

A Vision for VanVoorhis

Prepared for Monongalia County Commission

by

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Executive Summary

Like many other former glass factory sites, that the former Quality Glass Company location in VanVoorhis is contaminated with lead and possibly other chemicals. The simplest way to restore such a site is to seal it by paving the surface.

While such a procedure is suitable for this location, grant funding for remediation efforts is conditional on the economic development (job creation) potential.

This preliminary plan outlines one possibility for approximately 35 acres of river bottom land at VanVoorhis. This area is only 500 feet wide at its maximum, but extends for almost a mile along the river.

Features included in the plan are a publicly funded boat launch on the actual Quality Glass property, with a capacity of 58 car-trailer units. On adjacent property we can envision private development of a commercial marina, a residential marina which we have termed "The Harbor," and an art/craft community which we have designated as "The Colony". We have referred to the total package as "Riverville."

Background and General Considerations

Monongalia County Commissioner Bob Bell asked us if we felt that the former Quality Glass Company site in VanVoorhis could be remediated as a boat launch area. Our feeling is that the Quality property should not be considered separately from the 40 plus acre flat on which it lies, and this study provides a more expanded consideration of the question. The overall area is only 500 feet wide at its maximum, but extends for almost a mile along the river.

Like many other former glass factory sites, that the former Quality Glass Company location in VanVoorhis is contaminated with lead and possibly other chemicals. This was verified by a preliminary survey about ten years ago, although neither the extent of the pollution nor a comprehensive listing of contaminants was not determined.

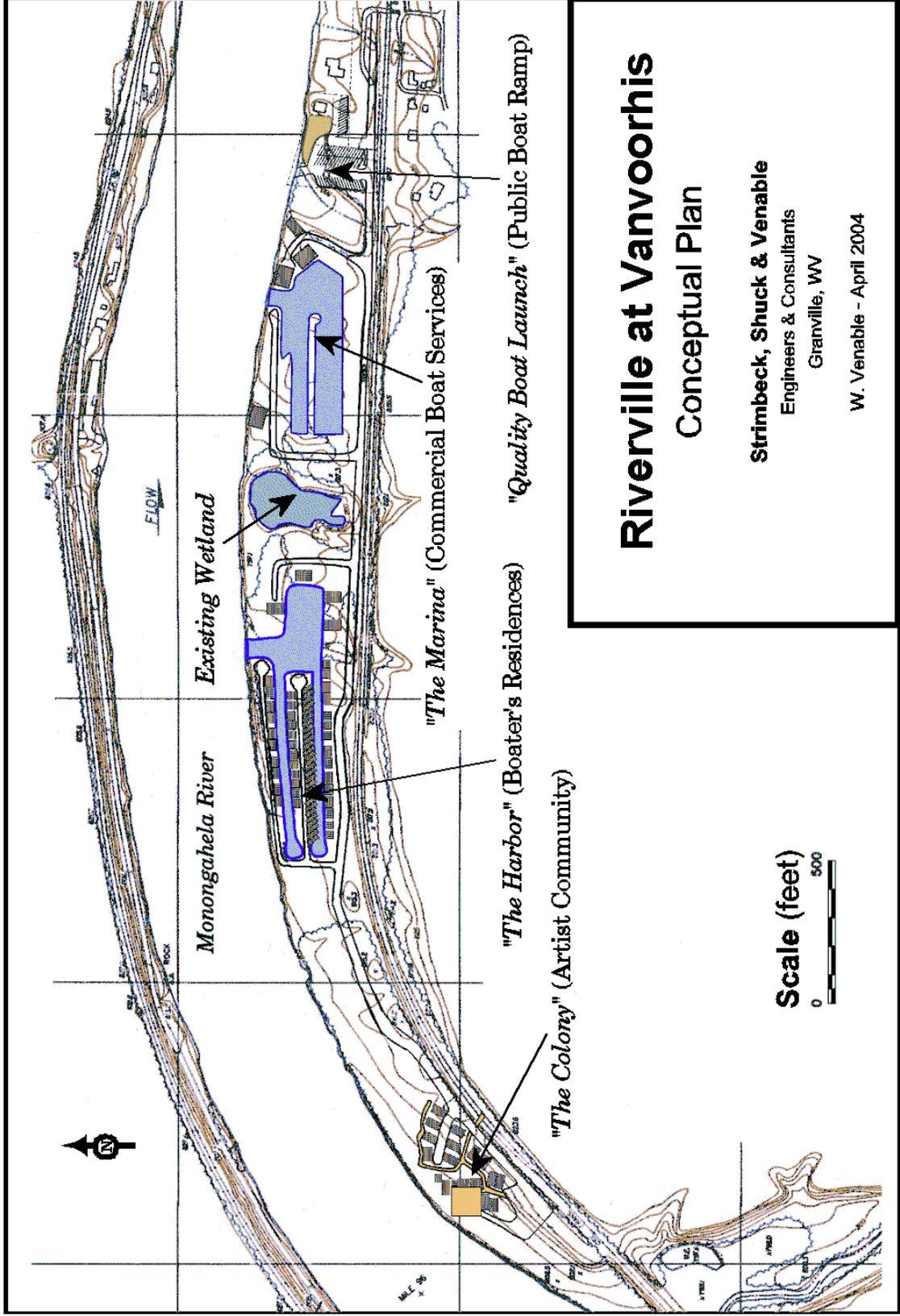
The simplest way to restore such a site is to pave the surface. This seals the surface, preventing spread of the materials. This is generally not considered suitable for residential development, and the acreage essentially becomes either a parking lot or an industrial or commercial pad.

