

# **Black River Park Skid Pier Replacement MNRTF Grant Application**

## **FEBRUARY 26, 2015 (DRAFT)**

### *I. Project Need and Justification*

The proximity of South Haven, Michigan has made it a convenient location for tourists accessing Lake Michigan from both Detroit and Chicago, particularly those interested in a variety of recreational activities. South Haven boasts numerous parks, many along the Black River which provides easy access to Lake Michigan. Black River Park itself has been a destination for watercraft, kayak, and canoe enthusiasts for decades. The Black River Park contains one of four municipal marinas in the city of South Haven. The public boat launch enters the Black River approximately one mile from Lake Michigan and is the only boat launch access point to Lake Michigan between Benton Harbor and Saugatuck, a distance of roughly forty-five miles. The park contains sixty seasonal and transient slips and five boat launch ramps, a picnic area, showers and restrooms. The municipal marina is open from April 15-October 15 but the park facilities and grounds remain open throughout the year.

The park's primary service area and target population includes permanent and seasonal residents and visitors to the City of South Haven. The City currently contains a permanent resident population of 4,403, according to the 2010 US Census. The project site is located less than one-half mile from South Haven's downtown area, and is within Van Buren County's Census Tract 103, which contains 1,732 persons per square mile. In addition, it has a secondary user base of citizens from Van Buren County, which contains 76,258 people, as well as other nearby areas. People throughout Southwest Michigan come to South Haven for the numerous recreational opportunities the community provides. Seasonal residents as well as tourists contribute significantly to the use of the City of South Haven's recreational amenities. Around 50% of the residential parcels in the City are occupied seasonally and the City has approximately 2,400 seasonal residents within its limits.

The location of the Black River park public boat launch in relation to both the Black River and the municipal marina makes it ideal for both resident and seasonal watercraft users. However, sections of the skid pier's wood decking are broken, risers have had to be replaced and rebolted, and the steel structure has started to loosen. Repairs are frequently needed despite the piers being pulled out of the water at the end of the season to prevent ice damage. The existing skid piers were first constructed in 1974 and rehabbed to 70% in 1992.

### *II. Project Description*

The City of South Haven is seeking grant assistance for replacement of two public boat launch skid piers.

This project meets the goals and objectives of the City's Five Year Recreational Plan. The Plan was a collaborative effort, developed in partnership with the City, the Public School System, and South Haven Township. Page eighty-two (82) of the Plan outlines Priority #3: Parks and Public Spaces. Included in Priority #3 is a goal for the City Council to work with staff to seek grant funds to assist with the planning and development of improvements in and near the Black River Park, keeping in mind improved access to the Black River and attempts to improve water quality. Additionally, page 92 to 93 of the Plan outlines the capital improvements and projects that city staff, the Parks Commission, and the community have identified for Black River Park Marina. These include updating the picnic area, fishing area, non-motorized boat launch, parking, and accessible route to river's

edge. These suggested improvements specifically speak to goal five on page 81, “develop recreation opportunities that focus upon and take advantage of the South Haven area water resources.”

The proposed replacement of two skid piers is included within the City of South Haven’s Five Year Capital Improvement Plan. Future renovations within the larger, master plan upgrade to Black River Park give the park an overall facelift while making necessary upgrades and replacements to meet the ever growing demands of tourists and residents. Included are plans for driveway improvements in order to relieve traffic congestion through the center of downtown South Haven. An expansion of the Black River Park parking into the unpaved area east of current parking will increase parking availability. A new fish cleaning station and a second restroom facility is included within the Black River Park Master Plan although; improvements to the existing facility are a higher priority. The City of South Haven is also making moves to expand Black River Park into a 1.5 acre empty lot to the east. That plan includes a sustainable fishing platform and riverbank stabilization.

It is expected that no additional maintenance will be necessary upon completion of this project. The city maintains 10 public parks, seven beaches, and beach access sites, and their associated amenities. They have, and continue to, successfully and safely manage heavily frequented public lands while enforcing regulations. The existing piers and ramp are deteriorating and require maintenance above and beyond their respective norm. Since this park is already within the City’s park system, maintenance of the park will continue to be under the Park and Recreation Department’s jurisdiction.

To facilitate communication with the community, information about the park upgrades will be published on the City’s website and updated throughout the duration of the project.

### *III. Natural Resource Access and Protection*

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund listed projects located within an Urban Area as one of three funding priorities for its 2015 grant funding. Black River Park is located in such, providing access to natural resources within city limits. The park is walking distance from downtown South Haven and is part of the Bangor to South Haven Heritage Water Trail. Cyclists and walkers, hikers, joggers also frequent the park on their way to/from the adjacent Kal-Haven trail head or while enjoying a leisurely bike ride or stroll through town or along the river’s edge.

Black River Park gives visitors direct access to the Black River and is one mile from Lake Michigan and because it is a designated park, it provides protection from further impeding development. Such development could threaten the existing environment in a variety of ways. Rather, necessary upgrades and improvements to the park, incrementally, will ensure that the natural resources and appropriate recreational activities remain and can be enjoyed well into the future. The park and associated amenities were originally constructed in 1974 and remodeled in 1992.

