



# Aurora, Indiana River Town Review

*Fresh Eyes on Enhancing Tourism & Outdoor Recreation in your Community*



Round 2, Spring 2021

## Ohio River Recreation Trail Team



**NPS RTCA**  
RIVERS, TRAILS & CONSERVATION  
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
[www.nps.gov/rtca](http://www.nps.gov/rtca)



**Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Experience**  
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*Fresh Eyes on Enhancing Tourism & Outdoor Recreation in your Community*

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# Introduction

## Ohio River Recreation Trail (ORRT)

The vision of the volunteer-led Ohio River Recreation Trail steering committee is to create a 274-mile land and waterway self-guided adventure trail that connects people to opportunities for outdoor adventure, recreation, and discovery on and along the Ohio River from Portsmouth, Ohio to West Point, Kentucky. It will serve to promote tourism and economic development; facilitate education about the Ohio River valley’s unique history, culture, and beauty; promote environmental awareness and safety; and respect for lands and waters.

**Vision:** The Ohio River is an accessible and welcoming recreation corridor with vibrant river towns connected by land and water trails.

**Mission:** Facilitate world-class outdoor adventure opportunities through partnerships that promote healthy recreation, education, stewardship, and economic development for Ohio River communities.



## River Town Review (RTR)

A team of professional planners from the National Park Service - Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA), leaders from the ORRT, the Lewis and Clark Geotourism project, and volunteers from outdoor recreation user groups work with engaged leaders to capture the benefits of outdoor recreation and tourism along the Ohio River. Their combined experience and skills provide a free assessment of the community recreation resources, facilitate a community input process, and prepare a summary of their findings for the community. The RTR helps communities see the possibilities and identify potential actions they can pursue to add sustainable recreational opportunities to their communities.

## City of Aurora RTR Planning Process

The detailed RTR Planning Process can be found in Appendix A.

One Dearborn, Inc., the local economic development organization serving Dearborn County requested a River Town Review by the ORRT Team to provide “Fresh Eyes on Enhancing Tourism & Outdoor Recreation in their Community.” The request was approved for the second round of RTRs in the spring of 2021. The One Dearborn, Inc. RTR request included both the City of Aurora and the City of Lawrenceburg.

The RTR Team reviewed materials provided by the community contact and conducted a desktop review of the community’s internet presence. Several RTR Team members visited the community and met with key stakeholders. It was intended to be an in-person, several-days visit, but plans were modified due to COVID-19 restrictions. The team hosted a virtual community input workshop on May 18, 2021, that included a SWOT analysis and brainstorming of ideas for enhancing outdoor recreation in the City of Aurora. The participants were asked to help prioritize the ideas generated into short-term and long-term goals for the community to pursue. The RTR Team reviewed and analyzed the community input to create recommendations for this report.

## Desktop Reviews

The detailed results of Desk Top Reviews can be found in Appendix B.

### Process/Results

Four volunteers spent about one hour each online to see what they could find out about the City of Aurora as if they were thinking of visiting for a day or overnight. They looked at outdoor recreation opportunities, lodging, restaurants, breweries/wineries, historical sites, attractions, and events.

Reviewers found the primary community outdoor recreation attractions include parks, Aurora Recreation Community Center, the bike share program, marinas, golf, skiing, hunting, and fishing. The Southeast Indiana tourist website ([www.visitsoutheastindiana.com](http://www.visitsoutheastindiana.com)) included an outdoor recreation component for Dearborn County and lists the marinas in the area, though it does not give amenity details for kayakers or boaters.

#### Recommendations:

- Include more information about existing amenities on the river such as the canoe and kayak launch at Waterways Park and the numerous marina options located in or near Aurora.
- Market the Dearborn Trail and encourage biking between downtown Aurora and downtown Lawrenceburg to attract more outdoor adventure enthusiasts to visit Dearborn County for longer periods of time.
- Add a description and link about the Ohio River Recreational Trail on all relevant web sites and social media sites to help promote the Ohio River as a destination corridor.
- Add more photos of the area to the websites

In summary, the RTR Team found that the Lawrenceburg/Aurora/Dearborn County related web sites and crowdsourcing sites give a good summation of the businesses and events happening in the communities and sometimes along the Ohio River.

### Walkability & Bikeability Scores for Aurora

Walk Score & Bike Score measure the walkability/bikeability of any address using a patented system which analyzes hundreds of walking and biking routes to nearby amenities. Points are awarded based on the distance to amenities in each category.

- Walkability Score for Aurora – **58 Somewhat Walkable**
- Bikeability Score for Aurora – **45 Somewhat Bikeable**

Please visit [www.walkscore.com](http://www.walkscore.com) for more information

#### Walk Score

90-100 Walkers Paradise  
70 -89 Very Walkable  
50 -69 Somewhat Walkable  
25 -49 Mostly Car Dependent  
0 – 24 Car Dependent

#### Bike Score

90-100 Bikers Paradise  
70 -89 Very Bikeable  
50 -69 Bikeable  
0 - 49 Somewhat Bikeable



Lesko Park

## Community Visit

Community Visit details can be found in Appendix B.

## Community Experiences

Several members of RTR Team visited Aurora to experience the community.

Some of the key things that the RTR Team liked about their community experience in Aurora were:

- Small town feeling and calm pace of life
- Walkable business district, historic buildings and great viewshed of the Ohio River
- Numerous marinas
- Overall signage in the downtown area is consistent and not overbearing
- Streetscape amenities, such as light and sign poles, were tasteful and aesthetically pleasing
- Ample parking in downtown with plenty of street parking
- Lesko Park and the ferry boat landing for river access
- Waterways Park for Hogan Creek access

Some of the key things that the RTR Team would encourage the community to improve are:

- Promoting what visitors can do on the river by:
  - Providing welcoming and wayfinding signage along the river for boaters and paddlers
  - Promoting the river for outdoor adventure recreation
  - Providing wayfinding signage to Waterways Park and the Hogan Creek canoe and kayak ramp
  - Providing camping opportunities for through paddlers and boaters
  - Providing public and transient docking facilities to encourage boaters to stop in Aurora
- Place more emphasis on bicycling by:
  - Adding additional bike racks
  - Providing signage for bike lanes and sharing the road
  - Connecting downtown Aurora with the Dearborn Trail through a connector (multi-use trail or shared roadway system)



## Community Input

The detailed results can be found in Appendix B.

## Virtual Workshop

The RTR Team hosted and facilitated a virtual workshop for the City of Aurora on May 18, 2020. Six local community members, including elected officials, participated in the workshop via Zoom. The Desktop Review and Community Visit findings were shared by the RTR Team for discussion. The participants were asked to share their thoughts by entering their ideas through the virtual workshop using an online platform called Mural. The participants then prioritized those ideas using Mural’s voting system. This virtual workshop assisted the RTR Team to better understand what is important to the community and where the special places are in the Aurora area.

## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

The workshop participants identified the following as the primary considerations for each of the categories of SWOT Analysis for Aurora and Dearborn County area. This list identifies the higher priority items selected from all of the ideas generated during the SWOT Analysis for all four categories. Please refer to Appendix B – Aurora RTR Documents to review all of the ideas generated from the SWOT Analysis.

### STRENGTHS

- Lesko Park
- Walkable downtown with plenty of retail and restaurant options
- Dearborn Trail and connection to Lawrenceburg
- Numerous Marinas

- River viewsheds
- Hillforest House Museum
- Location on the Ohio River downstream of Cincinnati

### **WEAKNESSES**

- Financial Resources
- Flooding
- No transient docking near downtown
- No primitive camping available
- Lack of bike racks
- Need more participation from young adults
- US 50 creates a separation between downtown & existing marinas/campgrounds

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

- Expand the ferry landing
- Add canoe/kayak paddling event on the river
- Link Dearborn Trail and other parks in Aurora
- Different funding opportunities
- Improve wayfinding signage
- Public kayak rack and storage
- Add more bike racks

### **THREATS**

- Absence of funding
- Resistance to change
- Major flooding events
- Viewshed of the river changing
- Loss of downtown businesses
- Traffic congestion of U.S. 50
- Property owners not investing/upkeeping downtown properties & homes

## **Brainstorming Ideas**

The participants were led through an exercise to identify ideas to improve or create recreation assets and tourism opportunities in the Aurora area. The following lists identify some of the higher priority short-term and long-term items selected from all the ideas generated during the brainstorming exercise. These lists also include ideas to consider from the workshop participants homework exercise.

### **SHORT TERM IDEAS**

- Joint tourism marketing with other Ohio River communities, especially Lawrenceburg and Rising Sun
- Seek Bicycle Friendly Business designation
- Install more bike racks
- Add signage for public canoe/kayak launches
- Create primitive camping area near river

## LONG TERM IDEAS

- Complete Aurora Riverfront Visioning Plan
- Link Aurora with Rising Sun via a bike trail
- Create a boat ramp to attract boater community
- Develop transient dockage by Hogan Creek
- Link Dearborn Trail with Waterways Park



### A perfect day for a visitor in Aurora is....

As a homework assignment to help identify what makes the Aurora Area a special place, the RTR Team asked the workshop participants to describe a perfect day for a visitor in the community. Some of the common items identified were exploring downtown Aurora via a “Windows of Aurora” guided tour, biking the Dearborn Trail to Lawrenceburg and back to Lesko Park, taking a tour of the Hillforest Victorian House Museum, kayaking on the river, taking in the views of the Ohio River, enjoying ice cream, and visiting the multitude of local eateries in the downtown area.

Please refer to Appendix B – Dearborn County RTR Documents to review all of the stories submitted.

### A brief summary of RTR observations - All the details are located in the Appendix.

The RTR Team looked at the internet presence of the City of Aurora and visited the community to experience what it has to offer in person. They found that Aurora is known as the “City of Spires”, is home to numerous historic churches and the Hillforest House Museum, a 19<sup>th</sup> century historic home designated as a National Landmark. Aurora has a vibrant downtown with shops and restaurants and an active Main Street Aurora organization that promotes the small businesses and hosts events in the historic downtown area. The historic central business district is just a short walk from the Ohio River and some of the marina facilities. It is truly a river city being almost surrounded by water and located on the bend in the Ohio River with several great long-distance views of the river. The existing Dearborn Trail connecting Aurora to Lawrenceburg is a major recreation attraction with excellent views of the Ohio River from the trail. The city leaders should be proud of their town and it’s wonderful amenities such as: a welcoming and clean business district, Dearborn Trail, Gabbard Park and Lesko Park. The major attraction for Aurora is the community setting on the bend in Ohio River and being located at the confluence of the North & South Hogan Creeks draining into the Ohio River providing several safe harbor marina facilities. The confluence of Wilson Creek & the Ohio River also has a safe harbor marina in the City of Aurora.



# Executive Summary



## A River Town Review Connecting Vision for the City of Aurora

The City of Aurora participated in the River Town Review process because it wishes to further enhance its river town destination potential to benefit existing residents and businesses. The city would like to attract new investments and increase outdoor recreation tourism. The following suggestions for the City of Aurora are based on what the RTR Team observed and learned from the community. These items ought to be explored, brainstormed, and action steps should be created by the community. [The RTR team believes the future of Aurora should include the Ohio River Recreation Trail and improvements to \*\*CONNECT\*\*:](#)

- the marinas, parks, neighborhoods, schools, and the historic business district.
- with safe sidewalks and trails.
- a comprehensive wayfinding signage system to guide visitors to the recreation and business assets in the community and the region.
- with more support facilities, overnight accommodations, restrooms with showers and other amenities for various user groups.
- development of outdoor recreation events.
- with adjoining communities for events, promotions, and destination river town connections.
- paddlers and bring in visitors to an annual paddle/pedal event.
- the creation of transient docking for motor boating users, with a sidewalk to the downtown business district and public restroom facilities.
- and encourage local businesses to seek a Bicycle Friendly Business designation and continue to expand cycling opportunities/facilities.
- and create tent camping, restrooms/showers and secure equipment storage for paddlers and bicyclists at one of the waterfront parks.

and continue to enhance the historic business district and create memorable places for civic events, attracting visitors, residents, and businesses. These efforts will provide a multitude of benefits for the city, residents and the visiting public as the community will become a viable Ohio River Recreation Trail gateway - increasing tourism, business opportunities, and quality of life for residents.