While such a procedure is suitable for this location, grant funding for remediation efforts is conditional on the economic development (job creation) potential. From a funding standpoint, opening the approximately 35 acres of river bottom land at VanVoorhis to development may be a key feature of tackling the Quality problem.

The Quality Glass site controls development of about thirty additional acres. This is because a steep hillside and the Rail-Trail make it uneconomical to construct road access from any other direction, and any practical access must be across the contaminated area.

While access to the area via VanVoorhis Road is somewhat restricted, the location is near the WVU Medical Center, ALOSH, Biotechnology development area, NETL, and other employers of well-paid professionals. We have chosen a development scheme which is relatively low in density, but high in interest as a destination area. It is intended to have a symbiotic interaction with the River and the Rail-Trail. It is intended as a set of "special places," not as a place that "everyman" would actually expect to live. It is part of the vision of the Greater Morgantown area as an unusual and special place deserving of national attention.

The larger site includes a pond/wetland area. We have suggested that this be retained, with possible aesthetic and or ecological improvements. One major reason for this is that regulations would require construction of a new wetland if the current one was removed.



Riverville at Vanvoorhis

Conceptual Plan

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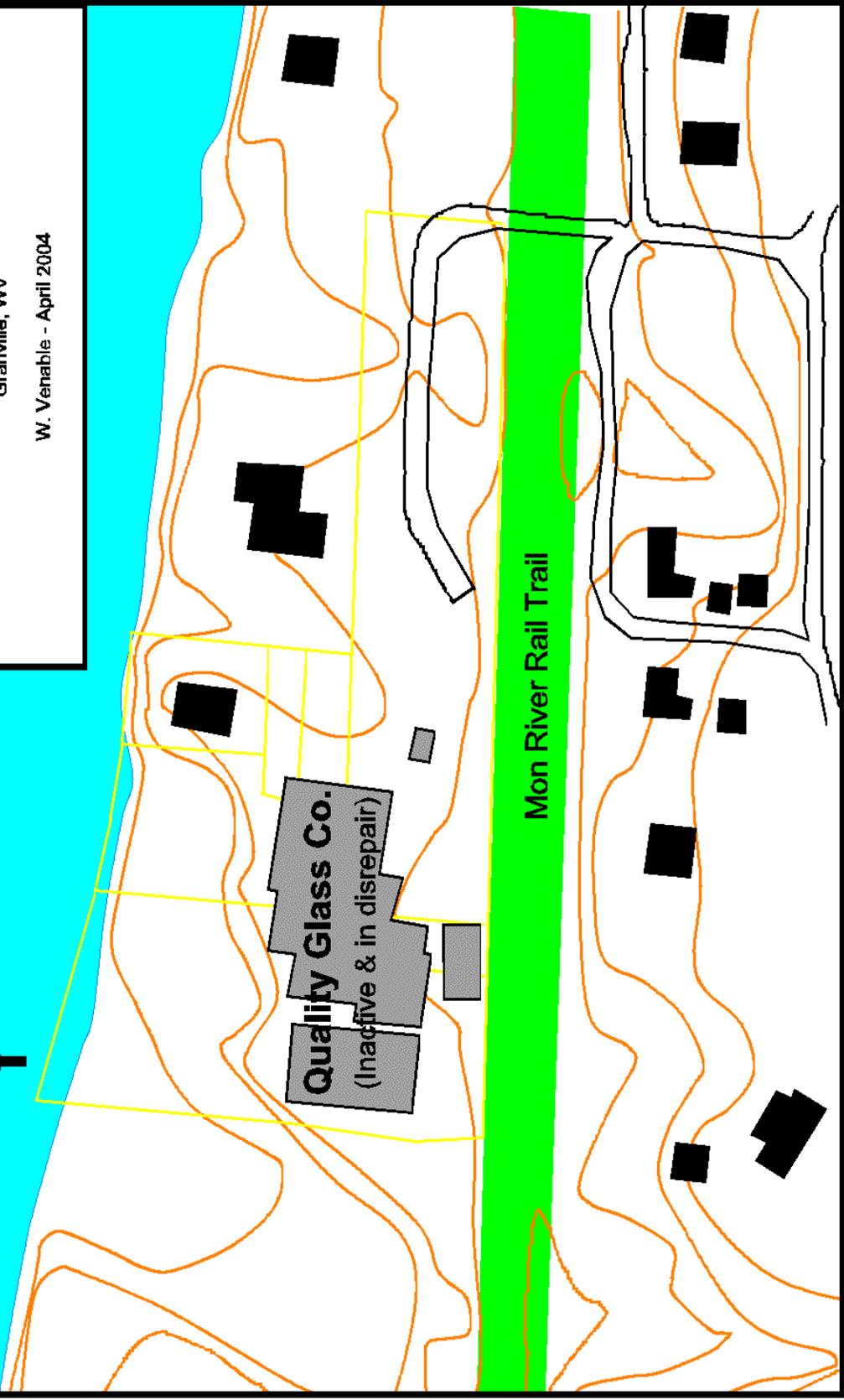
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Scale (feet)
 0 500

