

Winter Strategies: ACTION PLAN

**FOR
NILES, MI**



January 28, 2022



This winter strategies work plan was supported by technical assistance funds from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) Community Development division.

Niles has been an active Michigan Main Street community since 2004 (and nationally before then) and is currently engaged in the RRC process, working toward the RRC Essentials designation. For more information on both programs, visit www.miplace.org.

To learn more about RRC, visit www.miplace.org/rrc.

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[this document is formatted to encourage 2-sided printing]

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INTRODUCTION

The global COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a surge of interest in being outdoors for socializing, family recreation, biking, camping, hiking, fishing and other outdoor pursuits. The cold and snow of the winter season did not change the demand for outdoor activities and facilities, and communities across Michigan began to look for opportunities to meet these demands for close-at-home outdoor recreation. Some believe this trend is here to stay.

A growing number of communities across the northern tier of the United States and in Canada are embracing the winter season and finding the opportunities it offers: economically, socially and culturally. These cities are transforming themselves with year-round bicycling lanes, snow management innovations, winter festivals, ice skating plazas and all-season town squares, winter markets and other business opportunities. People want to shop, walk, bike and socialize outside year-round, as long as they can do so with relative ease and comfort. It only makes sense to plan and design our city for winter, as much as we do for summer.

In 2020, the MEDC Community Development Technical Assistance Team developed a Winter Strategies Guide to help Michigan communities foster continually vibrant, active downtowns throughout the colder months. And while those efforts came out of necessity, they've proven popular in communities across the state.

The City of Niles was selected by the MEDC as one of two communities to participate in a pilot program to create action-oriented work-plans for implementing new winter enhancements and activity based on those strategies. In its application for a Winter Cities Strategy, Niles made a strong case for its winter activities and efforts to-date, including:

- The Hunter Ice Festival has been held for 16 years, bringing world class ice sculptures to the downtown. The event also includes the Frigid 5k Winter race along the Riverfront Park Walking Trail. Depending on weather, the events bring more than 15,000 visitors to Niles, creating a huge economic impact on the local economy.
- In November 2020, the City closed a half a downtown block to create The NODE- Niles Outdoor Dining Experience. The build out of the area was created with minimal financial investment, so



that we could see if the area would benefit downtown. Jersey barriers were used to block off the road, picnic tables borrowed from the park were placed on the site, and with the financial help of a local foundation, a 5' gas fired fire pit was installed. The community found that the NODE was valuable space. The DDA began investing a bit more in the aesthetics of the area, as well as planning events for the area. The community was very supportive of the space. Once a month on Third Thursdays, well over 500 people come to The NODE for entertainment, dining and fun. The NODE was gifted a large snow blower, and volunteers use it to clear snow at that location. The DDA has considered creating a children's sliding hill in the space with snow. The DDA started making NODE and Downtown Niles swag, such as shopping bags and t-shirts, and are considering adding Hats, Mittens, and Lap Blankets. There is a local foundation that has offered funding up to \$75,000 to build out the NODE, as well as several businesses offering to make investment in infrastructure to make The NODE more year-round usable.

- A Homegrown Market was started in July that takes place five times a month, and after just five events, there are more vendors wanting to take part than we have space for so the City is reassessing how to grow it and make it into a winter market.
- Each holiday season, white lights are installed in downtown street trees, and remain lighted until spring, creating a lovely ambiance. Businesses and building owners are encouraged to decorate their window with a Winter theme so visitors have something attractive to look at while strolling the street.
- The downtown is fortunate that a downtown business owner voluntarily walks the town the morning after a big snow and clears everyone's sidewalk.

HIGHLIGHTED RECOMMENDATIONS

Pages 10-13 of this strategy contain a full set of recommended actions to help the city better embrace and plan for winter. Key recommendations include:

- ☐ Holding an annual community workshop each fall to discuss upcoming winter needs
- ☐ Determining the future of the NODE
- ☐ Reviving opportunities for ice skating
- ☐ Conduct a winter sidewalk audit after snowfall
- ☐ Expanding the city's lighting project along the Riverfront Walkway
- ☐ Incorporate more winter activity into the city's communication channels
- ☐ Multiple - Review the city's zoning ordinance to incorporate winter design concepts such as wind blocking, sun orientation, and colors.

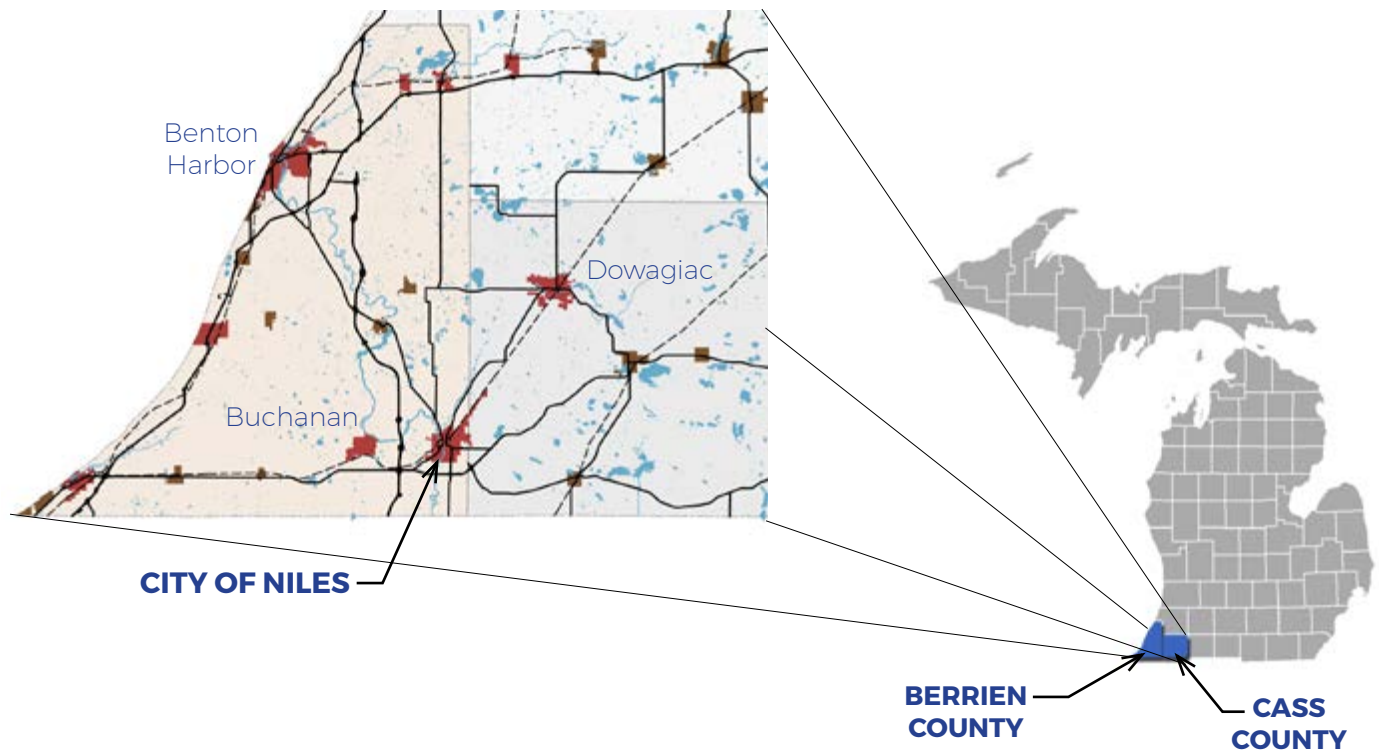
Many of these recommendations are described in greater detail throughout this strategy.