## River Town Review Recommendations

The following are specific recommendations for promoting recreation – connecting communities in each area the RTR team gathered input during the process:

### Desktop Reviews

- The social media platform designs and content need to attract and accommodate river-oriented businesses and showcase recreation opportunities.
- The events schedule should be included on the Ohio River Recreation Trail website.
- Highlight the existing amenities associated with the Ohio River including the canoe and kayak launch at Waterways Park and the numerous marinas in and near Aurora. Try to make this type of information easy to find for a person from out of town.
- Emphasize the Dearborn Trail connecting two river towns as an attraction for outdoor multi-recreation enthusiasts to visit and stay longer.
- Add photos of the recreation assets on the websites, provide more links to adjoining attractions and recreation facilities such as the marinas, paddle access sites, and the Ohio River.
- Add a description and link to the Ohio River Recreation Trail on all of the relevant websites and social media sites to help cross promote the Ohio River as a destination corridor for outdoor recreation.
- Continue to emphasize Aurora’s unique location on the Ohio River and what that means for connecting communities, recreation, multi-day destination trips, river history and influence on what Aurora has to offer!

### Walkability/Bikeability

- Encourage local business to seek a Bicycle Friendly Business Designation: [www.bikeleague.org/business](http://www.bikeleague.org/business)
- Create and adopt a Bike/Pedestrian Master Plan for the city of Aurora that complies with the Indiana Department of Transportation standards. Plan and evaluate how to connect all of the marinas, parks, neighborhoods, and schools to the historic business district with sidewalks and trails. Once a Bike Ped

Master Plan is adopted by a community and submitted to the state DOT any future state highway improvements will need to consider and potentially include the sidewalk or trail needs of the community. (See Appendix C List of Resources - Dept. of Transportation Bike & Pedestrian Planning, Indiana weblink for more information.)

- Support and explore a regional & county wide trails plan that includes bicycle touring opportunities that connect the City of Aurora to other communities. STRAVA Heat Maps can provide background on where cyclists are currently riding in the region. (See Appendix C for link)
- Check out the bikeability checklist for ideas items that a community can do to improve bike opportunities. (See Appendix C List of Resources, Bikeability Checklist)
- Explore opportunities to designate and sign easy on road bike routes or create protected bike lanes where it can be done.
- Create pop-up temporary bike lanes so people can see the possibilities.
- Hold events that feature the opportunities to be more bikeable/walkable - temporarily close streets for Walk and Roll or Saturday strolls. Activate closed streets with events, vendors and partner activities.

#### **Immediate Action Items** (Low Hanging Fruit):

- Update ORRT Digital Guide with local businesses/services:  
<https://www.ohioriverrecreationtrail.org/digital-guide>
- Partner with the ORRT organization:  
<https://www.ohioriverrecreationtrail.org/become-a-partner>
- Enroll in the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail Community Partner Program:  
<https://lewisandclark.travel/partner-community-program/>
- Utilize the photographs from the community visit by the professional photographers, Joe Wolek and John Nation, in future outdoor recreation information website updates.
- Add bike racks near service facilities in the city to welcome the cycling community.
- Schedule a popup event or a meet up group to walk and/or bike the riverfront area and it's connections to downtown to discuss the questions and ideas in this RTR report with others to get more input and develop support

#### **Short Term Ideas to Pursue**

- Create joint tourism/marketing efforts with other Ohio River Cities (Lawrenceburg, Rising Sun, Petersburg, Boone County, Ky etc.) Promoting all of the many recreation assets in the region.
- Create an annual paddle/pedal event with neighboring communities utilizing the Dearborn Trail.
- Explore options to expand the online marketing of the recreation assets in the community.
- Consider placing more emphasis on what visitors can do on the river in Aurora by:
  - o Providing welcoming signage along the river for transient boaters and paddlers.
  - o Providing wayfinding signage at the river to encourage boaters and paddlers to explore downtown Aurora.
  - o Improving wayfinding signage to existing amenities and parks.
  - o Providing wayfinding signage along US 50 directing visitors to the Ohio River, Aurora's riverfront parks and their amenities.
  - o Promoting the river for outdoor adventure recreation.
  - o Providing wayfinding signage to Waterways Park and the Hogan Creek Canoe / Kayak ramp.
  - o Providing primitive camping area for "through" paddlers and bicyclists (Waterways Park).

- Consider placing more emphasis on bicycling in and around Aurora by:
  - o Providing additional bike racks.
  - o Providing signage for bike lanes and share the road infrastructure.
  - o Developing some “loop routes” or safe routes that connect points of interest.
  - o Creating a “passport” to encourage residents and visitors to walk, bike and engage with local sites and businesses (or a scavenger hunt).
  - o Consider installing charging stations for electric bikes and bicycle repair stations in the downtown area, Dearborn Trail and at the riverfront parks.
- Engage local participation in the ORSCANCO River Sweep efforts.

### **Long Term Ideas to Pursue**

- Complete the Aurora Riverfront Vision Plan to link trails and add riverfront parks.
- Create lockable storage facilities for the bicycles, boats, kayaks, and canoes so visitors can shop and eat!
- Create transient dock facilities (Up to 12 hours) convenient to and linked to the historic downtown area. This will encourage boaters to stop and explore Aurora.
- Work with the Southeastern Indiana Port Authority (SIRPA). Their early strategic planning has indicated some desire for the support of recreation projects.
- Consider any long-range planning and how to connect to other trails and communities in the county, in the state or across the river.
- Explore new bicycling connections to Aurora
  - o Connect the two sections of the Dearborn Trail (northern & southern) via a downtown connector – either separated multi-use trail or a shared roadway system.
  - o Link Aurora (Dearborn Trail) to Rising Sun via a new bike trail.
- Plan for future repairs and upgrades to Dearborn Trail and its support amenities. (IE: 2-10-year Plan) Benches, interpretive signage, and site amenities all have an expected life cycle. Be prepared to reinvest in this wonderful infrastructure.

### **Additional Ideas to Consider:**

- Consider engaging the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail and including its auto tour signage <https://lewisandclark.travel/>
- Tell Your Story – every community has a unique history. Explore ways to create memorable experiences in your community and on the trails that link to your community.
- Highlight the history and cultural assets of the community. (Websites, signage, walking tour routes, etc.)
- Master plan and implement a true kayak launch and transient dock facility on the river as an NPS-RTCA project. To apply for technical planning assistance please visit the website at [www.np.gov/rtca](http://www.np.gov/rtca)
- Become a motorboat, cycling and paddling destination river town with overnight tent camping, transient docking, safe harbor marinas, paddling/cycling equipment storage and public restrooms with showers.

### **Classic Trip Opportunity:**

- Plan and promote a classic trip opportunity with a paddle from Lawrenceburg to Aurora on the Ohio River and pedal back to Lawrenceburg on the Dearborn Trail as a joint effort with the City of Lawrenceburg.
- Potential Laughery Creek Paddle Trail (7 miles) from IDNR access near Cole Lane to the historic Whipple Bridge public property. Will require a new kayak launch on the Triple Whipple Bridge site.

## Appendix A River Town Review Planning Process

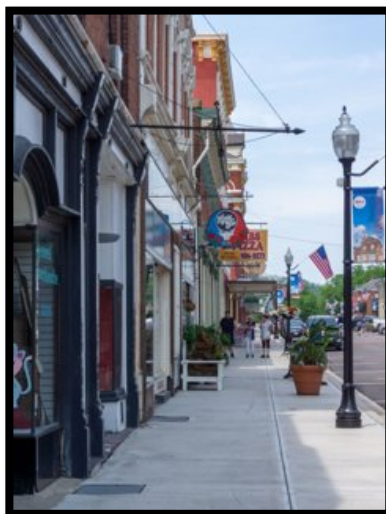
The RTR Team has summarized and created an outline for the steps of the ORRT RTR planning process with a virtual community input workshop. Appendix A contains the summaries of The Request Process, Pre-workshop Tasks, Workshop Tasks and Post Workshop Tasks.

## Appendix B Documentation from River Town Reviews

The RTR Team has compiled all of the information received from the workshop participants for further reference in this document. Appendix B contains the data from the Desktop Reviews, Visitor Assessments, SWOT Analysis, Brainstorming Ideas, Homework, Comments, A Perfect Day in Aurora Stories, and other information collected during the RTR process.

## Appendix C List of Resources for Communities

The RTR Team has compiled a list of resources for communities to seek additional information in the following categories: Outdoor Recreation & Adventure Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Maintaining Small Town Character, Grants and Funding Opportunities, Organizations and Community Assistance Programs. Please refer to Appendix C -List of Resources for Communities for a complete listing with website links.



Photos of the Aurora Area by John Nation & Joe Wolek



## Appendix A

### River Town Review Virtual Planning Process

The following steps outline the Ohio River Recreation Trail River Town Review planning process with a virtual community input workshop.

#### The Request

- **River Town Review Request** – A river town community submits a letter requesting a River Town Review to the Ohio River Recreation Trail Team. Details about requesting assistance can be found at [Ohio River Recreation Trail](#). The river town communities are selected based on meeting the criteria identified on the website.
- **Community Participation Requirements** – If selected, the community agrees to provide a contact person, list of key community members to participate in the RTR workshop, list of community assets, map identifying the location of the recreation facilities, host a tour of the community with the RTR Team and promote/encourage participation in the virtual community input workshop.
- **The ORRT River Town Review Team selects** communities, notifies them, schedules the River Town Review Workshop, and engages the community contact in the pre-workshop planning process.

#### Pre-Workshop Tasks

- **Desk Top Review** - The River Town Review Team will explore the internet presence of the community through a desk top review by several volunteers. They will be exploring the community assets, determining if they have the information necessary to plan an outdoor recreation adventure in the community (Recreation activities, lodging, restaurants, entertainment, etc.) and preparing a summary of their findings.
- **Community Visit & Assessment** – RTR Team members and outdoor recreation volunteers visit the community, explore the recreation assets, participate in a tour with local officials, interview people about the community recreation facilities and prepare a summary of their findings.
- **Prepare RTR Working Agenda & Presentations** – RTR Team identifies presenters and prepares information for the workshop.
- **RTR team and community leads** meet for a pre-workshop confirmation review and recruit people for participation in the workshop.

#### Workshop Tasks

- **Virtual Community Input Workshop** – (COVID Travel Restrictions) The RTR Team facilitates a virtual meeting to share what the fresh eyes have seen and hear from the community. The Team presents opportunities for the community partner with Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail and increase their local businesses exposure on the ORRT Digital Guide. The team gathers community input/ideas through a SWOT Analysis, participants prioritize SWOT ideas, & participants Brainstorm ideas to enhance recreation and tourism in the community. After the workshop the RTR Team collects and distributes the prioritized SWOT Analysis Ideas, the Brainstorming ideas captured during the virtual meeting and sends

the data to the meeting participants. The virtual meeting includes power point presentations and interactive online polling.

- **Workshop Participants Homework** – The workshop participants are asked to review the prioritized SWOT ideas and the list of brainstorming ideas generated during the workshop. They are asked to identify their top three short-term and long-term ideas to pursue from the lists, visit websites and describe a what a perfect day for a visitor in my community is. This information is returned to the RTR Team to be reviewed and analyzed as additional input to consider for recommendations.

### **Post Workshop Tasks**

- **Report Out** – The RTR Team assembles all of the information collected from the desktop reviews, site visits, and community input to prepare a summary of recommendations. The collected data and a List of Resources for Communities are included as appendix items with the summary.
- **RTR Team and all RTR communities** convene for a River Town Review Summit to share challenges, successes and ideas for future collaboration.

*Templates have been created to help record the information, document the procedures, and guide the River Town Review process.*

# Aurora, Indiana

## River Town Review

### Appendix B: Background & Supporting Materials



Ohio River Recreation Trail Team  
River Town Review

A Collaboration of:  
Ohio River Recreation Trail Partners  
Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail Experience  
National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation  
Assistance Program

Summary Report Prepared by:

Andrea Irland  
Russell Clark  
Helen Siewers  
Michael Shilling

*Fresh Eyes on Enhancing Tourism & Outdoor Recreation in your Community*





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# Application Letter



Monday, August 17, 2020

National Park Service

Attn: Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Field Staff Mr. Russell Clark and Mrs. Andrea Irland  
russell\_clark@nps.gov and andrea\_irland.nps.gov

**Re: Letter requesting River Town Review assistance for Dearborn County, Indiana region**

To Whom It May Concern,

Our organization, One Dearborn, Inc., is the central economic development office for Dearborn County, Indiana. We play several roles including attracting and retaining new business, leading quality of place projects, supporting efforts to grow population in our county and the state, and advocating for more housing options in order to meet the workforce demands of our existing employers and those who may come in the future.