Vanvoorhis Boat Launch Current Configuration

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Quality Boat Launch Facility

Our preliminary review of the Quality Glass site leads us to conclude that an important boat launch facility is well suited to the site.

Currently there is no launch area on the river within the County which is large enough to accommodate current demands, particularly those in conjunction with bass fishing tournaments.

Limiting paving primarily to the estimated polluted area, we estimate that approximately 58 trailers and tow vehicles could be accommodated on paved surfaces. This would make it the largest boat launch area on the Upper Monongahela.

The capacity is smaller than we would like to see, but we feel that retention of some green space is highly desirable. Barriers between paved and green areas could be made removable to provide some additional parking for fishing tournaments or other special events.

The green space within the boat launch facility should be designated as an overnight "boat camping" area for small boat users cruising the Upper Monongahela River Trail. Only occasional use is to be expected, and no special construction would be needed.

In the short term, the owner of the adjacent property might find it advantageous to provide a pad for a concession trailer or construct a small food service building, and to allow "special event" parking. In the longer term, a marina operator might find it advantageous to help with events parking.

The Marina

Currently Monongalia County has two small marinas on the Monongahela River. One of these is operated primarily as a club, the other as a commercial facility with about 25 slips and a primitive boat ramp. Both have very limited potential for expansion because of small site size.

The proposed design is based on the construction of an excavated basin. This provides boats with protection from the wakes created by river traffic and from river currents. It also reduces drift and debris during normal high run-off periods. A basin of limited depth also simplifies such things as the recovery of sunken boats and control of resultant fuel spillage damage.

The preliminary plan shows 135 slips for boats ranging up to 45 feet in length. In addition several larger vessels can be accommodated outside the basin. We consider a marina with less than 200 berths to be on the small size, from a business side. The actual business activity envisioned here would actually be enhanced greatly by the adjacent boat ramp and by The Harbor, an adjacent residential development which might be under different ownership.

We have not included boat launching in the site plan because we would expect the adjacent Quality Boat Launch facility to be available. We would expect this marina's

