteers will “Pop Up,” reaching out to the community at the Downtown Farmers Market and other public venues beginning in May 2019.

#### PUBLIC MEETINGS/EVENTS

The LBR Leadership Team will use public meetings (DDA, City Planning Commission and City Commission) to invite free flowing discussions, to update the community and advertise upcoming engagement events.

#### RIVER CELEBRATION 2019

The goal of this event is to celebrate the achievement and completion of the watershed restoration project phase while bringing attention to the final efforts downtown.

## WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS?

The following groups are responsible for the process:

#### DDA/ DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

- Responsible for Overseeing Plan Development
- Approval of Contracts, Grants, Etc.
- Approval of Unified Plan
- Facilitate plan implementation with partners.

#### LOWER BOARDMAN RIVER LEADERSHIP TEAM

- Responsible for ensuring Civic Engagement is achieved in keeping with goals
- Developing the recommended Unified Plan with the Consultant for action by the DDA Board

#### CONSULTANT: SMITHGROUP (HIRED AS THE CONSULTANT TEAM)

- Support implementation of the civic engagement plan
- Organize and help lead kick-off meeting
- Draft Unified Plan

# ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

A successful process to develop and implement a plan for the Lower Boardman River requires civic engagement strategies that enable access to the process by the many and diverse interests that should be involved. The LBR Leadership Team is committed to an inclusive and meaningful process. Ideas and recommendations for improving and enriching the process are invited!

## ENGAGEMENT METHODS

The following engagement strategies will be used:

- Public meetings
- Launch meeting
- Online story map
- Online survey
- Focus group meetings
- Pop-up workshops
- Public townhall

us downstream for this first meeting. This interactive discussion will invite all interests to talk about the engagement process, the desired outcome and goals and how we will best work together.

***What do you think?*** We'll talk about what matters to interests that join us: values; river conditions; history; culture; the good, bad and ugly and much more. But this will just be the beginning of an initiative that we will celebrate as it is developed and implemented.

## OPEN MEETINGS

Sound boring? We hope not. The goal is the development of a Unified Plan for the Lower Boardman River. Open, well publicized meetings are a necessity and will provide opportunities for everything from informal discussions to special presentations. We want to emphasize two-way discussions so that everyone shares in crafting this plan. From large to small groups, we want the drumbeat to be about encouraging and inviting ideas and observations, listening and exploring common ground.

## LAUNCH MEETING

A launch meeting is planned for June 12, 2019 at 4:30pm to 6:00pm at Parking Lot B on the Boardman River (commonly referred to as the Farmer's Market lot). By foot, kayak, canoe, bike or car, we want everyone to join

## WEBSITE AND ONLINE STORY MAP

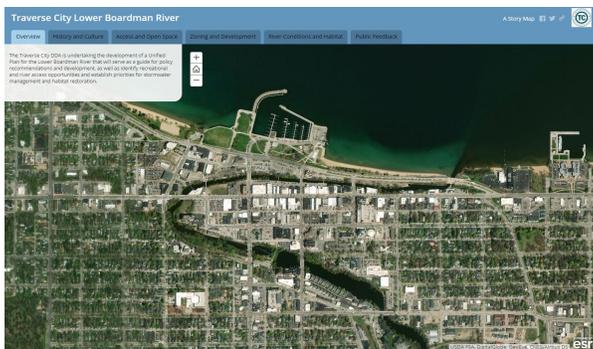
The website for this initiative is

[www.dda.downtowntc.com/projects/lower-boardman-river-unified-plan/](http://www.dda.downtowntc.com/projects/lower-boardman-river-unified-plan/).

It will include information of value to all interests, including:

- Names and contact information for the Leadership Team
- A list of project partners and their roles
- Meeting and event topics, dates, times and places
- A blog for observations and real-time discussions
- A running journal that includes what's being discussed and what everyone is thinking
- A running list of potential implementation projects
- Information, research, literature, citations and even a limerick or two that people tell us are important to them
- The draft plan when completed along with the plan adopted by the DDA Board –a game plan for implementation.

**Check out the Story Map!** Esri Story Maps provides an immersive experience and unique online storytelling platform built for discovery. We invite you to take our Story Map for a spin and learn more about the assets, opportunities and challenges of the Lower Boardman River past, present and future through scrolling images, text and interactive maps.



## ONLINE SURVEY

Surveys will be used to engage interests in a variety of ways once the project is underway and we have a better understanding of the questions to ask about the initiative. We will involve project participants in helping us define the purpose and uses of surveys that

will be developed and administered through the Leadership Team by DDA staff.

We want to know more about your experience with the Lower Boardman

- What is your favorite activity related to the Lower Boardman River?
- Where is your favorite place along the Lower Boardman River?
- What is your favorite memory of the Lower Boardman River?
- Share your favorite photo of the Lower Boardman River!

**Visit the website to take the survey!**

## FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

The LBR Leadership Team will meet with focus groups to dive deeper into the opportunities and challenges of the river corridor. While additional themes may be added, the following provide a framework for the development of these focus groups:

- History and Culture
- Access and Open Space
- Zoning and Development
- River Condition and Habitat
- Recreation
- Philanthropy
- Fisheries
- Neighborhoods and residents

## POP-UP WORKSHOPS

Pop-up workshops function as an outreach and an engagement method. They will be used to ask **“What do You Think?”** as well as to provide general information and progress reports about the initiative.

Pop-ups are currently planned for the Downtown Farmers Market as well as other events sponsored by organizations like the DDA, Merchants Association, City of Traverse City and others. Pop-up workshops are designed to meet stakeholders where they are and create opportunity for simple, quick engagement. The Leadership Team invited recommendations on other opportunities for workshops.

**PUBLIC TOWNHALL**

Towards the end of the planning process, the Leadership Team will hold 1-3 townhall sessions to present the plan and implementation strategy and invite added input and participation.

<b>SEPT</b>	<b>Public townhall + DDA/PC/CC meetings</b>
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**PROJECT SCHEDULE**

A DRAFT project schedule is provided below. Specific dates, times and locations of engagement events will be provided on the project website and advertised through the identified outreach methods.

<b>MAR</b>	<b>LBR Leadership Team kick-off</b>
<b>APR</b>	<b>DDA/PC/CC meetings</b>
<b>MAY</b>	<b>Website launch + outreach to the community</b>
<b>JUNE</b>	<b>Public project launch meeting Wednesday, June 12 at 4:30 PM</b>  <b>Public engagement efforts (TBD)</b>
<b>JULY</b>	
<b>AUG</b>	