



WALKABLE NOVI COMMITTEE

MINUTES

June 16, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.
Council Conference Room
45175 W. Ten Mile, Novi, MI 48375
(248) 347-0475

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.

ROLL CALL

Present: John Avdoulos, Laura Marie Casey, Jay Dooley, Justin Fischer, Edward Roney and Joe Tolkacz

Absent: None

Staff Present: Lindsay Bell, Senior Planner, Community Development
Barbara McBeth, City Planner, Community Development
James Hill, Planner, Community Development
Jeff Muck, Director of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
Rebecca Runkel, Project Engineer

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion to approve the June 16, 2022, Walkable Novi Committee agenda made by Member Tolkacz and seconded by Member Casey. Motion carried 6-0.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Barbara Moroski-Browne, City of Northville Mayor Pro Tem, Gwen Markham, County Commissioner for District 9, and Kevin Vettrano, SEMCOG Director of Planning, introduced themselves to the Committee members.

MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

a. Northville River Walk Task Force

Senior Planner Bell introduced Nancy Darga, Chair of the Northville River Walk Task Force, and said that she had a presentation for the Committee.

Nancy Darga said when we recently met with SEMCOG, they strongly encouraged us to make regional connections for this undertaking. Thus, we are here to talk to you today. The task force was put together by Northville Mayor Brian Turnbull in December of 2020 with the mission to improve the ecology of the river and to expand community access. Our largest goal was to develop a river walk along the river course that connects the city to all neighbors and connects all the park lands along the river. The framework plan also looked extensively into Randolph Drain and all other factors that impact water quality. We developed an implementation plan that answers what it will take to make

this project happen. We identified cost estimates and potential funding sources. Our study area looks far beyond the city of Northville's boundaries, per SEMCOG's suggestions. We looked at areas where there might be regional connectors, such as the I-275 Bike Way.

Ms. Darga continued to say this project provides a huge opportunity at the intersection of the Johnson Creek and the Middle Rouge branch, which occurs in the Downs Racetrack. That section of river was buried in 1962, and our dream is to daylight that river and create a river walk along it. That intersection is a hub that connects three watercourses together. Our framework plan includes an extensive network of pathways and trails along the Rouge River and Johnson Creek. The Upper Mill Pond Trail is the section of the River Walk that we hope will connect with Novi. There are several options to make that connection, but each one has challenges. The CSX railroad will make it very difficult to connect across 8 Mile Road, but our civil engineers have been looking at options such as going over or under the railroad. It has also been mentioned that the 8 Mile overpass bridge is scheduled to be redone in 2024, which could present an opportunity to incorporate a trail connection.

Michelle Aniol, resident of Northville, and Community Development Manager for the City of Dexter, said this is the start of a conversation. I understand that Novi is currently updating its Non-Motorized Plan, and Northville has recently submitted for a grant to update our Non-Motorized Path Plan. We want to work with you on this process. We need to identify and refine routes that connect both cities. We also would like to identify all our funding options.

Member Roney asked what Northville's targeted timeline for this project is.

Ms. Darga explained that like Novi, they hope to have it updated within a year.

Senior Planner Bell said we are still refining the RFP, so that has not been issued yet.

Ms. Darga said we have not received a grant yet, but you can see some of our work has already gotten underway. We are also working with Wayne County on the Connect the Rouge River project, and we have been looking into how we can integrate into your existing pathways. I believe we will have better access to funding the more we work together.

Member Avdoulos asked if any of the routes have been established, even if just bits and pieces?

Ms. Darga said Ford Field is established already, but many of the other ones are still in the planning stages.

Member Tolkacz asked when do you think the river will begin to be daylighted so the core part of the river walk can get underway?

Ms. Darga said I believe 2024 is their goal. If we take the grant, we will have to complete the daylighting by 2026.

Member Fischer said I think a lot of great work has been put into this. I think it would be a good idea to mention this project at our next City Council meeting, and perhaps we should consider adding it to a future agenda for the Grants Subcommittee.

Senior Planner Bell said it seems that the Committee supports the work that has been done on this, so we will be sure to include it in the RFP for our Non-Motorized Plan as a focus area.

Motion to include the Northville Riverwalk Task Force as a focus area in the RFP for the current Non-Motorized Plan update made by Member Casey and seconded by Member Fischer. Motion carried 6-0.

The Committee discussed possible options to incorporate what was presented. A subcommittee was suggested while others were concerned that City Council should be kept updated since this is likely to be a large financial cost.

Director of Parks Muck mentioned that many of the paths presented that would connect to Rotary Park will not be possible since that section is largely under a conversation easement. He did not think EGLE would be in favor of terminating the 100-year easement, so it is likely that this task would be much more difficult than expected.

b. Major Segments: Top 20 Prioritization

Senior Planner Bell said I wanted to briefly discuss these to make sure they are up to date for the CIP discussions for the next budget year. I removed three segments on 10 Mile from the last prioritization. Several new priorities rose into the list, and we just compiled the new top 20. In the current CIP, there are only 2 segments – the other 14 projects are neighborhood maintenance.

Motion to continue discussing the Top 20 Prioritizations for Major Segments at the August Walkable Novi Committee meeting made by Member Casey and seconded by Member Roney. Motion carried 6-0.

c. March 24, 2022 Walkable Novi Committee Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the March 24, 2022 Walkable Novi Committee meeting minutes with the amendment that Member Avdoulos was nominated as Vice Chair made by Member Tolkacz and seconded by Member Casey. Motion carried 6-0.

STAFF UPDATES

1. Planning Update

a. [Master Plan update](#)

Senior Planner Bell reminded the Walkable Novi Committee that the Master Plan Steering Committee has been meeting. We have a survey available, so please take it yourself and encourage other to take it as well.

2. Engineering Update

a. Update on Non-Motorized Public Projects

Project Engineer Rebecca Runkel said Safe Routes to School improvements will start up again in Orchard Hills, and we hope to have that done by mid-July. The ITC Trail Connector, Wildlife Woods to ITC, has started – we are having trouble getting an asphalt contractor out there. Two sidewalk segments on the south side of 12 Mile Road will be completed later this fall or next spring. At the 9 Mile and Taft roundabout project, we are going to redo the intersection to have typical crossing on all four sides of the intersection. The Taft Road rehab project will include bike lanes on both sides of the road. Concerning the Beck Road widening, we just approved the design for that which will include sidewalk caps for the east side of Beck south of Grand River.

b. Update on Wayfinding Signage

Ms. Runkel said we included a memo about way finding signage. We don't want to put up too many signs, so it is a bit limited. Some signs are being replaced, some are being added, but only 2 would be for the non-motorized routes.

3. Parks, Recreation and Cultural Service Update

Mr. Muck said we completed our first soccer season at Bosco Fields, and we also are working on a site plan for the splash pad that will go in at Bosco Fields. We have been reviewing the Oakland County Agreement for the Northwest Park Grant. We plan to open the water tower park officially in July. On Monday night, tunnel engineering and advanced purchase of the box culvert for Lakeshore Park will be going before City Council for construction in the fall.

COMMUNICATIONS

Senior Planner Bell said we received two emails within the last day. One included more general comments about non-motorized access in the city, and the other was a more specific request near Casa Loma.

ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn the June 16, 2022 Walkable Novi Committee made by Member Avdoulos and seconded by Member Casey. Motion carried 6-0.