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND



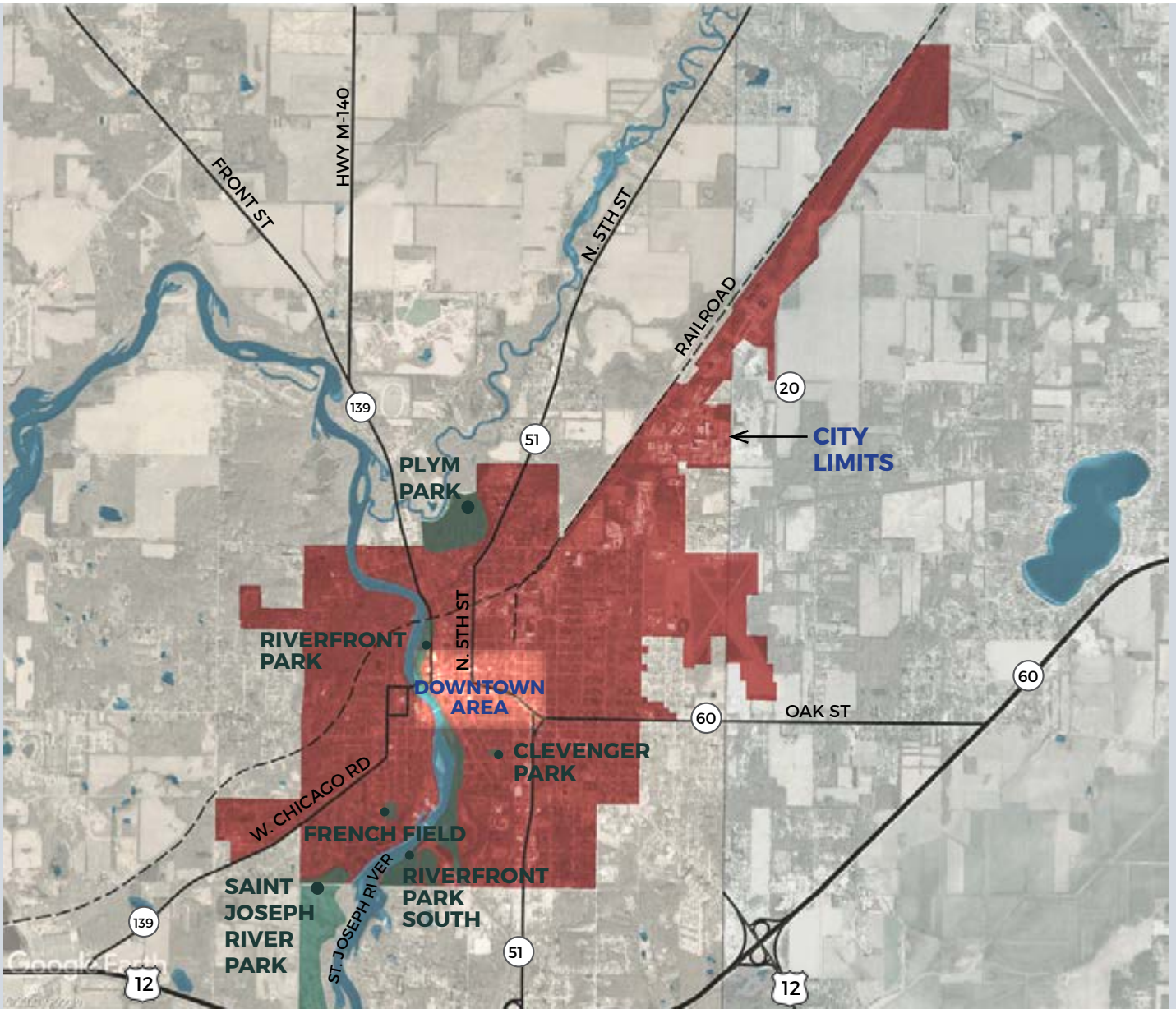
Niles is a city in Berrien County, Michigan. According to the US 2020 Census, the population of Niles is 11,197 persons.

Niles lies on the banks of the St. Joseph River, at the site of the French Fort St. Joseph, which was built in 1697 to protect the Jesuit Mission established in 1691. After 1761, it was held by the British and was captured on May 25, 1763, by Native Americans during Pontiac's Rebellion. The British retook the fort but it was not re-garrisoned and served as a trading post. During the American Revolutionary War, the fort was held for a short time by a Spanish force. The occupation of the fort by the four nations of France, Britain, Spain, and the United States has earned Niles the nickname City of Four Flags.



NILES VICINITY MAP

Winter Strategies: **ACTION PLAN**
For Niles, MI



NILES CITY MAP

WINTER CLIMATE



The City of Niles is situated at 41.8298 degrees north latitude, which is comparable to Chicago. Overall, the climate would be characterized as humid continental, however, all of Michigan is greatly influenced by the Great Lakes, with moderated winter temperatures, cloudy weather, and snow.

Niles receives an annual average of 63.9" of snowfall, a surprising amount of snow considering the mild winter temperatures. Most likely some of this snowfall is lake effect snow, however, snowfall is sporadic and unreliable. Mild winter temperatures above freezing means the snow doesn't stay for long periods of time. The table below shows average low and high temperatures for the months of December through March.

A search of the City of Niles Master Plan only identified only a couple mentions of winter, one of these identifying a need for ice skating.

Even with moderate winter conditions, it is still possible to plan and implement winter activities and facilities that get people outdoors to enjoy the season. Stakeholder interviews revealed that over the years, Niles has moved away from embracing its winter climate, but the community is open to expanding outdoor recreation opportunities and doing more to embrace the winter time.

WINTER IN NILES

NILES AVERAGE WINTER TEMPERATURES

	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
HIGH	36	32	35	47
LOW	24	19	20	28

SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER INPUT

A number of persons contributed their thoughts to identifying opportunities to improve the winter season in Niles. This input is summarized below:

- Snow and below freezing temperatures are very unreliable and limit what can be done with traditional snow and cold weather-related activities.
- Winters have been so mild that the community has lost its “winter culture”; residents don’t bother clearing their sidewalks, volunteers to make ice rinks are discouraged when the efforts of their labor melt in a few days. etc.
- Looking for ideas to make the NODE a warmer and more inviting space, such as decking or paving materials.
- There are no slopes or hills in the city for sledding.
- Some citizens would like the 2.25-mile riverfront trail groomed for skiing, others want it plowed for walking
- The City clears snow from primary school routes, and public building sidewalks.
- The parking lot located on the NW corner of Front and Main Streets has potential for a all-season gathering space.



THE NODE

WINTER STRATEGIES ACTION PLAN



The Winter Strategy Action Plan identifies some “low-hanging fruit”; low cost projects and initiatives that can help gauge community interest in using city parks and the downtown during the winter season. These ideas should be considered as test or pilot projects to be tried and modified as the community gains experience creating winter activities and events, as well as major, longer-term initiatives. Some winter activities should be tested as “pop-up” events and facilities, to be implemented when cold and snow is in the forecast.

The following table includes Niles-specific recommendations, organized by each of the winter cities principles. For more information on the principles themselves, see pages 24 - 31.