I am writing this letter of interest on behalf of Dearborn County Convention Visitors & Tourism Bureau, City of Lawrenceburg, and Main Street Aurora to express the desire of these stakeholders to work as a unified region in the River Town Review.

#### **Why do our communities want this review?**

The Ohio River is a magnificent natural resource which is closely tied to the identity, history and future of Dearborn County and its river cities, Lawrenceburg and Aurora. Although the river impacts many aspects of residents' lives – providing a public water source and means of commerce – it may not currently be achieving its full potential for outdoor recreation.

Dearborn County is a place known to locals and visitors for year-round recreation. Perfect North Slopes ski area, located along tributary Tanners Creek, brings hundreds of thousands of visitors to the county annually. Hollywood Casino Lawrenceburg, a riverboat on the Ohio, provides hundreds of jobs and supplemental local tax revenue. Hillforest Mansion Victorian House Museum is a historic home built on a hillside providing a panoramic view of the river's bend at Aurora.

But direct enjoyment of the river for recreation may be limited by Lawrenceburg's flood protection river levee as well as few accessible ramps along the river for kayakers and canoers to put in and pull out. A need for housing in our county and cities may be creatively addressed with residences offering direct access to the river and unique, picturesque views. The health benefits of added outdoor recreation opportunities cannot be understated. Of course, Dearborn County's above-

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average reliance on its tourism economy could directly benefit from better amenities and marketing of the United States' 10<sup>th</sup> longest river.

There may be other shortcomings in need of investigation and solutions. One Dearborn, Inc., the Dearborn County Convention Visitors & Tourism Bureau and cities of Lawrenceburg and Aurora – the latter three existing partners in the Ohio River Recreation Trail – submit this request together in a spirit of partnership. We hope to initiate a conversation with the National Park Service and Ohio River Recreation Trail River Town Review program's experts to determine if the program can help achieve the overarching goal of taking Ohio River recreation in Dearborn County to the next level.

Your expert analysis and recommendations will allow our county and river cities to identify these challenges and opportunities, then provide recommendations toward overcoming and achieving them.

**What are your anticipated outcomes?**

Our region believes the River Town Review program could better inform local planning efforts as it pertains to downtown redevelopment, infrastructure management, housing and marketing.

The Lawrenceburg Redevelopment Commission is currently executing a downtown business attraction and marketing plan with Cincinnati-based consultant Urban Fast Forward. Findings and recommendations of the River Town Review's professional planners may lend deeper perspective and better inform the LRC's efforts.

Similarly, the City of Aurora has an active Main Street Aurora organization which organizes events and marketing supportive of small businesses in the historic downtown. City leaders also have stated a desire to grow population in the city's limited footprint, with some of the best opportunities perhaps along the river or its tributary Hogan Creek.

In 2020, One Dearborn engaged Ohio River Recreation Trail steering committee member Jack Sutton, an local resident, to conduct a county-wide trails assessment. This recently completed report may be a jumping off point for a potential county-wide trails strategic plan. With arguably the county's best trail, the Dearborn Trail between Lawrenceburg and Aurora, along the banks of the Ohio River, this program's findings could better inform any trails strategic plan.

There could also be great value in sharing and learning between Ohio River communities. A regional partnership in this program as proposed in this letter is nod to that. A partnership between Aurora and Lawrenceburg led to creation of the Dearborn Trail for walking and biking recreation. The potential may exist for a "water trail" between the cities. On a larger scale, with Cincinnati

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upstream and Rising Sun downstream, what synergistic opportunities might we cooperatively identify? We agree that the 2021 River Town Review Summit event can identify such opportunities.

Our local stakeholders would also hope to learn about funding and grant opportunities to support water recreation. This program's experts may be able to share this knowledge and identify which opportunities make the most sense for various projects.

#### **What are your communities' biggest assets?**

The Ohio River and its tributaries – Tanners Creek, Hogan Creek, Laughery Creek – are significant natural resources. Many assets and opportunities rest along these waterways in Dearborn County.

Historic downtown business districts are an enormous piece of Dearborn County's future growth and success. Downtown Lawrenceburg has received much investment by the City of Lawrenceburg over the past two decades with Lawrenceburg Main Street supporting businesses in various ways. A new \$6 million Lawrenceburg Civic Park is just a few hundred feet from the Ohio River, though buffered by the river levee.

Aurora's downtown also boasts a number of small businesses, similarly supported by Main Street Aurora. There is no levee hill blocking views and easy access to the river, meaning the city is more flood-prone. Yet Aurora proudly embraces its identity as a river city. Lesko Park and its walking path are a popular spot for visitors to get a panoramic view of the river. Aurora has also introduced a new park, Gabbard Riverfront Park, just a stone's throw from the water's edge.

The Dearborn Trail is a major asset in promoting outdoor recreation and providing an exercise venue for the public in warmer months. It runs atop Lawrenceburg's river levee, then follows an active railroad south to Aurora, where walkers, runners and bicyclists are greeted by the newer Aurora Dog Park.

An economic asset on the Ohio River is the site of the decommissioned AEP Tanners Creek Power Plant in Lawrenceburg. This 725-acre site has been proposed for Indiana's fourth inland port. Existing infrastructure from the power plant – these include pilons in the river and railway – and being within the Cincinnati metropolitan area lend credence to the idea. The site is currently under contract to be sold to Ports of Indiana. A brownfield redevelopment company is in the process of closing various coal fly ash landfills.

Other related or outdoor recreation assets in Dearborn County include the aforementioned tributaries, Lawrenceburg Speedway, Riverwatch Restaurant on the Ohio River in Lawrenceburg, Perfect North Slopes ski area, the Oxbow wildlife conservation area, a handful of boat marinas and orchards.

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**Who will be the main contact to work with the River Town Review Team?**

Mike Perleberg, Director of Marketing and Community Projects with One Dearborn, Inc., will serve as the main local contact for the River Town Review Team as it pertains to this regional group. One Dearborn is a 501c6 non-profit organization designated as the local economic development organization (LEDO) in Dearborn County.

Founded in 2017, One Dearborn engaged local county, city and town stakeholders from across the county to create the Dearborn County Regional Economic Development Action Plan (link: [www.1dearborn.org/reports](http://www.1dearborn.org/reports)). Using existing community plans and stakeholder input, shared opportunities and challenges were identified and prioritized in determining the report's Big 8 Economic Development Drivers. Among the Big 8 drivers are downtown redevelopment, tourism & culture, and trail connectivity – three areas which the River Town Review program may focus its analysis and recommendations.

Perleberg has been a member of the Dearborn County community for 13 years. Professionally, he served as the local news director of Lawrenceburg-based radio station Eagle Country 99.3 (WSCH), developing relationships with various public officials and non-profit leaders and a firm understanding of challenges and opportunities within various municipalities. He joined One Dearborn in October 2019 to launch a new career advancing economic development initiatives such as business attraction, business retention, housing, and marketing/branding of the county. His work in community development includes supporting the Sutton trails report, rural broadband, and enhancing communication between non-profits.

Contact information: Mike Perleberg  
Phone: 513-256-1843  
Email: [mperleberg@1dearborn.org](mailto:mperleberg@1dearborn.org)

**Who will be invited to participate?**

**Aurora:**

Mark Drury, Mayor of Aurora  
Derek Walker, Aurora City Manager  
Nancy Fahey Tuner, Director, Main Street Aurora  
Members of Aurora City Council  
Members of Aurora Park Board  
Members of Main Street Aurora Board of Directors

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**Lawrenceburg:**

Kelly Mollaun, Mayor of Lawrenceburg  
Guinevere Emery, City of Lawrenceburg Communications Director  
Bryan Messmore, Lawrenceburg Redevelopment Director  
Kathleen Norris, Urban Fast Forward – city consultant  
Michelle Cone, Director, Lawrenceburg Main Street  
Members of Lawrenceburg City Council  
Members of Lawrenceburg Parks & Playgrounds Board

**Dearborn County Convention Visitors & Tourism Bureau (DCCVTB):**

Debbie Smith, Executive Director, DCCVTB  
Board members of DCCVTB

**One Dearborn:**

Terri Randall, President and CEO  
Mike Perleberg, Director of Marketing and Community Projects  
Jack Sutton, trails consultant to One Dearborn

**Others:**

Mark McCormack, Director, Dearborn County Planning & Zoning  
Meg Poehlman, Executive Administrator, Oxbow, Inc.

**Does your town agree to provide information, stakeholder participation and host meetings, if selected?**

One Dearborn has engaged key stakeholders in Aurora, Lawrenceburg and at DCCVTB about River Town Review. The two-page River Town Review overview document was provided to those stakeholders to ensure they had a general understanding of the program and information which will be needed by the review team. Properly informed of the program, each community and organization pledged support for a regional partnership to submit this letter of intent.

Through our current and past work as the LEDO for Dearborn County, One Dearborn is equipped to provide various strategic plans, maps, marketing materials, historical context, and other information to the review team as needed.

One Dearborn can run point to coordinate and communicate meeting dates, deadlines and other important information between city and DCCVTB contacts and the review team. We maintain a respected and friendly relationship with these local stakeholders.

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Small to medium-sized meetings are frequently hosted by One Dearborn. The organization has an office conveniently located at Ivy Tech Community College's Lawrenceburg Lakefront Campus capable of hosting small gatherings of up to 10 people with audio and visual capabilities. Ivy Tech also makes large classrooms available to One Dearborn for larger meetings. The cities of Aurora and Lawrenceburg and DCCVTB also have their respective meeting spaces which could be available. If necessary or more convenient, One Dearborn does maintain a Zoom premium account for hosting virtual video conferences with up to 100 participants which we would offer for purposed of the River Town Review.

Thank you for consideration the addition of the Lawrenceburg-Aurora Ohio River Region to the National Park Service and Ohio River Recreation Trail River Town Review program in 2020. While there are many assets, events and trends bringing citizens to have a closer relationship with our portion of the Ohio River, we believe more can be done to fully tap into the unique opportunities the river provides for safe, responsible and enjoyable outdoor recreation and tourism.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Perleberg".

Mike Perleberg  
Director of Marketing and Community Projects  
One Dearborn, Inc.  
500 Industrial Drive, Suite 2110, Lawrenceburg, IN 47025  
513-256-1843  
mperleberg@1dearborn.org

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## Digital Desktop Review for Aurora

Four volunteers spent about one hour each on-line to see what they could find out about Aurora as if they were thinking of visiting for a day or overnight – lodging, restaurants, breweries/wineries, historical sites, attractions, events, outdoor recreation opportunities, etc.

[Overall Feedback from reviewers...](#)

### Team Review Summary

Dearborn County, IN  
ORRT Team Summary Review  
5/4/2021

As of May 4, 2021, four individuals have completed Desk Top Reviews for Dearborn County / Lawrenceburg/Aurora. Team members included a representative from Thomas More University, and volunteers of the ORRT.

The following is a high-level summary of the findings

[www.Dearborncounty.org](http://www.Dearborncounty.org)

Primarily a government function web site with limited links to recreation. Recreation tab at the top of the page but only links to Dearborn County parks. Does use a picture of Perfect North Slopes as the header. No apparent links to other recreation or tourism on the page.

[www.visitsoutheastindiana.com](http://www.visitsoutheastindiana.com)

This web site is well done and highlights shopping, gaming, racing, dining, and lodging front and center on the opening page with lots of visually engaging pictures.

Under the “Things to Do list” at the bottom of the page, there is the “*Outdoor Recreation link*”. It appears Dearborn County has quite the number of outdoor activities and opportunities including: cycling, golf, skiing, boating, Oxbow, Inc., Dearborn Trail, and the bike share program.

The “Fun on the Water” link goes to the Marina listings.