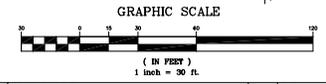
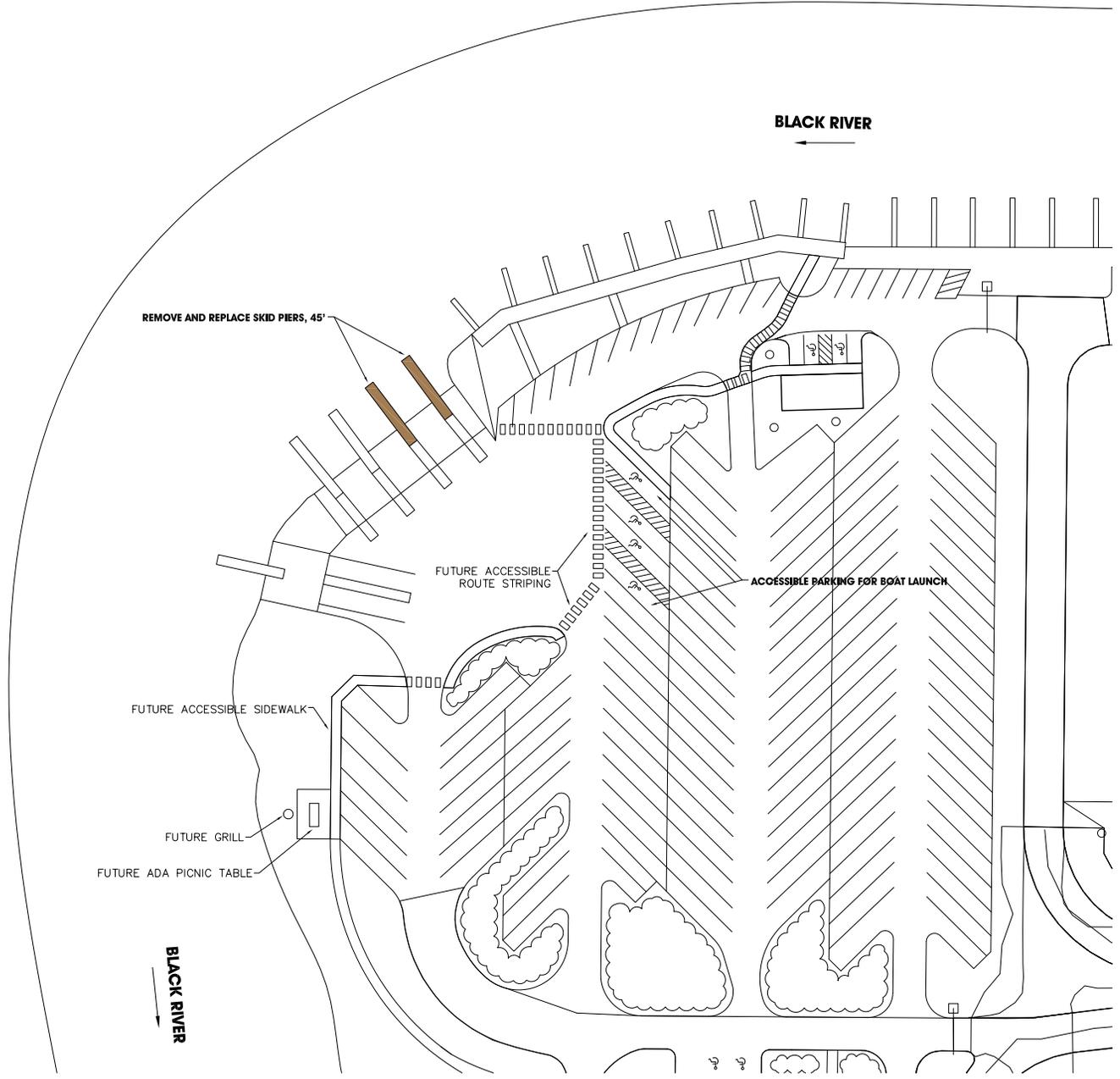
In addition to providing access and protection of the Black River and further, Lake Michigan, Black River contains a number of fish species and is a favorite fishing spot for both locals and tourists.

The City values recreation as an important land-use and recognizes the economic value and ecosystem services provided by protecting natural resources. South Haven has not closed, sold, or transferred control of any parkland or recreation facility within its park system and has strict provisions in the City Charter regarding parkland.

*IV. Other Information*

Safety within city parks is very important to the city of South Haven. Signs displaying the park entrance and hours of operation are clearly posted. The park does not allow unleashed animals or alcohol and it requires those picnicking to properly dispose of hot coals. The restroom facility, and the entire park, is well lit. Vandalism has never been an issue at Black River Park but there is a gate attendant during the day and the grounds are monitored by Police, as their schedule allows. The restrooms are cleaned daily in the early morning and are inspected and cleaned again throughout the day.

Historically, South Haven has established a rich relationship with MNRTF. In the past 37 years South Haven has received 7 MNRTF grants. All grants were managed and implemented successfully and continue to provide and protect access to recreational opportunities and natural resources.



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