WINTER STRATEGIES ACTION PLAN

Task	Description	Time Frame for Initial Implementation	Lead(S)	Estimated Cost Category ¹	Potential Funding Sources ²
General Recommendations: <i>These recommendations will help the city maintain the winter cities principles over time and work toward a cultural shift back toward embracing the possibilities of winter instead of dreading the season.</i>					
1.1	Hold an annual community workshop each fall to discuss upcoming winter needs.	Annually; Fall	City Staff	Low	N/A
1.2	Update this action plan based on workshop outcomes.	Annually; Fall	City Staff	Staff Time Only	N/A
Principle: Provide or enhance opportunities for winter outdoor activity <i>These recommendations will help the city promote community building and activity during winter months.</i>					
2.1	Determine the future of the NODE ³	2022	City Council	Low	N/A
2.2	If the Niles Outdoor Downtown Experience (NODE) continues, develop a winter time maintenance plan for the space.	2022	DDA	Low	DDA Funding
2.2a	If the NODE remains permanently, work with local foundations to add more permanent enhancements to the NODE, including those aligned with winter design principles.	2022	DDA	Low - Medium	Local Foundations; DDA Funding
2.2b	If the NODE remains but not permanently, explore opportunities to transition the space into a winter activity space from November - March with temporary, but enhanced, features such as outdoor games, potted trees, heat lamps, and lighting.	2022	DDA	Low - Medium	Local Foundations; DDA Funding

Winter Strategies: **ACTION PLAN** For Niles, MI

Task	Description	Time Frame for Initial Implementation	Lead(S)	Estimated Cost Category ¹	Potential Funding Sources ²
2.3	Consider establishment of a Town Square adjacent to downtown along the Riverfront (this is in addition to the NODE) or in the parking lot located at the NW corner of Front and Main Streets.	2023-2024	Council	High	Local Foundations; MEDC Public Spaces; DNR?
2.4	Revive ice skating at one of the previously used rink sites. ⁴	2023	Parks & Rec.	Low-Medium	City Funding; Local Foundations
2.4a	Consider constructing a pavilion over the ice rink to better preserve the ice and reduce overall maintenance.	2023	Parks & Rec.	Medium	City Funding; Local Foundations; MEDC Public Spaces
2.5	Establish a location to provide coverage storage for clean snow which can be used for sculptures and other snow activities such as building a sledding hill.	2023	DPW	Low	City Funding
Principle: Improve winter transportation for pedestrians, cyclists and public transit users <i>These recommendations will help the city encourage transportation options year-round and promote a more active lifestyle in the winter.</i>					
3.1	Continue city clearing of sidewalks along school routes	Ongoing	DPW	Existing Costs	City Funds
3.2	Organize volunteers to conduct a sidewalk, pedestrian crossings, and bike lane clearance audit within 24 hours of a recent snowfall to determine other areas which may need to be prioritized.	2022; Winter	DPW or Public Safety	Low	City Funds
3.2a	Based on results, establish a system (either city or volunteers) to enhance sidewalk clearing in priority areas.	2023	DPW or Public Safety	Staff Time Only	N/A
Principle: Design for winter safety and comfort <i>These recommendations will help the city factor in changes which can add little comforts to winter time, addressing common concerns around cold and wind.</i>					
4.1	Review the city's zoning ordinance to incorporate winter cities design strategies such as a building's impact on wind and cold; make updates as needed	2022	Planning Commission	Staff Time Only	N/A
4.2	Provide handrails in any publicly owned paths which are on slopes.	2023-2025	DPW + Parks & Rec	Medium-High	GRF

WINTER STRATEGIES ACTION PLAN



Task	Description	Time Frame for Initial Implementation	Lead(S)	Estimated Cost Category ¹	Potential Funding Sources ²
Principle: Snow management <i>These recommendations will help the city address snow management</i>					
5.1	Continue coordination with downtown business owners to ensure sidewalk clearance.	Ongoing	DDA	Existing Costs	N/A
5.2	Establish a proactive communications campaign to help residents and businesses understand the city's snow plowing operations.	2023	DPW or City Manager	Low	GRF
5.2a	Consider investing in a like snow plow tracker as an advance part of the campaign.	2024+	DPW	Medium-High	GRF
5.3	Coordinate with DPW on snow piling strategies in the downtown to ensure continued availability of parking and clear pedestrian crossings.	Ongoing	DDA + DPW	Staff Time Only	N/A
Principle: Vegetation and landscaping <i>These recommendations will help the city factor in the impact vegetation can have on the ability to block wind and create more welcoming winter spaces.</i>					
6.1	Review the city's zoning ordinance to incorporate winter vegetation principles; make updates as needed.	2022	Planning Commission	Staff Time Only	N/A
6.2	Consider adding vegetation to the NODE or other outdoor spaces as part of any permanent improvements.	2022 - 2023	DDA	Low	Local Foundations
Principle: Lighting and color <i>These recommendations will help the city maintain a brighter atmosphere throughout the darkest months of the year.</i>					
7.1	Maintain the Niles Downtown Tree Lights throughout the winter.	Ongoing	DDA	Existing Costs	DDA Funding
7.2	Expand the lighting project along the Riverfront Walkway.	Ongoing	Parks & Recreation	Medium	General Revenue Funding; Local Foundations
7.3	Coordinate a winter time outdoor lighting competition in neighborhoods throughout the city, including organized walks for viewing.	2023	Local Foundation	Low	City of Partner Funding
Principle: Make winter a positive asset to attract business, tourism, and new residents <i>These recommendations will help the city continue to encourage downtown activity throughout the winter which can foster economic development and develop a sense of place.</i>					
8.1	Continue and expand the Hunter Ice Festival.	Ongoing	DDA	Existing Costs	Existing Sources
8.2	Offer pop up events such a hot chocolate nights, winter time scavenger hunts, or yard games in the downtown.	Ongoing	DDA	Low	DDA Funding

Winter Strategies: **ACTION PLAN** For Niles, MI

Task	Description	Time Frame for Initial Implementation	Lead(S)	Estimated Cost Category ¹	Potential Funding Sources ²
8.3	Consider the creation of a small winter market to incubate new businesses.	2024	DDA	Medium	Local Foundations; DDA Funding
8.4	Conduct a storefront activation training for business owners and a corresponding competition.	2023	DDA + Economic Development	Low	DDA Funding
8.5	Incorporate winter time activity into the city's social media and traditional communications strategies	Immediate	DDA + City Staff	Staff Time Only	N/A

NOTES

¹ This is a very rough estimate in an attempt to help the city prioritize small vs large projects; no official cost estimates have been conducted.

² These are possible funding sources and are likely to change as details of each item is finalized. Provided as a starting point only.

³ MEDC encourages the city to secure additional outside support to gather feedback and assess opportunities for the future of the NODE. That decision is outside the scope of this winter strategy document.

⁴ The city previously had three ice rinks; see content of this document for more details

A red heart with a white scarf wrapped around it, set against a dark blue background. The scarf has a fringed end.

This section of the Winter Strategy identifies some “low-hanging fruit”; low cost projects and initiatives that can help gauge community interest in doing more during the winter season, as well as “bigger idea” efforts like lightscaping and creating a new all-season town square. These ideas should be considered as test or pilot projects to be tried and modified as the community gains experience creating winter activities and events. Some winter activities should be tested as “pop-up” events and facilities, to be implemented when cold and snow is in the forecast.



Photo Source: Niles Outdoor Downtown Experience Facebook page

NILES OUTDOOR DOWNTOWN EXPERIENCE (NODE)

No plan about Niles would be complete without recognizing the Niles Outdoor Downtown Experience (NODE). Created in 2020 in response to the pandemic, the NODE was originally established as a way to expand downtown local businesses capacity to serve food and drinks; in addition to the space itself, it also is also part of the city's social district which allows for open container drinks from registered establishments. Since that time, the NODE has welcomed thousands of visitors for food, drink, music, events, and just to meet with friends and family in an outdoor, safer environment. In early 2021, mLive declared the NODE to be Southwest Michigan's Top Outdoor Dining experience. Several foundations in the Niles area have indicated they would provide funding upwards of \$100,000 to make more permanent, higher quality improvements to the NODE in the future.

