



## **Discovery Center ~ Great Lakes Focus Groups - Preliminary Report**

December 21, 2011

### **OVERVIEW**

- Four focus groups were held between November 8 and November 20, 2011
- 50 total participants
- 10 individuals under the age of 40
- 25 individuals between 40 and 60 years of age
- 15 individuals 60 years and over
- 25 male participants
- 25 female participants

### **Governmental representatives**

- Jack Kelly, Elmwood Township
- Mark Benedict, Elmwood Township
- Joe Buzzella, US Coast Guard

### **Business representatives**

- Dave Conrad, Bay Breeze Yacht Services
- Bill Allgaier, Harborview Yacht Sales
- Jim Frye, FIM Group
- Dennis Lauterbach, Traverse Floor Covering
- Steve King, Financial Planner

### **Non partner organizational representatives**

- Jo Bullis, Women's Resource Center
- Julie Clark, TART Trails
- Lee Maynard, TART Trails
- Libby Tomlinson, Grand Traverse Yacht Club
- Hans VanSumeren, Great Lakes Water Studies Institute
- Eric Carlson, Leelanau Enterprise
- Mark Breederland, Michigan Sea Grant
- Andrea Hornby, Girl Scouts
- Mary Manner, Great Start Collaborative
- Annie Campbell, Disability Network
- Kathy Lievense, Inland Seas
- Tom Kelley, Inland Seas Education Association
- Debbie McKeon, NorthSky Nonprofit Network
- Ryan Matusak, Grand Traverse Sport Fishing Association
- Harvey Norris, Grand Traverse Bay Power & Sail Squadron
- Michelle Shane, The Children's House

### **Partner organization representatives**

- Judy King, MHA
- Larry Hathaway, MHA
- Jake Brecinski, MHA
- Mary Budde, MHA
- JoAnne Pace, MHA
- Sherri Feels, MHA
- Becky Ewing, Rotary Camps & Services

### **Activities / programs to include on the site that were mentioned in all four sessions**

- Fresh water aquarium; something small like Inland Seas or Cabela's or something larger like the Milwaukee Museum and Calvert Museum were mentioned
- Weather education/ real time weather reporting
- Sailing education and opportunities to access the bay by boat
- More outdoor space that is interactive and self directed and compelling enough the adults will stop and check it out (touch screens, play space, outdoor displays and exhibits, self guided tours) Example: "The Great Barrier Reef", Australia
- Classroom and education space – for both partner organizations and others – that is flexible and can accommodate traditional classes (with speaker and AV) and training that requires large, open, indoor and outdoor spaces
- Event space/ amphitheater
- Commercial space- restaurant, retail, rentals
- "Age up" The Children's Museum (one group suggested "rebranding it" as museum for all ages)
- Activities for all ages
- Activities that are both educational and fun
- Make it easy to spend the day; lots of diverse activities and food
- Routinely change programs so there's always something new
- Keep the campus open until sundown daily so you can walk around even when buildings are closed
- Really versatile education space related to all the organizations on the site but integrating topics such as leadership, team building and the academics (math, science, etc.) Example: learning math while building a boat
- Have people arrive at the site in a different way by trail, bike, water taxi, trolley; establish a bio fuel bus that makes a continuous loop to transport visitors
- Make it a cultural experience: spend the night on a Schooner, watch enactments, sail, swim, etc.

### **Site design ideas that were mentioned in all four sessions**

- Connect to TART Trail; create a natural loop from Cedar Lake and a bridge over the stream; create signage and an entrance on the trail for Discovery Center
- Highly visible; capture attention from M22 (Ideas suggested included a tower, lighthouse structure, ship, rooftop deck, large sails, running water, artist murals, sculptures- giant hiker, sailor, or animals; replicate large artwork with smaller icons throughout the site)
- Integrated theme and design for campus; either one central building for all offices or easy movement between buildings; perhaps a "mall concept" with some individual sites and some multi-purpose sites

- Create a central hub to enter the campus with all organizations represented with education programs, displays, videos, meeting rooms, office space (could be an interpretive center or visitor center); include site map and schedule of events; something like Sleeping Bear Dunes Interpretative Center
- Safe access to the water
- More use of outdoor space
- Move parking to less visible spot
- Universal access; fully adaptable like Boardman River with wheelchair access for boats
- More welcoming to just stop in without a specific purpose
- Four season space
- Learn to swim and dive from boat
- Event space/ amphitheater for related nonprofit festivals, events (nautical-theme films during Film Festival, nautical art exhibits, etc.)

#### **Additional partner organizations to include on the site**

- Great Lakes Water Studies Institute (broadcast from their site)
- Inland Seas; don't duplicate but complement their programs
- Coast Guard
- Traverse City Area Public schools
- Northwestern Michigan College
- DNR (salmon hatchery)

#### **Potential themes for the site**

“Mystic Seaport of Michigan” with re-enactments, boat building, sailing, science education, learn to read a compass, learn to use navigation charts, partner with Inland Seas for programs, Coast Guard research vessels and boater safety; historic representation of a port, the cranes, the equipment, the commerce

“Discovery” theme – a place to trigger excitement, “sail in”, something for everyone to discover

Add a tag line to the Discovery Center ~ Great Lakes; example: “ *a great place for sailing, creating, learning* ”

All about The Watershed – what is a watershed, learn about the water from the bottom up (tadpoles, etc.) historical, ecological, environmental, commercial, recreational perspective; how to build a boat; learn to sail