- There are 10 local marinas listed, however there are no links to their web or FB sites and no mention of the amenities they offer such as launch ramp availability, restrooms, overnight accommodations, distances to amenities, transient dockage, etc. Might be good to have a vicinity map showing their locations.
- Adding links to Ohio River information, i.e., stage, velocity, water quality, fishing tournaments, regattas, riverfront festivals, etc. might be helpful for out-of-town boaters.
- It might also be nice to provide copy specifically welcoming and inviting boaters to come to Dearborn County/Lawrenceburg/ Aurora, In.

<https://www.thinklawrenceburg.com> -

This is a broad ranging website that includes tabs for residents, local government, Business, Lawrenceburg Main Street, and visitors.

- The “Visitors” tab opens with quick links at the top to area attractions, festivals, parks, and the Dearborn County Tourism website.
- Main Street tab at the top connects to business district website that includes a calendar of events, links to restaurants. However, the Ohio River is not referenced as an attraction or amenity on the edge of town.
- Bike share details are under the Dearborn Trails link. There may be value in elevating the bike share program to the attractions page.

<https://aurora.in.us/main-street-who-we-are.html> -

This is also a broad ranging website that includes tabs for government services, Main Street Aurora, parks and recreation, economic development as well as business services in the community. The “Who We Are” page is very bright with images showing its historical connection to the Ohio River.

- Parks and recreation tab on top has links to the parks, Aurora Recreation Community Center, the bike share program, marinas, and groups together golf, skiing, hunting, and fishing.
  - Parks has big bright pictures of each park and those along the river include the river as a central theme. Dearborn trail is included with pictures showing it in multiple seasons
  - Bike Share program has link to the website and details about where to rent a bike and detailed information about how to do it.

<https://visitindiana.com/things-to-do/54713-dearborn-county-convention-visitor-and-tourism-bureau> -

State tourism website with a link to [visitsoutheastindiana.com](http://visitsoutheastindiana.com). Very general with google map and highlighted links to dining and lodging

Social Media Platforms Visited included:

[www.Yelp.com](http://www.Yelp.com)

[www.Tripadvisor.com](http://www.Tripadvisor.com)

[www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

## Desk Top Review – D. Rutter

- Prior to visiting a River Town, the "Visitors" should review the application submitted for a River Town Review and make notes of any important information.
- Review of social media, websites, articles, and existing tourism information. Look for connections to the river and outdoor recreation.
  - Dearborncounty.org – Primarily a government function page with limited links to recreation. Recreation tab at the top of the page but only links to Dearborn County parks. Does use a picture of Perfect North Slopes as the header. No apparent links to other recreation or tourism on the page.
  - Visitsoutheastindiana.com – Shopping, gaming, racing, dining, and lodging front and center on the page. Lots of pictures and visually engaging. Load time was very slow for the site and pages.
    - Link in small print on the bottom for outdoor recreation. This page highlights the bike share program in the image, but aspect ratio of the picture is not maintained resulting in a distorted image. Descriptions for cycling, golf, skiing, Oxbow, Inc., and water with links to some. The water link lists the marinas and contact information. Might be good to have a map showing their locations.
    - I would encourage a description and link to the ORRT website
  - <https://visitindiana.com/things-to-do/54713-dearborn-county-convention-visitor-and-tourism-bureau> - State tourism website with a link to visitsoutheastindiana.com. Very general with google map and highlighted links to dining and lodging
  - <https://www.thinklawrenceburg.com> - Broad ranging website that includes tabs for residents, local government, Business, Lawrenceburg Main Street, and visitors.
    - Visitor's tab opens with quick links at the top to area attractions, festivals, parks, and the Dearborn County Tourism website. No difference between Attractions and Major Area Attractions. Also provides a nice introduction to the community and its history. The history is the first place I have seen any mention of the river.
    - Main Street tab at the top connects to business district website that includes a calendar of events, links to restaurants. Wouldn't know there is a river on the edge of town from this. No links to the trail or bike share program. River is not listed as an attraction.
    - Bike share details are under the Dearborn Trails link. I would recommend elevating the bike share program to the attractions page.
  - <https://aurora.in.us/main-street-who-we-are.html> - Main page is very bright with images showing its historical connection to the river.
    - Parks and recreation tab on top has links to the parks, Aurora Recreation Community Center, the bike share program, marinas, and groups together golf, skiing, hunting, and fishing.
      - Parks has big bright pictures of each park and those along the river include the river as a central theme. Dearborn trail is included with pictures showing it in multiple seasons
      - Bike Share program has link to the website and details about where to rent a bike and detailed information about how to do it.
      - The hunting and fishing information is limited but has a link to IDNR. However, that takes the user to a statewide site. Now I am no longer connected to Dearborn County and don't have any idea where I could hunt or fish.

- Dearborn County – Southeast Indiana Facebook page – Seems to be kept fresh with new posts every few days.
  - Videos show cycling
  - Posts include lots of local updates on events and many posts regarding Perfect North Slopes
  - Posts on river flooding closing portions of the Dearborn Trail
  - Many photos that include the river
- Dearborn County Southeast Indiana Instagram – Not sure who is running this account but many posts by Dearborn county parks. Very few people under the age of 35 use Facebook for anything other than keeping up with family. Instagram is used much more along with snapchat and TikTok. These are the platforms to be creating content if you want to reach them. They also watch very little TV. Not much on the river.

## Desk Top Review – J. Schulte

### **Desktop Review, Dearborn County, Lawrenceburg, and Aurora Indiana**

This review has been conducted to assess the availability of information to those planning to participate in an adventure on and along the Ohio River Recreational Trail.

The Ohio River Recreational Trail has been developed to provide opportunities for adventurers to safely plan and enjoy the majesty of the Ohio River and the towns and people that call this amazing resource home. The backbone of the Ohio River Recreation Trail is the Digital Guide to the Ohio River. This guide is a focused resource for those interested in participating in an Ohio River-oriented experience. But like any information resource, it is only as good as the information it contains. The Digital Guide provides an amazing amount of “static” information such as locations of boat ramps, towns, tributaries, etc., but it is also a host site for links to communities and businesses located along the trail to support their economies and promote economic growth. As such, ORRT volunteer staff undertake evaluations of available on-line information sources to assess the availability of river-oriented information to support River Trail participants, particularly from the riverside/river-use perspective.

Ideally, community websites would provide information that would welcome boaters, be they power boaters or paddlers, to come and explore their communities (and support their economies). The amenities needed so boaters can safely stop, moor, or otherwise secure their boat, then spend time exploring your community, consists of the following:

1. Marinas and transient dockage information for powerboats
2. Beaches, landings, haul-out areas or dedicated and secure launch facilities for paddle craft, i.e., canoes, kayaks, and stand-up paddle boards
3. Public restroom location and availability
4. Readily available and accurate information on the location and distances to local amenities, i.e., shops, restaurants, stores, medical services, etc.
5. Locations of campgrounds and other local overnight accommodations
6. Current listings and locations for community events
7. Again, the Ohio River Digital Guide is a host site for links to communities and businesses located along the ORRT to support their economies and promote economic growth. Social media content

that provides the above referenced information will undoubtedly be attractive to the Ohio River boating community.

It is from the boating community perspective that the content found on the following websites has been evaluated.

Information Sources Reviewed:

- a. <https://visitindiana.com/things-to-do/54713-dearborn-county-convention-visitor-and-tourism-bureau>
- b. <https://www.thinklawrenceburg.com/government/>
- c. <https://aurora.in.us/main-street-who-we-are.html>

#### Overall Assessment

The Dearborn County, Lawrenceburg, Aurora area has a lot to offer Ohio River Recreational Trail users. However, consideration needs to be given to social media platform designs and content to attract and accommodate river-oriented business.

#### Website Information and Presentation

**Dearborn County** <https://visitindiana.com/things-to-do/54713-dearborn-county-convention-visitor-and-tourism-bureau>

This website presents visitor information specifically for Dearborn County. Working through the Things to Do list, I focused on the Outdoor Recreation link. Dearborn County has quite the litany of outdoor activities and opportunities. One link, Fun on the Water, took me to the Marina listings.

- There are 10 local marinas listed, however there are no links to their web or FB sites and no mention of the amenities they offer such as launch ramp availability, restrooms, overnight accommodations, distances to amenities, transient dockage, etc.
- I could not find a reference or statement regarding the fact that Dearborn County has 7.4 miles of frontage on the Ohio River
- There were no links to Ohio River information, i.e., stage, velocity, water quality, fishing tournaments, regattas, riverfront festivals, etc.
- Did not see any copy specifically welcoming and inviting boaters to come to Dearborn County/Lawrenceburg/ Aurora, In.

**City of Lawrenceburg** <https://www.thinklawrenceburg.com>

On this site I navigated to the Attractions link and found only one Ohio River oriented link, Tanners Creek boat ramp. However, upon reading the ramp description, I found what I believe are gross inaccuracies in the description, “offers transient docking available for boats up to 70 ft in length along with slips.”. Having personally used this ramp for many, many years I am unaware of any docking facilities on Tanners Creek other than those at the boat ramp, which are to accommodate launching activities only. And while a FB link is listed, neither it nor the fishing tournament schedule link are functional.

Continuing to the Parks and Recreation link, I went to the Dearborn Trails description only to find the “For more information” link not functional.

I found no information on the “Veterans Park” or the area at the end of Walnut Street as a good Ohio River viewpoint, nor was there any mention of Riverwatch restaurant and dockage.

I also went to the Fall Fest link only to find the links for both parties listed to be non-functional.

**City of Aurora:** <https://aurora.in.us/main-street-who-we-are.html>

The City of Aurora’s website is “quaint”. And knowing all the boat-oriented access via Hidden Harbor and the Hogan Creek marina complex I found no open invitation for boaters to come to Aurora and enjoy the day or weekend. Aurora does have a dedicated paddle craft launch facility at Waterways Park, but no other information regarding amenities, other than mention of a shelter, is provided for this location. Aurora does have a Local Marinas page but only one marina has a link associated with it. Other facilities that are listed have links or FB pages (and Aurora Harbor is now Hidden Harbor, LLC).

Of the three websites reviewed, this is the only site that references fishing and the Ohio river.

While Dearborn Trail is listed on the Parks link, it has no narrative.

#### Summary

While the Dearborn/Lawrenceburg/Aurora area has a tremendous amount to offer visitors, their social media offerings could benefit them greatly by embracing a river-centric viewpoint. As the use and popularity of the Ohio River Recreation Trail grows, we will continue to work with river communities to enhance their visibility to the ORRT user community.

## Desk Top Review – J. Sutton

Dearborn County, IN

Sutton Review

5/4/2021

[www.Dearborncounty.org](http://www.Dearborncounty.org)

This web site is traditional web site serving county government services. Its primary purpose is to assist residents with utilizing county wide public services. The recreation tab is dedicated to the local county park system.

[www.visitsoutheastindiana.com](http://www.visitsoutheastindiana.com)

This web site has a bright and cheerful opening page that focuses on Hollywood Casino, the racetrack, Hillforest, dining and lodging. There is a “Things to Do list” tab at the bottom of the page, with an “*Outdoor Recreation link*”. Perfect Ski Slopes is prominently displayed at the top of the page. Does this photo change out during the summer? There is a “Bike Southeast Indiana” pdf brochure providing general tourism info. But it does not offer recommended rides or routes and has limited information on the Dearborn Trail.

<https://www.thinklawrenceburg.com> -

This web site is a combination government services web site and tourism / main street type web site. It has an abundant amount of information and is easy to navigate. It has extremely attractive photographs! Aside from several aerial photographs, it is not clear just how close downtown Lawrenceburg is to the Ohio River. This seems

like a missed opportunity. The Attractions link under the Visitors link does not identify the Ohio River nor the Levee Walk / Verdin Bell Clock Tower at the end of Walnut Street as an attraction.

<https://aurora.in.us/main-street-who-we-are.html> -

This is also a broad ranging website that includes tabs for government services, Main Street Aurora, parks and recreation, economic development as well as business services in the community. The “Who We Are” page is welcoming with an image showing the Michael Balzer painting of the Aurora Riverfront. This immediately tells the visitor the Aurora is a “River Town”! The park and recreation tab is comprehensive and has helpful photos of each park. While there is mention of a canoe launch at Waterways Park, it might be nice to add a photo of the launch with kayaks and canoes in use.