The NODE remained open throughout the duration of this strategy's development but in January 2022, the DDA voted to temporarily close the NODE until its future could be determined. While the scope of this action plan does not cover whether the NODE should continue and/or where it should be located, an online survey was conducted during the planning process to gather input on potential winter improvements and get a general gauge of its support or concerns. Approximately 570 unique responses were identified and of those ~70% had been to the NODE. The majority of those came with family and nearly a quarter came downtown when they wouldn't have otherwise because of the NODE. They survey included 15 potential winter time amenities for the NODE. The top five most supported were fire pits, heat lamps, winter festivals, winter décor and improvements to wind blocking. Open ended responses ranged dramatically from enthusiastic support for the NODE in its current form, to more neutral support which asked for higher quality improvements or moving the NODE. A group of respondents submitted comments focused on the road closure and concerns around parking. Full results are compiled and provided in conjunction with this action plan (as a separate document).

The survey results are far from scientific due to the rushed timeframe, two different (but very similar) forms of the survey going out based on an accidental error in initial release, and the political nature that the NODE discussion has taken on. But it is always important to acknowledge the time residents and stakeholders take to provide input and factor such feedback into a plan's recommendations as much as possible. The future of the NODE itself will warrant further discussion and the city is already in talks for additional MEDC technical assistance to help it navigate the decision, but if it does continue, there is no denying that the NODE can and should serve as a catalyst for winter time activity and vibrancy in Niles.

KEY PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS



CONDUCT AN ANNUAL WINTER ENHANCEMENT WORKSHOP

To build and maintain momentum towards the goal of becoming a better winter city and improving quality of life in winter, an annual workshop should be held to solicit community input and ideas, and discuss upcoming efforts, lessons learned and new initiatives. The initial project team can lead this effort and expand the team as new stakeholders and interested persons and groups are identified.



THE NODE

Ideas for improvements to make the NODE (or its successor) more comfortable in winter can be found on the winter patio concept drawing included on the next page. Wind break ideas include Christmas trees, straw bales or canvas panels. More hanging lights would brighten up the space.

A wood decking system, such as shown in the photograph here, would be pretty simple to install, and can be temporary stay in place for a long time. The system pictured would

or

THE NODE IN WINTER

Photo Source: Niles Outdoor Downtown Experience Facebook page



*Downtown Mount Pleasant is vibrant with the addition of **Light Curtains** in the winter.*

Photo Source: City of Mount Pleasant, MI

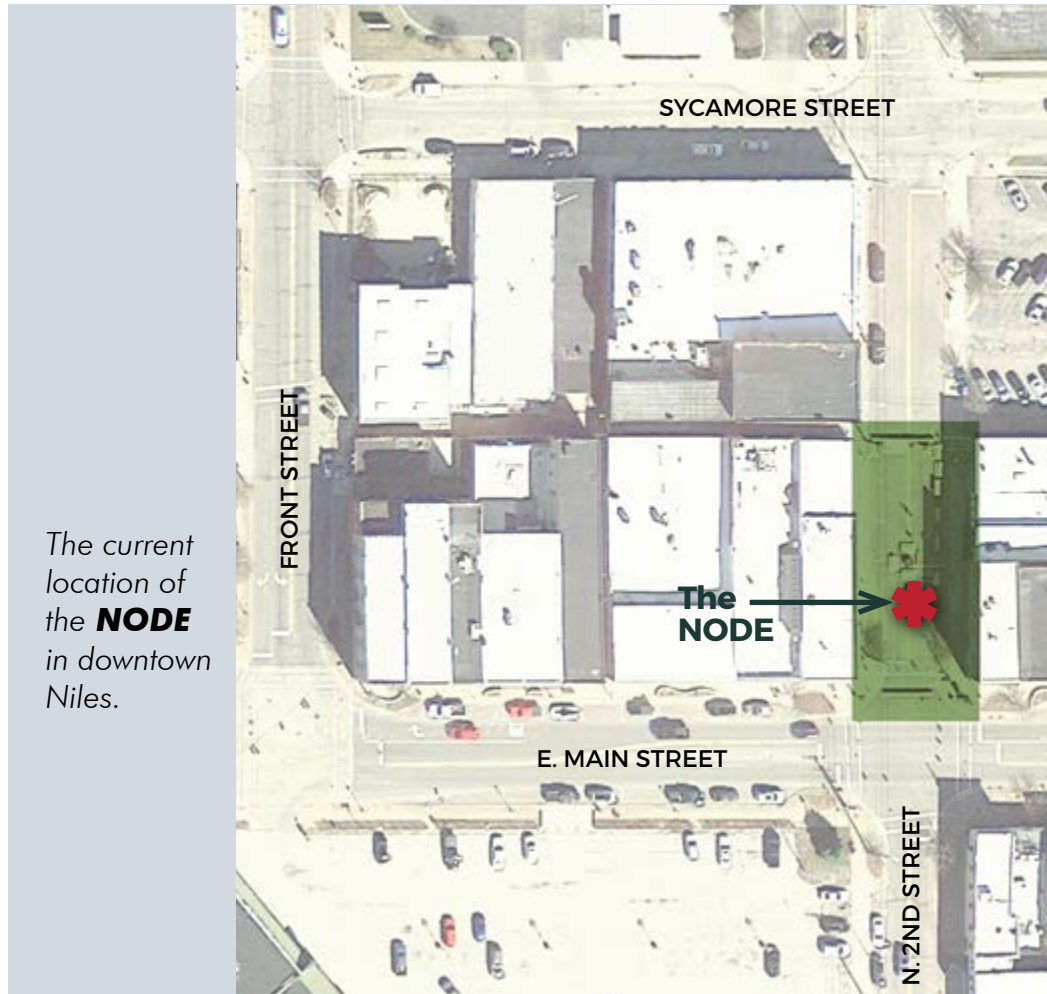
also work with the existing street drainage, relieving concerns about interrupting storm-water.

LIGHT UP PUBLIC SPACES AND BUILDINGS

Without a consistent white blanket of snow, the winter in Niles is dark and dreary. Snow on the ground reflects ambient light and makes a tremendous difference to offset the long winter nights. A Niles Lightscaping project is suggested as a way to brighten up the community. Lighted public spaces can lift a community's spirits and improve winter attitudes.

Downtown trees are lighted with twinkle lights throughout winter. This project would expand that effort to include public parks and public buildings.

A great place to begin the Niles Lightscaping project is along the Riverfront Walkway. Lighting trees, and even light curtains or canopies could be installed. It should be lighted up evenings and mornings. This would also encourage evening use of the walkway. It would be highly visible from the bridges and west side of the river and could become an attraction to bring people to Niles.