All about Great Lakes Fish- fishing, boating, tribal fishing, Native American fishing village, historical, recreational, learn to fish, fishing pond, restaurant serving Great Lakes seafood, fish market, charter boats, rent fishing equipment, learn to dive, aquarium, fish hatchery, navigation (the fish hatchery at Oden/ Petoskey has good ideas for exhibits and programs)

Integrate Art and Science (Look at “Leonardo” in Salt Lake City) – art classes on the water, art exhibits, evenings with music, make it exciting, exhilarating, fun, thrilling

Maritime Heritage Trail tying together all maritime programs in the region including fishing ports, Fishtown, Inland Seas (First stop on the way to Leelanau); driving tour CD

Clean water- what people do to get water, the quest for clean water, sanitation, fishing, boating, etc. live feed to Circle of Blue organization; tell the story of the Rotary commitment to clean water

Cluster all environmental, nautical, water-related organizations on the site with either a physical or virtual presence

### **Other ideas for activities/ programs**

- Charter boat facility
- Traveling aquarium
- Multi-generational programs: example- teach children to swim, water safety, what flags mean and progress to sailing, how to swim and dive from a boat, and then to adults for sailing and cultural opportunities
- Multi- day educational programs
- Immerse people in the water cycle (travel in a water drop- go into leaf and through photosynthesis)
- Fish cleaning facility (an attractive one like in Grand Haven)
- Relationship to the Cherry Industry including the agricultural ecosystem created by the water, commercial, canning and shipping aspects
- Use the pier space and have the Coast Guard bring in research and rescue vessels for education and tours; Albatross Helicopter on display; Coast Guard bring in newer boats, MHA bring in historic boats
- Display “real time” information about the Bay by tracking data from a research buoy (providing Great Lakes Maritime Institute); watch things like waves, riptides, and other water conditions)
- Demonstrate riptides and provide safety training about how to interact with water
- Provide a radar weather simulator for year round education
- Include a perspective on the history of the area
- Create educational programs on mentoring, internships for teens; a place where teens can learn about environmental education that is integrated with TCAPS and NMC
- Provide education on brown fields and their impact on the watershed
- Women’s education on fishing
- Children’s education on fishing
- Go out on charters with divers
- Portable library for the summer months
- Create a contest or an educational challenge—something like art prize in Grand Rapids (example: create your own container.)
- Sponsor outdoor activities such as stargazing, camping and education
- Run camps out of the schooner for Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts (example: live like a ship mate in a specific time period)
- Build a new boat in the back lot and let the public help
- Put the “Welcome” ship in the parking lot for tours and demonstrations
- Ship wreck education (30 shipwrecks off Sleeping Bear Dunes)

- Demonstrations of old equipment and techniques for building with opportunities to try out the equipment
- Living demonstrations by artists and crafts people
- Use the marshes in back for education, boardwalks and recycled lumbar
- Learn art/ music out on a schooner and provide opportunities for artists/ musicians to create art out on a schooner
- Joint programming between Boardman Nature, Tart Trail and Discovery Center; bring participants in via TART Trail
- Otters exhibit
- Sailing programs with land-based facility to teach sailing
- Great Lakes fossils/ archaeology
- Go behind the scenes at the Discovery Center for an insider tour
- Create a more visible presence for The Watershed Center; illustrate the watershed plan and make it come alive; include a watershed model to demonstrate how a watershed works
- Indoor wave table
- Indoor stream table to see how a stream works
- Ice boating- rentals and education
- Diving- rentals and education
- Leadership programs: boating lends itself to building leadership and team skills
- Folklore of the Great Lakes and practical aspects such as how to navigate by the stars
- Display equipment from the schooner era: cranes, etc.

### **Other ideas for design**

- Access to bay: sail mast with zipline, chairlift, glass tunnel with running stream, ship bridge over M22
- Create a round, inter-connected circle of buildings and activities that people can walk around and inside
- An entrance hall with an aerial photo of the region on the floor and rolling carts with magnified glass; you can roll the carts over the map and magnify sections
- Green focus (LEED certification)
- Access to site: Trail trolley from TART trail
- Create a boardwalk
- Elevated walk ways through workshops so visitors can observe restoration in progress
- Incorporate developmental stages of children into events or educational programming
- Courtyard design where there is no wrong entry point; you can enter from any angle
- Place a Visitors Center on the inside and parking on the outside
- Develop a service drive to turn into the Discovery Center and then drive behind and exit at next cross street
- Re-direct the creek so it flows from the wetland to the Bay (and through the Discovery Center)

- Rooftop deck with activities and art: telescope, restaurant, commercial space
- Parking lot that can convert to event space/ amphitheater (Calvert Museum)
- Remove personal boat storage from site to free up space
- Make sure the space is sound worthy – can broadcast/ amplify live and recorded music

### **Other opportunities**

Incorporate the Discovery Center site with planning related to the Bay side of M22 and surrounding Elmwood Township; the easiest way to gain support for the Discovery Center is to build access to the harbor

Create an integrated place with Elmwood Township

Partner with local businesses to employ seasonal workers during the fall and winter  
Include Leelanau Brownfield Authority (Trudy)—there may be funding and programming opportunities

Great Lakes Cruise Ship stop

Don't create separate education programs for each organization; integrate and create programs that span organizations and include multiple components and perspectives

First make sure that everyone knows about the Discovery Center and the individual members and what everyone does and that we are creating a great place to do it.