#### **Overall Findings of Desk Top Review – Suggestions to Consider**

Overall, the Lawrenceburg/Aurora/Dearborn County related web sites and crowdsourcing sites give a good summation of the businesses and events happening in the communities and sometimes along the Ohio River. The websites are modern and appealing.

Suggestions to consider include:

Consider placing more emphasis on what you can do on and adjacent to the Ohio River. With respect to the web sites and web pages geared toward the City of Lawrenceburg, more emphasis could focus on Lawrenceburg being immediately adjacent to the river. While it is mentioned somewhat, the River is not featured as a regional attraction.

With respect to Aurora, more emphasis could focus on the existing amenities associated with the River including the canoe and kayak launch at Waterways Park and the numerous marinas in and near Aurora. From an “out of town” paddler or boater’s point of view, this type of information is not easily found on the Aurora Website.

On all web sites and social media platforms- Consider placing more emphasis on the Dearborn Trail and its proximity to the Ohio River. With over 5 miles of Dearborn Trail connecting two beautiful Indiana River Towns, this presents a wonderful opportunity to attract more outdoor adventure enthusiasts to visit Dearborn County for a weekend or even longer.

Finally, we would encourage a description and link to the Ohio River Recreation Trail <https://www.ohioriverrecreationtrail.org/> on all relevant web sites and social media sites to help cross promote the Ohio River as a destination corridor.

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## Desk Top Review – Woeste

Look at one social media site: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter. How many followers? What is the most recent post? How often updated? Are there photos? Any events?

- Facebook page: Dearborn County – Southeast Indiana
- 16,487 followers
- Repost about reopening valet for the Hollywood Casino Lawrenceburg
- Updated every couple of days
- Yes, there are a ton of photos
- Upcoming events that were reposted:
  - Dillsboro Homecoming Festival
  - Lawrenceburg Civic Park: Music on the River
- No new events, but there were a ton of past events such as the Fall Haul, Corks and Cookies, etc.

Visit the town’s website

Find one positive story from a news source (newspaper, tv, magazine, blog, etc.)

- <https://www.eaglecountryonline.com/news/local-news/purdue-university-extension-to-host-inaugural-agriculture-outlook/>

Find one story about Covid impacts and how it is affecting the town

- <https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/indiana/dearborn-county>

Look at crowdsourced site for reviews (trip advisor, yelp, etc.) What is consistently reviewed well or makes the top ten list?

- TripAdvisor: [https://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g37259-Lawrenceburg\\_Indiana-Vacations.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g37259-Lawrenceburg_Indiana-Vacations.html)
  - Reviews say that the Dearborn County area is full of nature, recreational activities such as hiking, fishing, kayaking, etc., great views of the Ohio River, historical sites, great eateries, local shops, Perfect North Slopes within a few miles, and the small local appeal.

If you were planning a trip with your friends...

What is one significant historical or cultural event that took place in the town that you would share?

- One significant historical event or site that took place in the town that is of interest would be to go to the Veraestau Historic Site. This historic building was built in 1838 and stands beautifully with its

massive architectural history. It overlooks a long stretch of the Ohio River and has huge trees that are elegant in style.

Where would you stay? Where would you eat?

- I would stay at one of the high rated hotels such as the Double Tree or Comfort Inn. I would eat at one of the local restaurants or pizza places in town. The reviews on pizza were very good in this area!

What tourist attraction would you want to visit?

- A tourist attraction I would want to visit is Perfect North Slopes. They had many different ski and snowboarding slopes, bunny hills for kids or beginners, and snow tubing.

What outdoor recreation would you do?

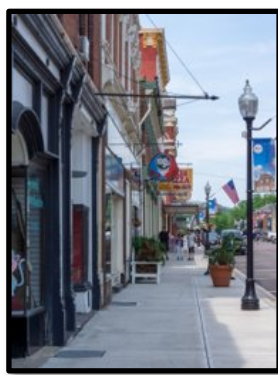
- An outdoor recreation activity I would do is to find a park. I would want to visit a local park and go fishing, kayaking, hiking, and experience nature in a peaceful environment.







Community Visit Photos



Photographs provided by Joe Wolek and John Nation



## Aurora River Town Review Visitor Assessment

Several members of RTR Team visited Aurora to experience the community. Some of the members also have paddled the rivers to experience the local recreation resources. The following documents are the summaries of RTR Team members visits.

### Purpose

The River Town Review Visitor Assessment is a "fresh set of eyes" taking an objective look at your existing conditions and asset inventory as a visitor would see it in relation to the Ohio River Recreation Trail and outdoor recreation opportunities.

### **Aurora- Visitor Assessment Summary**

Assessment team – David Rutter, Jerry Schulte & Jack Sutton

Date: Thursday April 15, 2021

3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Weather – Partly cloudy & cool – 55 degrees.

### **River Connections & Access**

Aurora is a quintessential Rivertown having a vibrant downtown with shops, and restaurants just a short walk from the Ohio River. Known as the “City of Spires”, Aurora’s downtown is home to numerous historic churches, and Hillforest House Museum, a 19<sup>th</sup> century historic home designated as a National Landmark. Lesko Park offers 0.8 miles of multi-use trail (southern leg of the Dearborn Trail) along the river and includes picnic shelters, playground, benches, decorative light standards, interpretive signage, and parking. The park also has a paved ramp leading into the river suitable for canoe and kayak launch access. Gabbard Park is located at the foot of Second Street just across Judiciary Street from Ohio River. The foot of Third Street includes the former ferry boat landing and is used by area boaters for river access and bank fishing. Waterways Park, located at the west end of Moore Street, provides a designated canoe and kayak launch area along Hogan Creek with easy access to the Ohio River.

The Dearborn Trail has two sections in Aurora – the southern 0.8-mile section along Lesko Park and the northern 1.4-mile section that connects the City of Lawrenceburg to Aurora via the Manchester Landing Trail head and George Street. This regional bike trail provides safe walking and biking opportunities with beautiful vistas of the

Ohio River and the wooded hillsides of Boone County, Kentucky. Public restrooms are available at the Manchester Landing Trail Head and Lesko Park. The Manchester Landing Trailhead area also includes a small dog park.

Aurora has several **off-Ohio River** marinas offering private mooring facilities. However, there is currently no public / transient docking facilities located in Aurora.

From a paddlers' point of view, access from the river into downtown Aurora is possible at Lesko Park and the Ferry boat landing. During our visit, we did not notice wayfinding or welcome signs to greet boaters or paddlers from the river.

## Pedestrian and Bicycle Access

Downtown Aurora is very walkable. There is a full complement of sidewalks along the streets and the crosswalks, ADA curb cuts, and site amenities are clean, safe, and welcoming.

While downtown Aurora is generally bikeable for most experienced bike riders, parts of the downtown are hilly and there is considerable through traffic via SR 56. The River City Bike Share program is based both in Aurora and Lawrenceburg and provides bike rental opportunities for residents and visitors alike. Weber's Bike Shop is located at the corner of Main and Third Streets.

One of Aurora's most valuable public recreation assets is the Dearborn Trail. This trail provides a safe walking and bicycling experience and connects the cities of Aurora and Lawrenceburg via an uninterrupted paved multi-use trail.

## Signage, Wayfinding and Site Amenities

Overall signage in the downtown area is consistent and not overbearing – no sign clutter. Entry into Aurora along US 50 has directional signage indicating "Downtown Aurora" and "Ohio River Scenic Byway". There is also a sign indicating the location of the "Dearborn Trail" at the intersection of US 50 and SR 148. We did not see wayfinding type signage indicating direction to the Ohio River from US 50.

Streetscape amenities along the downtown streets such as streetlights, signposts, utility poles, flag holders and event banners were tasteful and in relatively good condition.

## Parking

There is ample parking in the downtown area including off street parking.

## Overall Observations and Suggestions

Aurora leaders should be proud of their town and its amenities. The business district is clean and welcoming, and the Dearborn Trail, Gabbard Park, and Lesko Park are wonderful recreation assets for the community. Opportunities and ideas to consider include:

- Consider placing more emphasis on what visitors can do on the river in Aurora.
  - Provide welcoming signage along the river for transient boaters and paddlers.
  - Provide wayfinding signage at the river to encourage boaters and paddlers to explore downtown Aurora.

- Promote the river for outdoor adventure recreation.
- Provide wayfinding signage to Waterways Park and the Hogan Creek Canoe / Kayak ramp.
- Provide primitive camping area for “through” paddlers and bicyclists.
  - Perhaps at the Waterways Park
- Consider placing more emphasis on bicycling in and around Aurora by:
  - Providing additional bike racks
  - Providing signage for bike lanes and share the road infrastructure.
  - Connect the two sections of the Dearborn Trail (northern & southern) via a downtown connector – either segregated multi-use trail or a shared roadway system.
- Consider providing temporary docking facilities (up to 12 hours) to encourage boaters to stop and explore Aurora.
- Plan for future repairs and upgrades to Dearborn Trail and its support amenities. IE: 2-10-year Plan
  - Benches, interpretive signage, and site amenities all have an expected life cycle. Be prepared to reinvest in this wonderful infrastructure.
- Consider placing wayfinding signage along US 50 directing visitors to the Ohio River and Aurora’s riverfront parks and their amenities.
- Consider engaging the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail <https://lewisandclark.travel/> and its auto tour signage





## Community Meeting

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# RIVER TOWN REVIEW

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## Aurora, IN

May 18, 2021

### Agenda

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 1:00 – 1:05 | Welcome  |
| 1:05 – 1:15 | Big Picture<br><i>Ohio River/ORRT/LECL</i><br><i>RTR process</i><br><i>LECL Geotourism Site &amp; ORRT Digital Guide</i> |
| 1:15 – 2:00 | Tell us about your town<br><i>Strengths</i><br><i>Weaknesses</i><br><i>Opportunities</i><br><i>Threats</i>               |
| 2:00 – 2:20 | Brainstorming  |
| 2:20 – 2:30 | Questions, Wrap up, Next Steps   |



## Participants

### Community Participants

Mike Perleberg: [mperleberg@1dearborn.org](mailto:mperleberg@1dearborn.org)  
Mayor Mark Drury: [mldrury@aurora.in.us](mailto:mldrury@aurora.in.us)  
Debbie Smith: [dsmith@visitsoutheastindiana.com](mailto:dsmith@visitsoutheastindiana.com)  
Nancy Turner: [nancy.turner881212@gmail.com](mailto:nancy.turner881212@gmail.com)  
Kendal Miller: [kendal@enjoyrisingsun.com](mailto:kendal@enjoyrisingsun.com)  
Paige Wassel: [pwassel@indianalandmarks.org](mailto:pwassel@indianalandmarks.org)

### Team Participants

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[d.schimmel@solimarinternational.com](mailto:d.schimmel@solimarinternational.com)  
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Helen Siewers: [Helen\\_Siewers@nps.gov](mailto:Helen_Siewers@nps.gov)  
Michael Shilling: [Michael\\_Schilling@npd.gov](mailto:Michael_Schilling@npd.gov)





# SWOT Analysis

## Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities & Threats

These are the results of the River Town Review conducted via Zoom for Aurora, Indiana, on May 18, 2021. Participants listed the entries via Post-It-Notes in the Mural software. The Images below show the zoom meeting participants and the results of the ideas entered for each of the four categories of the SWOT Analysis. The table on next page lists all of the ideas in each of the categories for your information.