*The current location of the **NODE** in downtown Niles.*



Photo Source: Atlanta City Studio, <https://www.atlcitystudio.org/broadst>

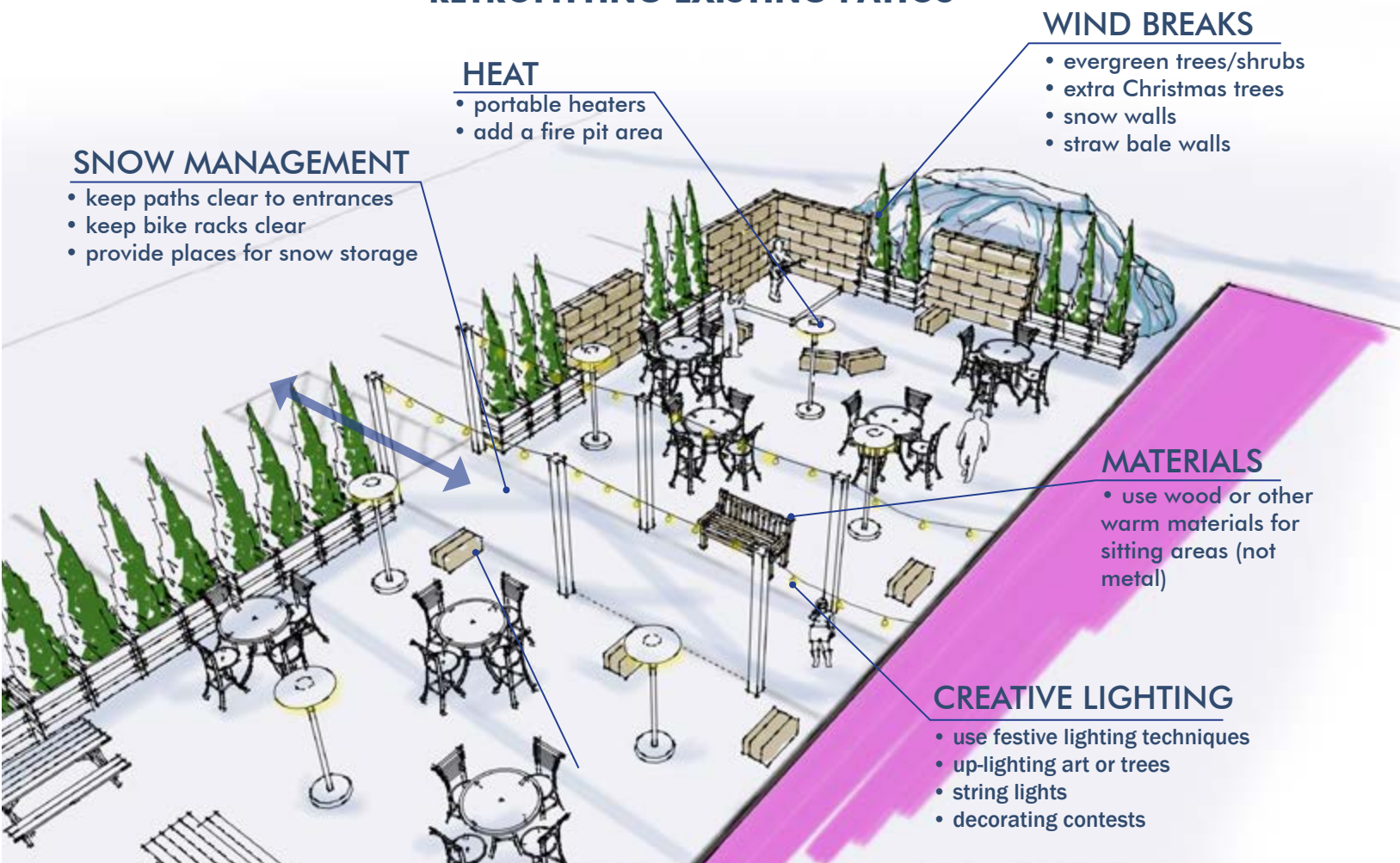
KEY PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS



Public buildings can use indirect or up-lighting to show off architectural features. Lighting also improves security.

The project could expand into city neighborhoods and along major arterials. Homeowners and businesses can be encouraged to consider lightscaping treatments beyond the typical holiday lighting.

RETROFITTING EXISTING PATIOS



The diagram above shows how various elements can work together to create dynamic and safe outdoor spaces that will provide protection from the winter elements.

ICE SKATING

At one time, there were three (3) outdoor skating rinks in Niles. Two (2) of the rink sites actually had/have clay liners installed to reduce water use while flooding and making ice. Due to the unreliable winter conditions, volunteers became frustrated when the fruits of their labor disappeared with a thaw. A pavilion cover over the rink area could prolong the life of a skating rink by shading it from sunshine and sheltering the rink from rainfall. The City should explore the possibility of reviving ice skating in the community at one of the previously used rink sites.

BLUE RIBBON TOWN SQUARE

The northwest corner of Front and Main Streets is a prominent location in downtown and the City. Much of this site is currently occupied by a parking lot. This site would be an excellent location for the development of an all-season Town Square that would tie the downtown to the Blue Ribbon Gardens along the riverfront. The site could be used for a variety of special events and gatherings.

A special feature would be the development of a refrigerated ice loop, also called a skating ribbon. A

A **Blue Ribbon Town Square** could be located near Riverfront Park and Main Street

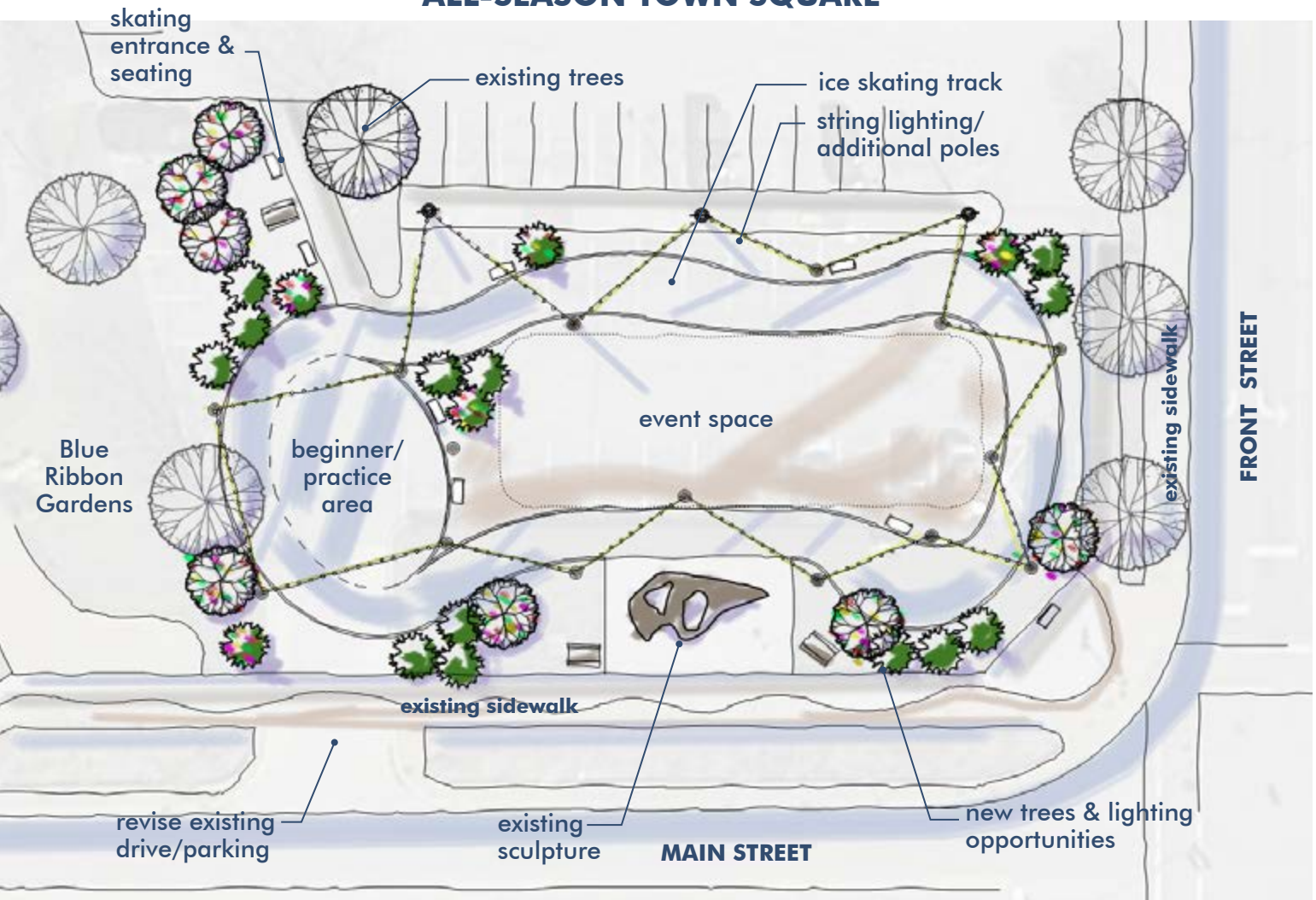


KEY PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS



skating ribbon is much more interesting and fun than a round, oval or square ice rink. Refrigerated ice would allow an extended season and guarantee ice for as much as 3 months. It is recognized there are significant costs to create this public space and the skating ribbon, however, it is possible that grants for “placemaking” and foundation grants for improving public health could be leveraged.

