

# Community Engagement Summary 1

From first public meeting on Monday, July 31, 2017



## First Resilient Bridgman Community Meeting a success; changing and unstable water levels in the Great Lakes presented as a basis for action

**Date:** Monday, July 31, 2017

**Public Attendance:** 43

**Staff Present:**

Juan Ganum, Bridgman City Manager

Kendall Gilbert, Community Planner at LIAA

Zachary Rable, University of Michigan

Harry Burkholder, Executive Director of LIAA

Richard Norton, University of Michigan

Guy Meadows, Michigan Technological University

The Resilient Bridgman Community Master Planning Process kicked off on the evening of **Monday, July 31, 2017**, as more than 40 people gathered at the Weko Beach House overlooking Lake Michigan to learn what exactly a resilient master plan is, and why such plans are increasingly important for coastal communities like Bridgman.

The Community Meeting was advertised on the City of Bridgman website, on Facebook, in the Harbor Country News and the Herald-Palladium, on WSJM Radio, and on flyers throughout City Hall. The event drew a mix of full-time permanent residents and part-time seasonal residents.

Following a welcome from Bridgman City Manager Juan Ganum, Executive Director of the Land Information Access Association (LIAA) Harry Burkholder explained that the nonprofit's role in the master planning project is to help Bridgman identify and understand its current level of community resiliency, and how residents and government leaders can develop a policy and planning framework that acts as a blueprint for guiding future growth and development decisions.

Members of the project team emphasized that it is the proximity to Lake Michigan and the influences of coastal dynamics that make planning for natural events in Bridgman an essential part of any community development plan. Bridgman, like other Michigan coastal communities, will be challenged and tasked in the coming years with managing the coastline, determining public land access rights, reinforcing and/or supporting the shoreline sustainably, and planning for possible population shifts as the state is projected to become even more attractive for people wishing to live in a mild climate close to freshwater resources and activities.

Guy Meadows, Director of the Great Lakes Research Center and Robbins Professor of Sustainable Marine Technology at Michigan Technological University, displayed large graphs depicting Great Lakes water levels over the past 100 years. Changes in the water levels are recurring and a normal part of coastal ecosystems. However, trends over the past 20 years have indicated a need to take a closer look at shoreline dynamics and how they affect public beaches, erosion, and lakefront residential properties.

Richard Norton, Professor and Chair of the Urban and Regional Planning Program at the University of Michigan, works closely with Dr. Meadows and the Great Lakes Research Center to help generate data and training materials that examine the hydrologic forces at play along coastal communities. Their work has led them to facilitate discussions about the public trust doctrine and other principles that define coastal shorelines. As shorelines change, so do the entities that manage them. The State of Michigan and various other organizations have become interested in collaborating with coastal communities to reexamine master plans, zoning ordinances, and building codes and help to unify them across the state in an effort to protect, preserve, and conserve unique beaches, shorelines, dune systems and coastal ecosystems, and to protect private property and civic infrastructure investments.

## Engagement Activity Results

### Exercise 1. Visioning Statements

Attendees were asked to fill out a visioning diagram detailing what they love about Bridgman, as well as what they think Bridgman needs more or less of as a community. The results are shared here:

*I love Bridgman because...*

- The lake and camping
- Camping
- Camping and the beach
- Lake, school, location
- Beach, small town community, schools
- Weather, proximity to Lake Michigan, reasonable cost of living, proximity to Chicago
- The boat ramp, the schools, the public safety (police, fire, ISO rating)
- Proximity and location, natural abundance, wineries, breweries, restaurants, city government with flexible thinking, people, farms, schools, industry
- Weko Beach, friendly small town, growth and fun places to visit
- The beach and people
- Good retirement community
- The lake and beach, small and friendly, great schools, safe, walkable
- The lake nearby, wide city public beach, small with room to grow and have more amenities
- Lake, school, library

*I think Bridgman needs more of this...*

- Vision
- Consensus
- Citizen participation
- An Amtrak stop
- Designated bike lanes and trails

- Bakery and coffee shop
- Diversity
- Businesses that grow jobs and the local economy
- Stricter city regulations for homes, yards, upkeep
- An attractive Lake Street
- Hardware store
- Hotel
- Affordable housing
- Jobs and industry
- Bakery
- Fine dining establishment
- Hotel
- Coffee shop
- Golf carts
- Biking and hiking trails
- Family activities
- Family-friendly dining establishments
- “Holiday Inn” type hotel
- Businesses and activities for young people
- Improve the parades
- Movie theater, fine arts activities, art gallery
- Restaurant in the beach house
- Add hanging flower baskets to Lake Street
- Hotel
- Movie theater
- Soda shop
- Video game shops
- Improved park bathrooms

*And less of this...*

- Old thinking
- Alcohol-based establishments
- Heavy truck traffic on Lake Street
- Old, unkempt buildings on Lake Street
- Less drinking establishments
- 1980s thinking
- Railroad crossings
- Vacant buildings

## Exercise 2. Identifying Assets and Opportunities

Following the individual visioning activity and exercise, attendees were asked to work as a group to identify what they consider to be community assets, and where there are opportunities to improve. The results are listed below.

Assets	Areas for Improvement
The beach and geographic location	Bike lanes and multi-modal transportation
Access to the lake and boat ramp	Varied commercial markets
The school system	Increased density
Community services such as the library and public safety departments	Improved entrance to the city
Water quality	Public transportation
Beer and wine trails	Parks and open space
	Corridor improvement for Red Arrow

## Exercise 3. Our Vision Statements

Upon completing the identification of assets and opportunities, attendees were asked to create a joint goal or vision statement to help guide the Resilient Bridgman Master Plan process and act as a benchmark for determining which goals and objectives should be featured throughout the final draft plan. The vision statements were as follows:

### Vision 1

We want Bridgman to be a full-service town with resident-focused, year-round amenities that maintains a small town and hometown quality and is interconnected to regional cities via transit.

### Vision 2

We want Bridgman to be a part of a regional community with a vision for the future.

### Vision 3

We want Bridgman to be a visually attractive, outdoor friendly, “Gotta see it” city.

The Resilient Bridgman Project Team would like to thank everyone who was able to attend the first Community Meeting and share their input, experiences and questions. These meetings will continue to be held monthly through December 2017, and will be advertised on the Resilient Bridgman website at [www.resilientmichigan.org/bridgman](http://www.resilientmichigan.org/bridgman). We look forward to furthering this open dialogue and receiving valuable input on developing a resilient master plan for the community of Bridgman. For further information on these meetings please **contact Juan Ganum** at [jganum@bridgman.org](mailto:jganum@bridgman.org) or by phone at **(269) 465-5144**.