## River Town Review: SWOT Analysis

### Aurora, Dearborn County, Indiana

Double-click to create a new note to record each of your ideas separately  
To enlarge your text, click on your note, then click on "A+" in the toolbar

Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Experience  
Premier On Expedition and Explore New People, Places, and Stories

#### Strengths

- Marines
- Aurora Museum
- City infrastructure for history
- Off-Highway Vehicle Park
- Public Parks
- Aurora Public Library
- Historic Sites
- Blue Trail
- Blue Green
- Blue State
- Blue Town
- Blue River
- Blue State
- Blue River
- Blue State
- Blue River
- Blue State
- Blue River
- Blue State
- Blue River
- Blue State

#### Opportunities

- Compare the Aurora Shawmont Vision Plan to link trails and add important parks
- Link Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail to Dearborn County
- Public kayak rack/storage
- ADD more bike racks
- Kids event for paddling and doing
- Public kayak rack/storage
- ADD a canoe kayak passing event to a nearby river neighbor or destination
- Link Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail to Dearborn County
- Public kayak rack/storage
- ADD a canoe kayak passing event to a nearby river neighbor or destination

#### Weaknesses

- Lack of store accessible to boaters/species for purchasing ice, beer, gas, etc.
- Lack of connection of the two ends of the Dearborn Trail
- Need more awareness for kayaking
- Need more participation from young adults
- Need more awareness for kayaking
- Need more participation from young adults

#### Threats

- US 50 traffic congestion
- Loss of pavement businesses
- Loss of pavement businesses
- Loss of pavement businesses
- Loss of pavement businesses

Aurora, Indiana

B24

River Town Review: Summary Report

# Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities & Threats - Continued

## Aurora, IN SWOT Analysis Results 5/18/21

Mural Whiteboard Comments



STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Riverview off river boat areas</p> <p>Marinas</p> <p>Dearborn Trail</p> <p>Ferry Landing</p> <p>Hillforest</p> <p>Kayaking opportunities river front the greenway</p> <p>Hogan Creek (Ohio River tributary in heart of Aurora)</p> <p>Bike Trail</p> <p>no floodwall</p> <p>Lesko Park</p> <p>Historic downtown 2nd Street</p> <p>National Historic Landmark</p> <p>Laughery Creek (Ohio River tributary south of Aurora at Dearborn-Ohio county line)</p> <p>Many Parks</p> <p>River Cities Bike Share</p> <p>City embraces its history</p> <p>Downtown Charm</p> <p>Having a BikeShop</p> <p>Aurora Mainstreet</p> <p>Downtown restaurants, brewery, ice cream shop</p> <p>Aurora Public Library</p> <p>downtown retail</p> <p>Walkable downtown</p> <p>Wooded Hillside</p> <p>The bend of the Ohio River at Aurora gives a unique view/sightline</p> <p>Proximity to Cincy</p> <p>Friendlyness</p> <p>Historic bridges: George Street Bridge and Triple Whipple Bridge</p>	<p>potential flooding</p> <p>Funding for projects</p> <p>On-river/riverfront docking for boats of any size - this would be beneficial to getting Ohio River users into downtown as most marinas aren't easily accessible/walkable to downtown</p> <p>Docking Facility to help bring more boat traffic</p> <p>No Transient docking near downtown</p> <p>trail connection to all neighborhoods</p> <p>Lack of bike racks</p> <p>Need more amenities for biking... Wayfinding</p> <p>Lack of store accessible to boaters/paddlers for purchasing ice, bait, gas, etc.</p> <p>no primitive camping</p> <p>Lack of connection of the two legs of the Dearborn Trail</p> <p>Trash and debris along the riverbank</p> <p>Need more participation from young adults</p>	<p>Expand the ferry landing to encourage more river traffic</p> <p>Add a canoe/kayak paddling event to a nearby river neighbor or destination</p> <p>river based events</p> <p>Paddle &amp; Pedal event among Aurora, Rising Sun and L'bur</p> <p>New funding available through READI and trails \$ in state budget</p> <p>Improved way finding to Kayak access at waterways Park</p> <p>Complete the Aurora Riverfront Vision Plan to link trails and add riverfront park</p> <p>Add more bike racks</p> <p>Share the Road signage for biking in downtown</p> <p>Southeastern Indiana Regional Port Authority to support public river dockage or other river projects</p> <p>Signage for canoe/kayak launch at Lesko Park and/or ferry landing</p> <p>paddlesport float from aurora to lawrenceburg</p> <p>Kids event for paddling and biking</p> <p>Public kayak rack/storage</p> <p>Link Lesko Park/Dearborn Trail to Ohio County</p> <p>Red White &amp; Boom 4th of July Festival</p>	<p>Flooding the view shed across the river in KY if the land gets developed.</p> <p>Absence of funding for discretionary projects around recreation</p> <p>Environmental Issues at AEP Plant site</p> <p>lack of funds</p> <p>state road blocks (utilizing Lesko Park)</p> <p>Traffic congestion. on US 50</p> <p>Amy corp of engineers road blocks</p> <p>Change Averse Attitudes</p> <p>Loss of downtown businesses</p> <p>Loss of downtown grocery IGA</p> <p>Environmental threat to public drinking water at Tanners Creek AEP site</p> <p>US 50 traffic congestion</p> <p>not enough young people volunteering</p> <p>Economic viability of existing marinas</p> <p>Indiana Destination Development Grant</p>





## Community Brainstorming Ideas

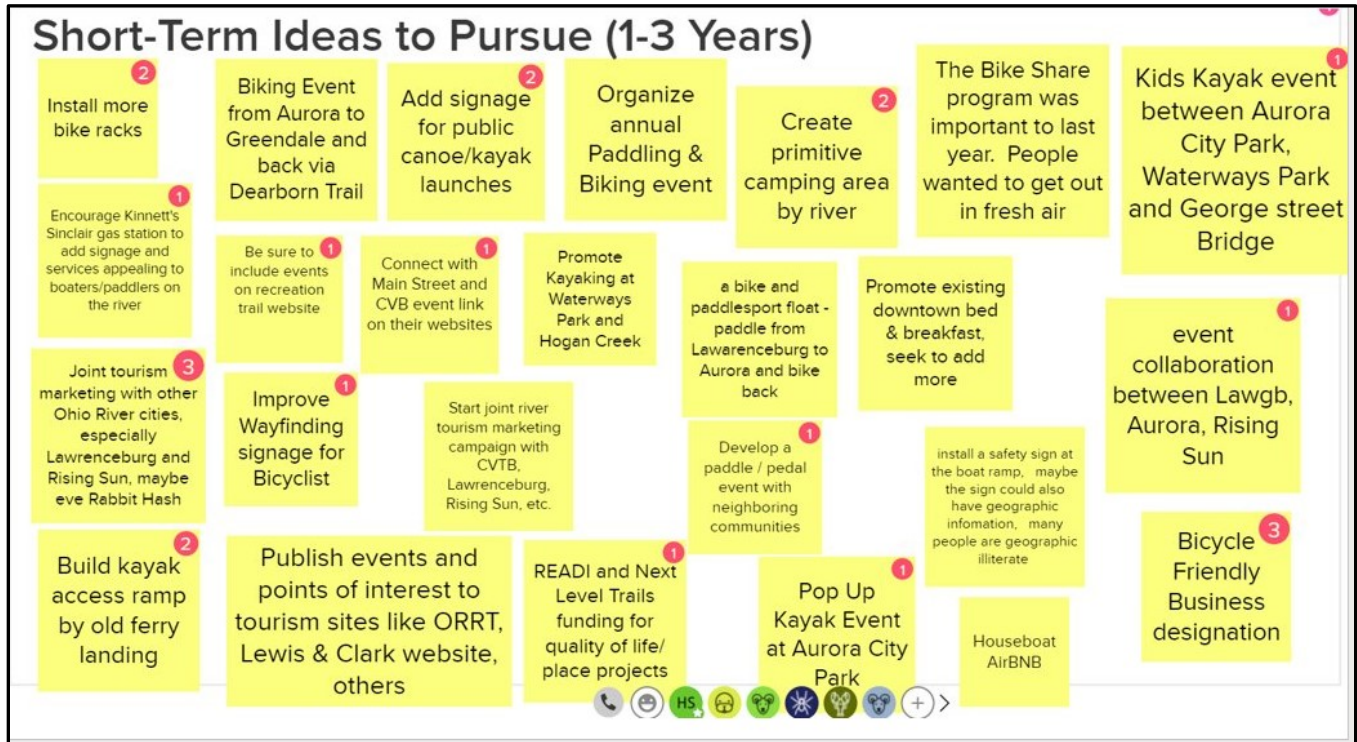
The following list of brainstorming ideas were compiled from the Mural Post-It-Notes input from the May 18, 2021 meeting participants. The highlighted ideas were identified as priority items by the participants.

### Aurora, IN Brainstorming Goals Results 5/18/2021

#### Mural Whiteboard Comments

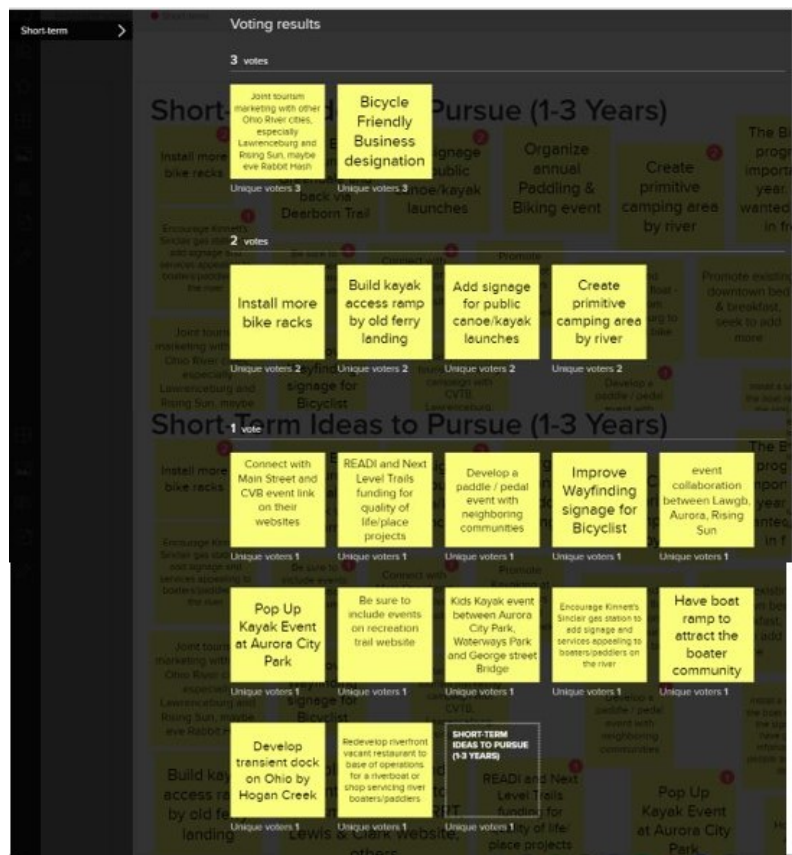
Leverage Southeastern Indiana Regional Port Authority involvement to plan and fund river infrastructure projects like docks, ramps, landings.  
Develop a paddle / pedal event with neighboring communities  
The Bike Share program was important to last year. People wanted to get out in fresh air  
Be sure to include events on recreation trail website  
Build kayak access ramp by old ferry landing  
Improve Wayfinding signage for Bicyclist  
Create primitive camping area by river  
Install more bike racks  
**Have boat ramp to attract the boater community**  
Promote Kayaking at Waterways Park and Hogan Creek  
Organize annual Paddling & Biking event  
work with the state of kentucky and the town of petersburg to preserve Aurora's viewshed  
READI and Next Level Trails funding for quality of life/place projects  
Link Dearborn Trail to Waterways Park under US 50  
Develop transient dock on Ohio by Hogan Creek  
Collaborate with Rising Sun on trail extension  
Biking Event from Aurora to Greendale and back via Dearborn Trail  
**Joint tourism marketing with other Ohio River cities, especially Lawrenceburg and Rising Sun, maybe a bike and paddlesport float - paddle from Lawrenceburg to Aurora and bike back**  
**Link Aurora and Rising Sun via bike trail**  
Add B&B Riverboat cruises to or from Aurora  
Connect with Main Street and CVB event link on their websites  
Redevelop riverfront vacant restaurant to base of operations for a riverboat or shop servicing river boat work to get the Ohio River byway to be more bicycle friendly  
Encourage Kinnett's Sinclair gas station to add signage and services appealing to boaters/paddlers on the river  
**Complete Aurora Riverfront Vision Plan**  
event collaboration between Lawgb, Aurora, Rising Sun  
Promote existing downtown bed & breakfast, seek to add more  
**Bicycle Friendly Business designation**  
install a safety sign at the boat ramp, maybe the sign could also have geographic information, many people are geographic illiterate  
Start joint river tourism marketing campaign with CVTB, Lawrenceburg, Rising Sun, etc.  
Pop Up Kayak Event at Aurora City Park  
Add signage for public canoe/kayak launches  
Kids Kayak event between Aurora City Park, Waterways Park and George street Bridge  
it would be great to have a walking trail from the marina to town  
Publish events and points of interest to tourism sites like ORRT, Lewis & Clark website, others  
Houseboat AirBNB