ALL-SEASON TOWN SQUARE



The diagram above is an example of how removing some parking can allow for an ice skating track with space in the center for events or a winter market, additional seating, lighting and decoration opportunities.

An example of an **Ice Skating Ribbon** in Pittsburgh's South Park.

Photo Source: Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Darrell Sapp/Post-Gazette



SNOW SCULPTURES AND SNOWMEN

It is possible to collect and store clean snow (not from parking lots) in a pile in a shaded area, cover it with a tarp and straw bales, and use it to make snow cubes for carving sculptures, making snowmen, or even snowballs. Plywood boxes can be constructed and filled with snow (a snowblower works well). After 24 hours, the plywood is removed, leaving a perfect cube of compacted snow for carving. Make a few of these and hold a competition. Bring in an expert to teach people how to carve snow.

This would be a fun way to expand upon the popular Hunter Ice Festival.



PRINCIPLES OF WINTER CITY PLANNING



Improving livability in “winter cities” requires a creative, innovative approach that addresses the problems of snow and cold while enhancing the advantages, opportunities and beauty of the winter season. A positive approach benefits the attitudes of residents, and bolsters the community’s ability to retain and attract new business and residents. While these guidelines are directed towards the city overall, many can be applied to business districts and downtowns.

The following general winter city planning principles define this approach. These best practices can be referenced when implementing items in the Action Plan.

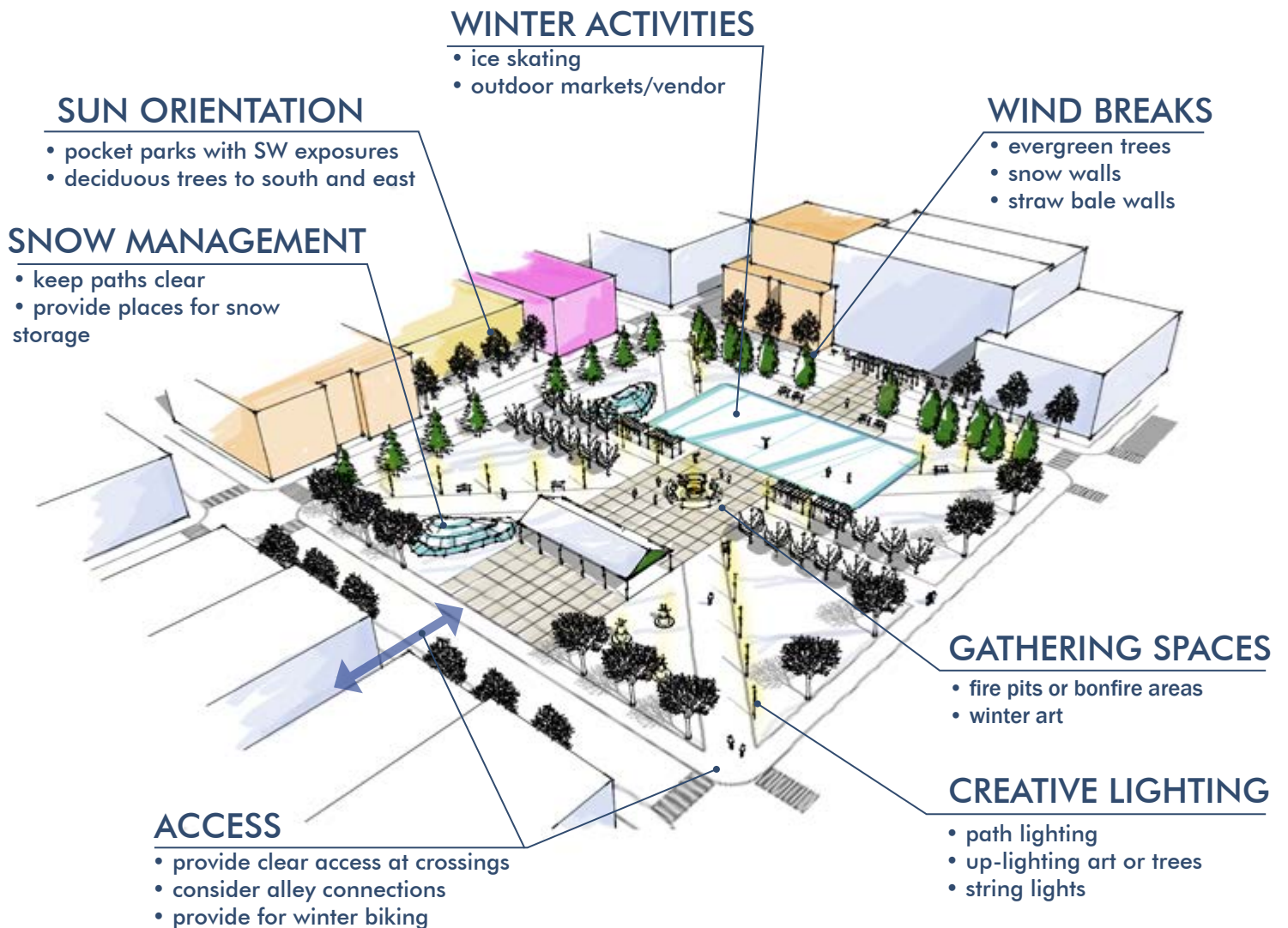
PROVIDE OR ENHANCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WINTER OUTDOOR ACTIVITY

- Consider ways to use existing city parks and open space for additional winter activities, such as a sledding hill, an ice skating rink or pathway, outdoor gathering area with a fire pit and creative warming hut.
- Create winter trails within the city on old rail grades. Where possible, connect existing trails and walkways.
 - Maintaining/grooming the snow for a multi-purpose skiing, running and walking path is possible where below freezing temperatures predominate.
 - Communities that experience extended above freezing temperatures may find it better to plow the trail for walking/running/biking.

IMPROVE WINTER TRANSPORTATION FOR PEDESTRIANS, CYCLISTS AND PUBLIC TRANSIT USERS

- Designate critical pedestrian areas that should receive priority when clearing sidewalks and walkways.
- Consider recruiting the assistance of local residents, such as business owners, neighborhood groups, or other organizations to maintain critical areas.
- Ensure that transition areas such as curb-cuts and bus stop platforms are properly plowed to ensure pedestrian safety, as these areas are often a collecting point for large mounds of icy snow due to street plowing.

TOWN SQUARE WINTER DESIGN STRATEGIES



The ideal town square would include some of these design features to provide both comfort from the elements and interactive pedestrian spaces during the cold winter months.

PRINCIPLES OF WINTER CITY PLANNING



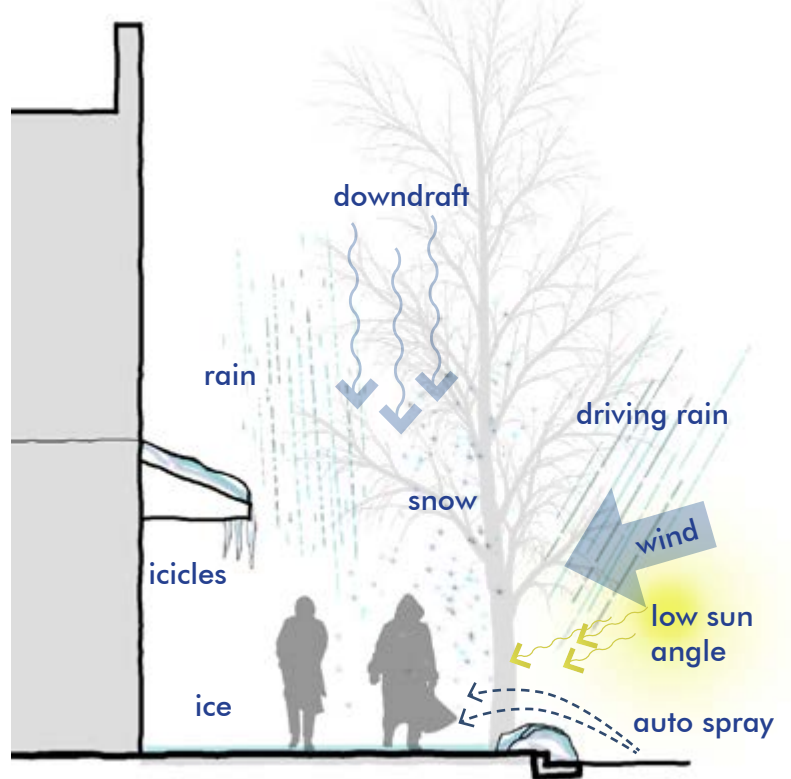
DESIGN FOR WINTER SAFETY AND COMFORT

- ❑ Take advantage of solar radiation in the orientation of buildings and outdoor spaces to provide a southern exposure to heat and sunlight.
- ❑ Use buildings and vegetation to protect outdoor spaces, such as vest pocket parks, from prevailing winter winds.
- ❑ Avoid building orientations which will create a wind tunneling effect.
- ❑ Avoid creating public spaces for winter use in areas that are shaded from the sun.
- ❑ Provide shelters or wind blocks in areas that serve as outdoor gathering spaces.
- ❑ Use technology and materials appropriate for a “winter city”.

Outdoor furniture should be constructed using appropriate materials such as wood, polyethylene, or vinyl-coated metal.

- ❑ Cover ramps or stairs to protect them from snow and ice.
- ❑ Provide handrails for all public and private walkways that exist on slopes. Particularly hazardous areas, such as steps and ramps, may need to be heated to prevent snow and ice from accumulating.
- ❑ Design roofs to account for snow and ice accumulation and also prevent snow and ice from shedding onto parking areas or pedestrian walkways.
- ❑ Create transition areas at building entrances to provide patrons with an area to shed snow prior to entering the building.

ELEMENTS OF PEDESTRIAN DISCOMFORTS IN WINTER CITIES



WINTER ACTIVITY

The **Marquette Commons** is a town square designed for all season use. In Spring, Summer and Fall, the plaza is used as a Farmers Market. In winter, it is transformed into an ice skating rink



Anchorage, Alaska, with a climate similar to northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula, grooms their extensive bike / walking / running trails for winter use. People walk, run, bike, and ski on the packed snow surface.



Eau Claire, Wisconsin, began clearing snow from a natural area bike and walking path as a pilot project in their Wintermission Eau Claire program. The pilot project has been an overwhelming success.



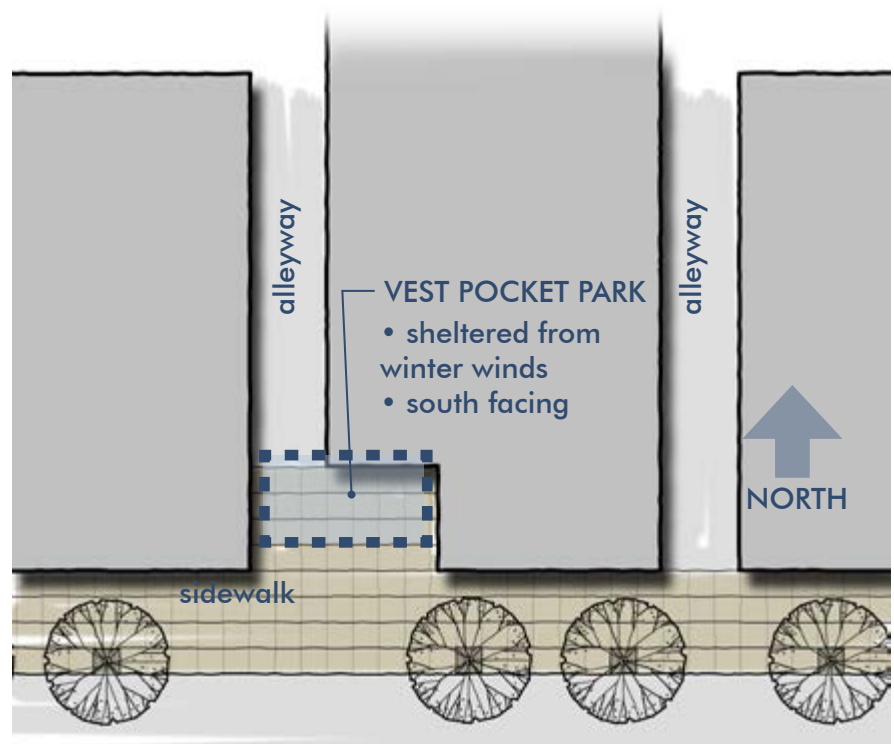
PRINCIPLES OF WINTER CITY PLANNING



SNOW MANAGEMENT

- ❑ Consider snow plowing and removal in the design of road improvements such as curb extensions/bump outs, to allow for easy maneuverability of equipment around such areas.
- ❑ Design road cross-sections to provide an area for snow storage to prevent snow from being plowed onto the sidewalks when the street is cleared of snow.
- ❑ Bike lanes should not be used for snow storage, as more people are using bicycles for transportation year-round.
- ❑ Bike lanes should be maintained to the same standard as streets in order to encourage more people to commute by bicycle.
- ❑ Bike parking racks should not be put away for the winter season.
- ❑ Map out snow management problem areas and issues to evaluate the impacts of winter winds and drifting snow on city streets and walking paths.
- ❑ Redesign areas where wind is problematic to use earth forms and vegetation to reduce wind and drifting snow.
- ❑ Investigate the use of new equipment or innovative technology for snow removal.