## Brainstorming Ideas – Continued



## Mural Board Brainstorming Ideas Input Results – Short-Term Ideas for Aurora

### Polling Results to Prioritize Short-Term Ideas for Aurora



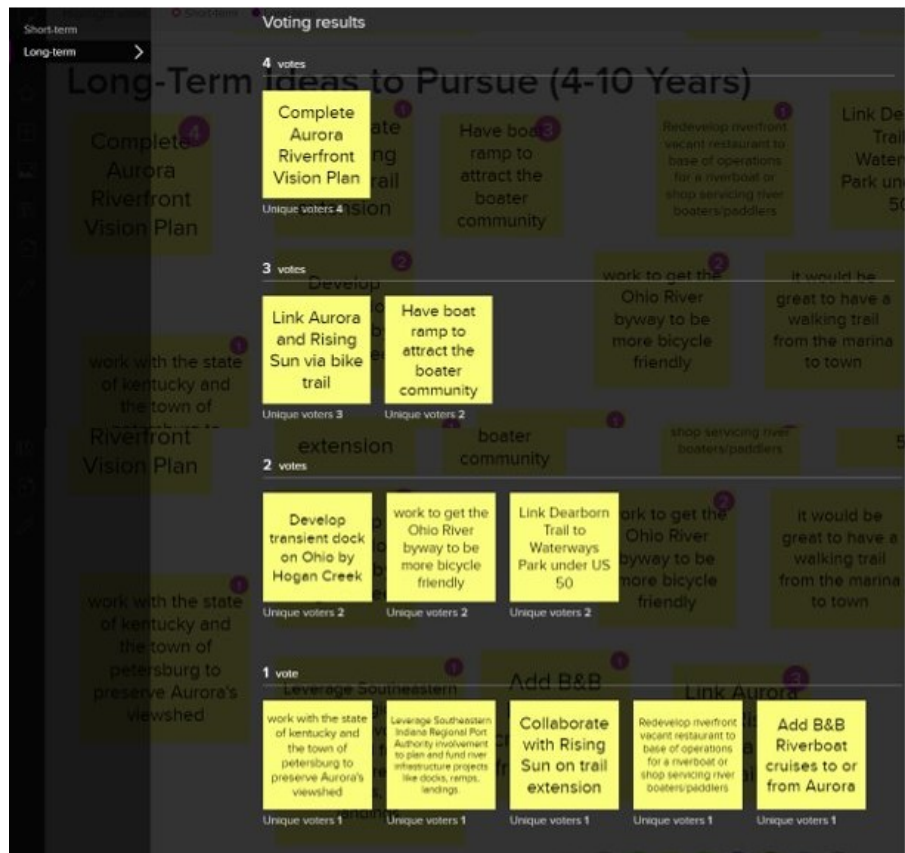
## Brainstorming Ideas – Continued

### Long-Term Ideas to Pursue (4-10 Years)

- Complete Aurora Riverfront Vision Plan (4 votes)
- Collaborate with Rising Sun on trail extension (1 vote)
- Have boat ramp to attract the boater community (3 votes)
- Redevelop riverfront vacant restaurant to base of operations for a riverboat or shop servicing river boaters/paddlers (1 vote)
- Link Dearborn Trail to Waterways Park under US 50 (2 votes)
- Develop transient dock on Ohio by Hogan Creek (2 votes)
- work to get the Ohio River byway to be more bicycle friendly (2 votes)
- it would be great to have a walking trail from the marina to town (2 votes)
- work with the state of kentucky and the town of petersburg to preserve Aurora's viewshed (1 vote)
- Leverage Southeastern Indiana Regional Port Authority involvement to plan and fund river infrastructure projects like docks, ramps, landings. (1 vote)
- Add B&B Riverboat cruises to or from Aurora (1 vote)
- Link Aurora and Rising Sun via bike trail (3 votes)

## Mural Board Brainstorming Ideas Input Results – Long-Term Ideas for Aurora

### Polling Results to Prioritize Long-Term Ideas for Aurora





## Homework & Comments

Post Aurora River Town Review Workshop, an action item homework assignment was sent home with the participants encouraging them to provide feedback on the following prompts:

- We invite YOU to look at your town with fresh eyes!
- Note other ideas or opportunities that occur to you!
- What other contacts could be valuable partners?
- Visit the three websites
- Describe a perfect day for a visitor in your community

### A Perfect Day

Describe a perfect day for a visitor in your community

- A visitor should stay at one of the existing bed & breakfast homes in the historic downtown. They can visit Uncle Steel's Brews for a morning coffee and pastry. From there, they can get familiar with downtown Aurora by going on a Windows of Aurora guided tour. Next, the visitor can rent a bicycle from the River Cities Bike Share and pedal on the Dearborn Trail to Lawrenceburg and back to Lesko Park to take in the Ohio River view. Upon their return to Aurora, they can grab lunch at Alejandra's Mexican Restaurant on Second Street. After some shopping downtown, they should take a tour of the Hillforest Victorian House Museum. The tour would be capped by some ice cream from Plug's Sweet Tooth on Second Street. If they want to paddle, there is an unofficial kayak launch near the Aurora Dog Park or the ferry landing at the Ohio River to explore the Ohio River and Hogan Creek. After the kayak excursion, they can clean up at their bed & breakfast. Dinner at the upscale Third & Main Steakhouse would precede the end cap of the day with a few craft beers at Great Crescent Brewery.
- My day would start by observing the fog rising from the Ohio River from the side yard at Veraestau perched high above the spires of Aurora. From there I would proceed down Market Street to Lesko Park for a close-up look at the barges and riverboats traveling up and down the Ohio. Before much of the morning is spent, we would head to the Aurora Diner for a tasty breakfast. After breakfast we would proceed up Main Street to Hillforest for a tour of this Italianate Museum home. Next, we would walk taking in the shops and historic architecture of the downtown. Now, ready for lunch we would have to choose between several selections... perhaps Mexican at Alejandro's, or steak, chops, or chicken at J Miller's, maybe go over to Great Crescent Brewery to check out their latest selection or maybe out to Eric's Bayview Grill to eat while looking over the marina. Time for a quick boat ride and then off to the new city pool (coming the summer of 2022) for a cool dip. Perhaps we could take time to wet a line down at Waterways Park where we can also see three of the tree carvings that make an impact in the many parks. I think we need to work off some of these meals from the day over at the Aurora Recreation and Community Center followed by a ride on the bike trail with the bikes that we just rented

## Describe a perfect day for a visitor in your community - Continued

from the kiosk downtown or by the dog park. We would go out to the soccer fields or baseball fields to watch the grandkids play. Dinner would have to be at the Third and Main... make mine wagyu, please! Dessert would have to be ice cream or other such sweets from one of our four ice cream establishments. The ice cream would be enjoyed while sitting in the wrought iron swings under the pergolas at Gabbard Riverfront Park while being entertained by music or whatever event happens to be going on... or just enjoy the evening peace of the river as the sun casts its golden glow on the water. Our ice cream is finished, and we have decided not to buy a lizard from the exotic pet store, so we're off to our rooms at the Harmony House for a good night sleep. WHAT a DAY!





## Contacts

### *Organization Websites*

Ohio River Recreation Trail	<a href="https://www.ohioriverrecreationtrail.org/">https://www.ohioriverrecreationtrail.org/</a>
ORRT Digital Guide	<a href="https://www.ohioriverrecreationtrail.org/digital-guide">https://www.ohioriverrecreationtrail.org/digital-guide</a>
Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail Experience	<a href="https://lewisandclark.travel/">https://lewisandclark.travel/</a>
NPS Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance	<a href="https://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/index.htm">https://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/index.htm</a>

### *Contact Information*

Andrea Irland	National Park Service	<a href="mailto:Andrea_Irland@nps.gov">Andrea_Irland@nps.gov</a>
Russell Clark	National Park Service	<a href="mailto:Russell_Clark@nps.gov">Russell_Clark@nps.gov</a>
Brewster Rhoads	ORRT Co-Chair	<a href="mailto:brewohio@gmail.com">brewohio@gmail.com</a>
Jack Sutton	ORRT Co-Chair	<a href="mailto:jsutton677@gmail.com">jsutton677@gmail.com</a>
David Wicks	ORRT Co-Chair	<a href="mailto:dwicks1@gmail.com">dwicks1@gmail.com</a>
Derek Schimmel	Lewis & Clark Geotourism	<a href="mailto:d.schimmel@solimarinternational.com">d.schimmel@solimarinternational.com</a>





# Ohio River Recreation Trail – River Town Review

*Fresh Eyes on Enhancing Tourism & Outdoor Recreation in your Community*

## List of Resources for Communities

As communities explore new opportunities to enhance outdoor recreation and tourism, the following list provides assessment tools, recommendations, guidelines and funding sources. This list of resources is the beginning of a journey to seek more information and it is not to be considered an all-encompassing list.

Table of Contents		
<b>I.</b>	<b>Outdoor Recreation &amp; Adventure Tourism</b>	<b>R1</b>
	Trail Towns & River Towns	
	Community Walkability & Bikeability	
	DOT Bike & Pedestrian Planning	
	Bicycle Touring	
	Paddling	
	River Safety	
<b>II.</b>	<b>Sustainable Tourism</b>	<b>R3</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>Maintaining Small Town Character</b>	<b>R4</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Grants &amp; Funding Opportunities</b>	<b>R5</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>Organizations</b>	<b>R6</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Community Assistance Programs</b>	<b>R7</b>

### I. Outdoor Recreation & Adventure Tourism

#### Trail Town & River Town Resources

Trail Town Program: [Certified Network - Trail Town Program \(trailtowns.org\)](http://trailtowns.org) and [Trail Town Guide](#)

Outdoor Towns: [Toolkit](#) and [Resource Library \(townsandtrailstoolkit.com\)](http://townsandtrailstoolkit.com)

[Trail Towns - Northern Forest Canoe Trail](#)

[Trail Towns - Huron River National Water Trail \(huronriverwatertrail.org\)](http://huronriverwatertrail.org)

[Kitsap Peninsula Water Trails Paddle Routes - Kitsap Peninsula Water Trails](#)

[Pennsylvania Environmental Council’s River Town Program](#)

[Monongahela River Towns](#)

[River Towns Program | Susquehanna Greenway](#)

[RiverTowns Program — Tennessee RiverLine \(tnriverline.org\)](http://tnriverline.org)

[River Towns Program | Susquehanna Greenway](#)

[Resources - River Network](#)



## Trail Town & River Town Resources ... continued

### Kentucky Trail Towns Guide & Workbook

[Kentucky Trail Towns v1.0 \(kentuckytourism.com\)](#)

[Kentucky Trail Town Program Workbook \(kentuckytourism.com\)](#)

### Destinations International – Variables Workbook

[DNEXT Online Diagnostic Tool Workbook 2017](#)

## Community Walkability & Bikeability

Walkability Score [Get Your Walk Score](#)

Bikeability Score [Bike Score Methodology \(walkscore.com\)](#)

### Walkability & Bikeability Assessment Tools

National Walkability Index [Smart Location Mapping | Smart Growth | US EPA](#)

[Healthy Communities: The Walkability Assessment Tool \(udel.edu\)](#)

[Walkability Assessment Tool | Planning for Complete Communities in Delaware \(completecommunitiesde.org\)](#)

Bikeability Checklist [bikechecklist1.ai \(epa.gov\)](#)

### Departments of Transportation Bike & Pedestrian Planning

Indiana [INDOT: Bicycle & Pedestrian Program](#)

Kentucky [Bike Walk Kentucky | KYTC](#)

Ohio [Bike & Walk | Ohio Department of Transportation](#)

### Public Bike Repair Station (Examples)

[Public Bike Repair Stand | Bicycle Repair Station | CycleSafe](#)

[Bike Repair Stations and Bike Pump Stations | Duo-Gard \(duo-gard.com\)](#)

### Bike Rack (Examples)

[Bollard Post Bike Racks - Park Warehouse](#)

[Racer Bike Rack - The Park Catalog](#)

## Mountain Biking

International Mountain Bicycling Association [Trail Accelerator Grants | IMBA](#)

## Bicycle Touring

US Bike Route System [U.S. Bicycle Route System \(USBRS\) | Adventure Cycling Association](#)

Indiana Bicycle Suitability Map [LRP BicycleSuitabilityMap.pdf](#)

Kentucky Bike Routes [On Road Bicycle Routes and Events | KYTC](#)

Ohio US Bike Routes [Create A Map | ODOT TIMS \(state.oh.us\)](#)

Long Distance Cycling Routes: Economic Impacts, Best Practices, and Marketing Strategies [\(usu.edu\)](#)

Warm Showers [Home | Warmshowers.org](#)

Bicycle Friendly Business Designation [Businesses | League of American Bicyclists \(bikeleague.org\)](#)

Heat Maps (Data Analysis Tools for Outdoor Recreation)

STRAVA Heat Maps [Strava Global Heatmap](#)

Map Line Heat Maps [Create a Heat Map in Seconds | Mapline Mapping Solutions](#)





## Padding

Ohio River Recreation Trail [Ohio River Digital Guide](#)  
National Park Service [River Access Planning Guide](#)  
[Images of Public Kayak Lockers](#)

## River Safety

Ohio River Recreation Trail [Safety Tips — Ohio River Recreation Trail](#)  
Ohio River Recreation Trail [On-Water Safety Guide](#)  
US Coast Guard Float Plan Checklist [USCG Float Plan \(cgaux.org\)](#)  
USGS Real time water data [USGS Current Water Data for the Nation](#) (waterdata.usgs.gov)  
USGS Real time water data mobile version [USGS Mobile Water Data](#) (m.waterdata.usgs.gov)  
Weekly Ohio River Water Quality Report [orsanco.org/weekly-ohio-river-water-quality-report](#)  
NOAA Live River Forecast Center [NOAA - National Weather Service - Water](#)

## II. Sustainable Tourism

USDA: Enhancing Sustainable Communities with Green Infrastructure  
[Recreation Economy at USDA Economic Development Resources for Rural Communities](#)  
[Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge | Rural Development \(usda.gov\)](#)

The Outdoor Recreation Roundtable Rural Economic Development Toolkit  
[Rural Development Toolkit – Outdoor Recreation Roundtable](#)

Solimar International [Solimar International | Tourism Marketing & Sustainable Tourism Consulting - Home](#)

Global Sustainable Tourism Council [Criteria, Standards, Certifications \(gstcouncil.org\)](#)

Adventure Travel Trade Association (This may be a great resource for river-based product development)  
[Global Network of Adventure Travel Tour Operators, Destinations, and Industry Partners](#)

United Nations World Travel Organization [Sustainable development | UNWTO](#)

The Travel Foundation [Home Page - Travel Foundation \(thetravelfoundation.org.uk\)](#)

Invisible Burden [Destinations at Risk: The Invisible Burden of Tourism - Travel Foundation](#)

World Travel and Tourism Council [\(WTTC\) | Travel & Tourism Representative Council](#)

Destinations International (A resource for DMOs and Chambers of Commerce) [destinationsinternational.org](#)

Destination Development Association [Destination Assessment Program \(destinationdevelopment.org\)](#)

Destination Stewardship [Destination-Stewardship-Framework.pdf \(wtcc.org\)](#)

National Recreation & Park Association Agency Performance Review [nrpa-agency-performance-review.pdf](#)

NRPA 2020 Engagement with Parks Report [2020-engagement-report.pdf \(nrpa.org\)](#)

Headwaters Economics [Home - Headwaters Economics](#)

Sample Survey from Township of Chatsworth, Ontario [Community Recreation Survey \(surveymonkey.com\)](#)



## **Additional Reports/Studies**

[Innovative and Promising Practices in Sustainable Tourism](#) (viu.ca)

[Ten Principles for Responsible Tourism](#) (Urban Land 2015)

[Tools and Resources for Nature-Based Tourism](#) (worldbank.org)

## **COVID Management Tools**

[Pandemic Toolkit](#) (PlaceMakers.com)

[Arts-and-Transportation-Rapid-Response.pdf](#) ([smartgrowthamerica.org](#))

(Summary of creative solutions to COVID-related transportation challenges)

[How Can Destinations Resume Tourism After the Pandemic While Ensuring Sustainability?](#) (PlaceBrandObserver.com)

## **III. Maintaining Small Town Character**

### **Smart Growth Principles**

[Smart Growth Principles - Smart Growth Online](#)

[Smart Growth Principles – Vermont Natural Resources Council](#) ([vnrc.org](#))

[Smart Growth in Small Towns and Rural Communities | Smart Growth | US EPA](#)

[Framework for Creating a Smart Growth Economic Development Strategy: A Tool for Small Cities & Towns](#)

[National Main Street Program](#) ([mainstreet.org](#))

[Kentucky Main Street Program - Kentucky Heritage Council](#) ([heritage.ky.gov](#))

[Streetscape Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial Districts](#) ([heritage.ky.gov](#))

[Walkable Communities Library](#) ([walkable.org](#))

[New Designs for Growth Development Guidebook](#) ([newdesignsforgrowth.com](#))

[Downtown Revitalization in Small and Mid-sized Cities](#) ([planning.org](#))

[A Handbook for Improved Neighborhoods](#) ([aarp.org](#))

[Citizens' Institute on Rural Design](#) ([rural-design.org](#))

### **Additional Items to Consider**

[Project for Public Spaces](#) [The Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper Transformation of Public Spaces](#) ([pps.org](#))

[Creative Exchange for the Arts](#) [Toolkits for Change Archives - Creative Exchange](#) ([springboardexchange.org](#))

[Finding Nature News, Nature Blog | Children and Nature Network](#) ([childrenandnature.org](#))

[Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights](#) bring leaders, residents together - [Children and Nature Network](#)

[Waste in Our Waters: A Community Toolkit for Aquatic Litter Removal](#) ([rivernetwork.org](#))



## IV. Grants & Funding Opportunities

[Home | GRANTS.GOV](#)

[Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation - American Rescue Plan | U.S. Economic Development Administration \(eda.gov\)](#)

[Economic Development Integration | U.S. Economic Development Administration \(eda.gov\)](#)

Outdoor Recreation Roundtable: Federal and ORR Member Funding and Technical Assistance Resources  
[Outdoor Rec Resources \(Formatted\)-2.pdf - Google Drive](#)

[View EDA-HDQ-OIE-2020-2006705 | GRANTS.GOV](#) FY2020 SPRINT Challenge Grant

[Grassroots Grantmakers](#)

[U.S. Department of Transportation Transit, Highway, and Safety Funds - Funding - Bicycle and Pedestrian Program - Environment - FHWA \(dot.gov\)](#)

[The Grant Plant, Inc. New Mexico \(thegrantplantnm.com\)](#)

[Office of Small Business Development Centers Resources \(sba.gov\)](#)

[Keep America Beautiful's Community Restoration and Resiliency Fund Application Survey \(surveymonkey.com\)](#)

[The Home Depot | The Home Depot Foundation - Team Depot Community](#)

[Shade Structure Program \(aad.org\)](#)

[Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program | Rural Development \(usda.gov\)](#)

[Community Impact | Waste Management \(wm.com\)](#)

[Online Funding Tool | Play and Recreation Funds | PlayCore](#)

[Grant Opportunities, Fundraising Resources, Funding | National Recreation and Park Association \(nrpa.org\)](#)

[Recreational Trails Program Project Database \(recreationaltrailsinfo.org\)](#)

[Thrive Outside - Outdoor Industry Association](#)

[Bicycles and Pedestrians | US Department of Transportation](#)

[Applications Now Live for the Citizens' Institute on Rural Design \(rural-design.org\)](#)

[Save America's Treasures \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](#)

[Equitable Funding Hub | City Parks Alliance](#)

[Funding Parks and Trails Through Land Trust Partnerships | City Parks Alliance](#)

[Community Change Grants | AmericaWalks.org](#)

[Mini-grants | Celebrate Urban Birds](#)

[Community-Based Participatory Research Technical Assistance Grants - River Network](#)

[Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities 2020 Request for Letters of Interest | Smart Growth | US EPA](#)

[Six Unique Trail Funding Solutions - American Trails](#)



[Q Community Grant | Quality Bicycle Products \(qbp.com\)](#)

[Six Grants for Trails and Greenway Funding \(permatrak.com\)](#)

[State and Local Grant Funding - Land and Water Conservation Fund \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](#)

**Indiana** [DNR: Land and Water Conservation Fund \(in.gov\)](#)

**Kentucky** [Kentucky DLG - LWCF Grants](#)

**Ohio** [Land and Water Conservation Fund | Ohio Department of Natural Resources \(ohiodnr.gov\)](#)

## V. Organizations

Adventure Cycling Association [Discover What Awaits | AdventureCycling.org](#)

American Trails [AmericanTrails.org](#)

American Rivers [Rivers Connect Us](#) (americanrivers.org)

American Canoe Association [ACA | Canoe - Kayak - SUP - Raft - Rescue \(americancanoe.org\)](#)

City Parks Alliance [About Us | City Parks Alliance](#)

International Journal of Wilderness [Foundation and Future of Long Distance Trails | IJW.org](#)

National Recreation and Parks Association [\(nrpa.org\)](#)

Partnership for the National Trails System [\(pnts.org\)](#)

People for Bikes [PeopleForBikes | Every ride. Every rider. Join us. \(peopleforbikes.org\)](#)

River Management Society [\(river-management.org\)](#)

River Network [Mission, Vision, Values - River Network](#) (rivernetwork.org)

Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals [Technical Resources \(recpro.org\)](#)

## VI. Community Assistance Programs

### National Park Service

#### [Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program \(RTCA\)](#)

- A national network of conservation and recreation planning professionals that partner with community groups, nonprofits, tribes, and state and local governments to design trails and parks, to serve and improve access to rivers, protect special places, and create outdoor recreation opportunities
- Free technical planning assistance is available for Communities and non-profit organizations through an application process



[Directory of National Park Service Community Assistance Programs](#)



## Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

[Smart Growth Technical Assistance Programs | Smart Growth | US EPA](#)

- Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities
- Cool & Connected
- Governor's Institute on Community Design
- Greening Americas Communities
- Healthy Places for Health People
- Local Foods, Local Places
- Recreation Economy for Rural Communities
- Smart Growth Implementation Assistance
- Smart Growth Implementation Assistance for Coastal Communities
- Special Smart Growth Technical Assistance Projects



[Environmental Justice Grants, Funding and Technical Assistance](#)

## US Forest Service

### Shared Stewardship Programs

- Forest Legacy
- Forest Stewardship
- Community Forest
- Ecosystem Markets
- Wood Innovation
- Urban and Community Forestry
- Forest Health Protection
- Landscape Scale Restoration
- Forest Taxation and Estate Planning



[How the Forest Stewardship Program Works | US Forest Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

## US Fish & Wildlife Service

### Division of Partner & Intergovernmental Affairs

- Rural Fire Assistance
- Small Wetlands Program
- Landscape Conservation Design

Several other programs are available. Please visit the website and type "**List of Programs**" in the Search Box.

[USFWS - Division of Partner and Intergovernmental Affairs](#)



## National Park Service

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

Ohio River Recreation Trail – **Resources List**

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## National Fish & Wildlife Foundation

### Active Programs

- Acres for America
- Bring Back the Natives
- Conservation Partners Program
- Five Star & Urban Waters Restoration Grant Program
- National Coastal Resilience Fund
- Resilient Communities Program
- Bats for the Future Fund
- Monarch Butterfly & Pollinators Conservation Fund



[Programs | NFWF.org](https://www.nfwf.org)

## US Department of Agriculture

### Natural Resources Conservation Service

[Technical Assistance | NRCS \(usda.gov\)](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov)

### Rural Development Programs & Services

[Programs & Services | Rural Development \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov/rural-development)

### Strategic Economic & Community Development

[Strategic Economic and Community Development | Rural Development \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov/economic-community-development)