VEST PARKS IN WINTER CITIES

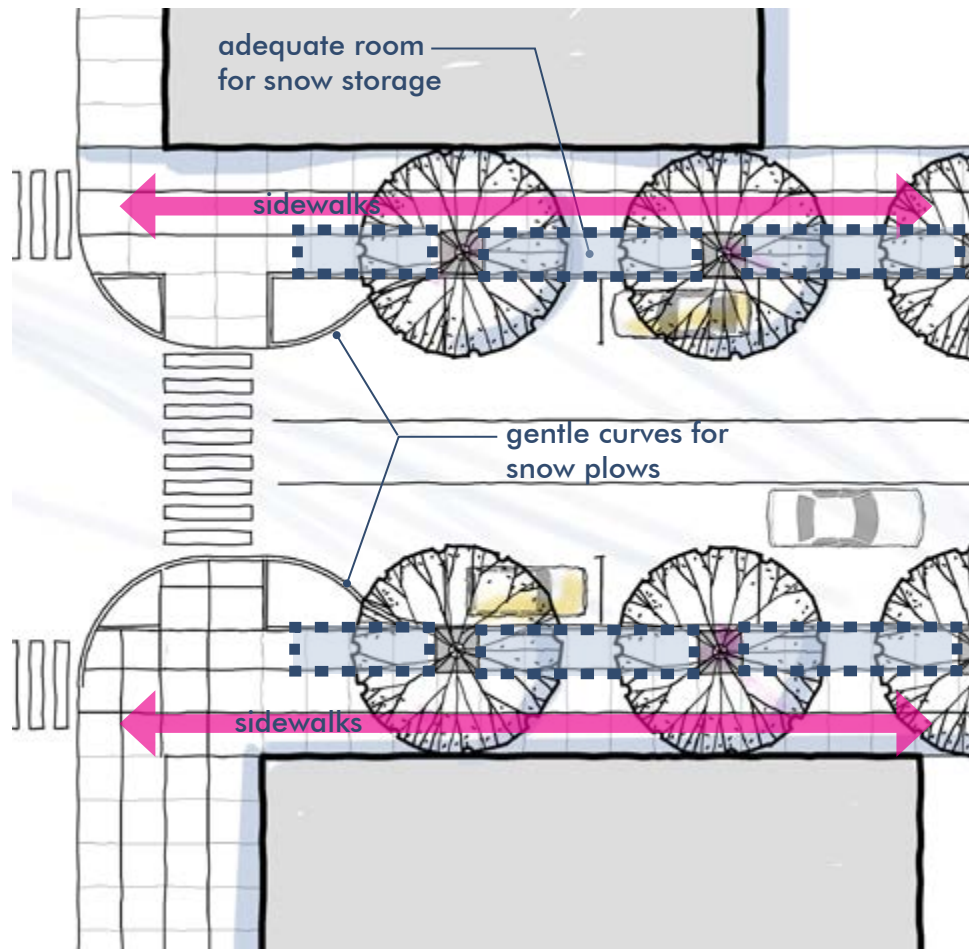


SNOW MANAGEMENT

CONTINUED...

- ❑ Locate snow storage areas where they will receive sufficient solar radiation to encourage melt-off and provide adequate drainage.
- ❑ Store snow in a number of smaller sites, rather than one large area in order to speed up the melting process.
- ❑ Balance the need for efficient snow removal with other considerations such as walkability, aesthetics, and parking.
- ❑ Explore and implement appropriate “best practices” for snow management that will improve service, reduce inconvenience and increase citizen satisfaction.

SNOW PLOWING & STORAGE



PRINCIPLES OF WINTER CITY PLANNING

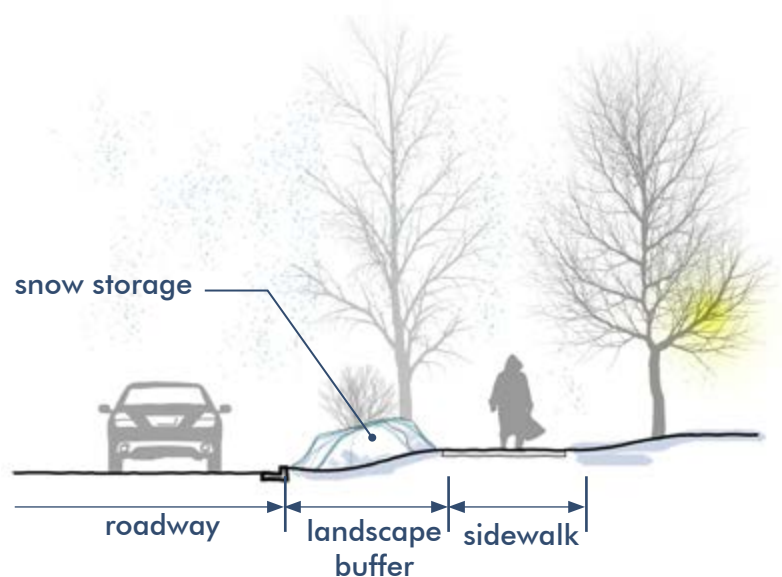


VEGETATION AND LANDSCAPING

- ❑ Plant deciduous trees on the southern face of a building or outdoor area to provide cooling in the summer (when leaves are present), while still allowing sunlight to filter in during the winter (when leaves have fallen).
- ❑ Coniferous vegetation should be used on the north and west sides to protect the area from prevailing winter winds.
- ❑ Use berms and vegetation to direct snow drifts away from building entrances.
- ❑ Select appropriate landscaping for snow storage areas to minimize damage and poor growth due to compaction, pollutants, and poor drainage.
- ❑ Consider using vegetation as snow fences to protect open roadways and other areas from prevailing winter winds.
- ❑ Create “outdoor rooms” using trees and vegetation to shelter exposed areas from prevailing winds.
- ❑ Use landscaping plant species that offer attractive or useful winter characteristics such as twig color, fruit, and salt-tolerance.



LANDSCAPE BUFFERS & SETBACKS

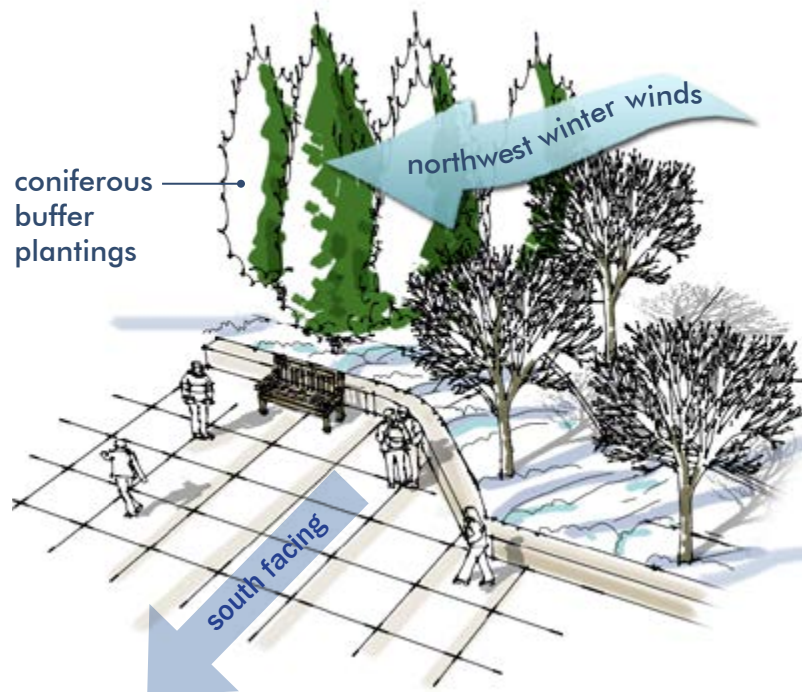


LIGHTING AND COLOR

- Consider color and lighting treatments for public spaces and buildings, in order to offset the darkness and monotony of the winter season.



OUTDOOR ROOMS



PRINCIPLES OF WINTER CITY PLANNING



MAKE WINTER A POSITIVE ASSET TO ATTRACT BUSINESS, TOURISM AND NEW RESIDENTS

- ❑ Collaborate with other area organizations to create a sustainable annual winter festival featuring family outdoor activities, snow/ice sculptures, winter market, food and music.
- ❑ Consider implementing a “winter market” to capture a greater share of winter tourism.
- ❑ Dress up downtown with lighting, public art, and snow/ice sculptures for the entire winter season, not just the holidays.



Houghton, Michigan takes advantage of steep grades and snow for this event.

LIGHT UP THE DARK

Lighting public space and buildings brightens up dark days and nights and creates winter beauty.

The **Place D'Youville** in **Quebec City** is an historic public square that features lighting of the surrounding buildings and a winter ice rink.



Tiny **Copper Harbor**, the northernmost community in Michigan lights up their town park with a beautiful display.