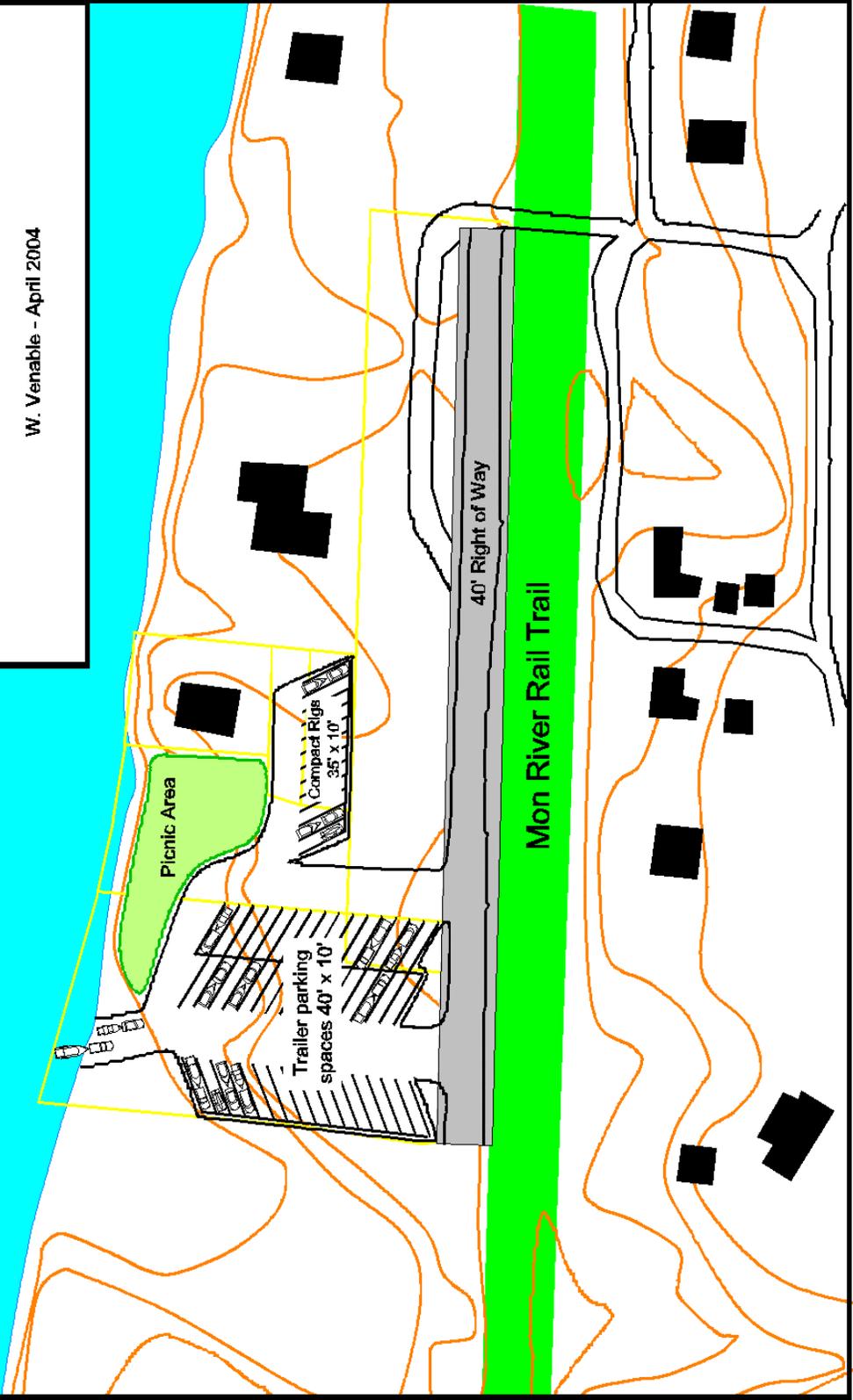
Quality Boat Launch Conceptual Plan

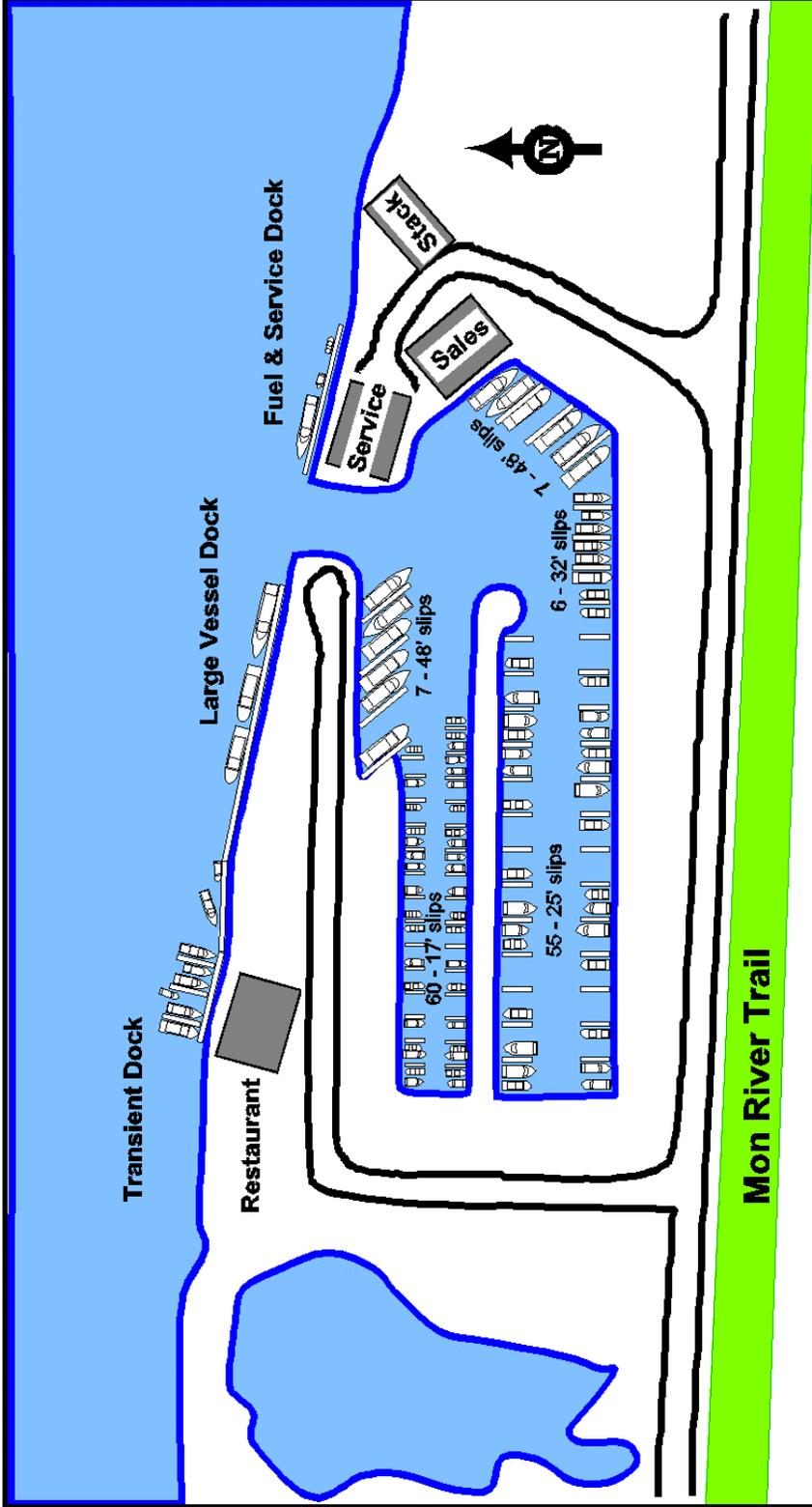
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Scale (feet)





Vanvoorhis Marina

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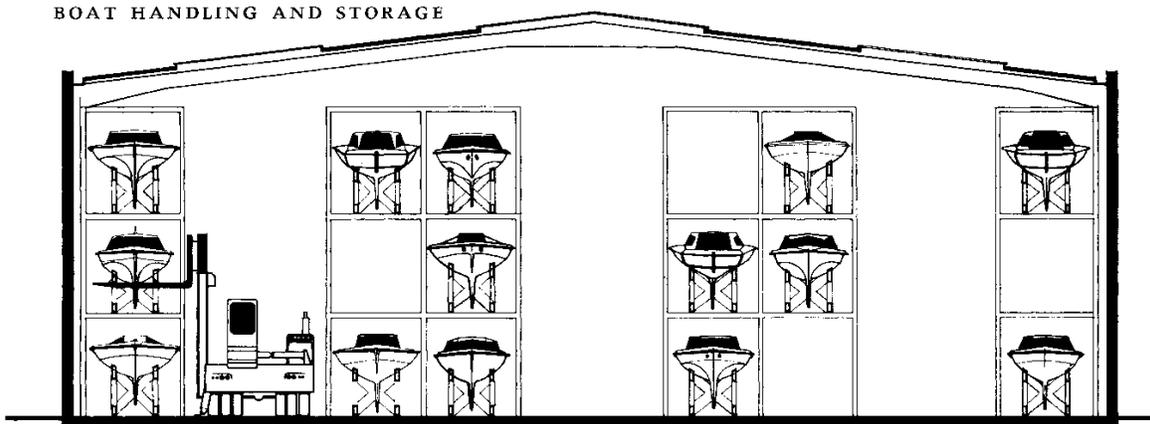
0 Scale (feet) 300



Mon River Trail

larger boat owners to rely on existing facilities at Ten Mile Creek (Mile 65) for out-of-water services.

We have included a "dry stack" storage building for Personal Water Craft and smaller day boats. This would involve launching with a forklift, which could also be used for many service operations. Figure 1 shows the cross-section of a dry-stack designed for



9.21 This covered store houses boats on three levels. The hoist, handling keeled boats, is of heavier duty than the fork-lift type
Aide - Marinas: A Working Guide to Their Development and Design - 2nd ed - 1977

larger boats.

Figure 1. A dry-stack storage unit.

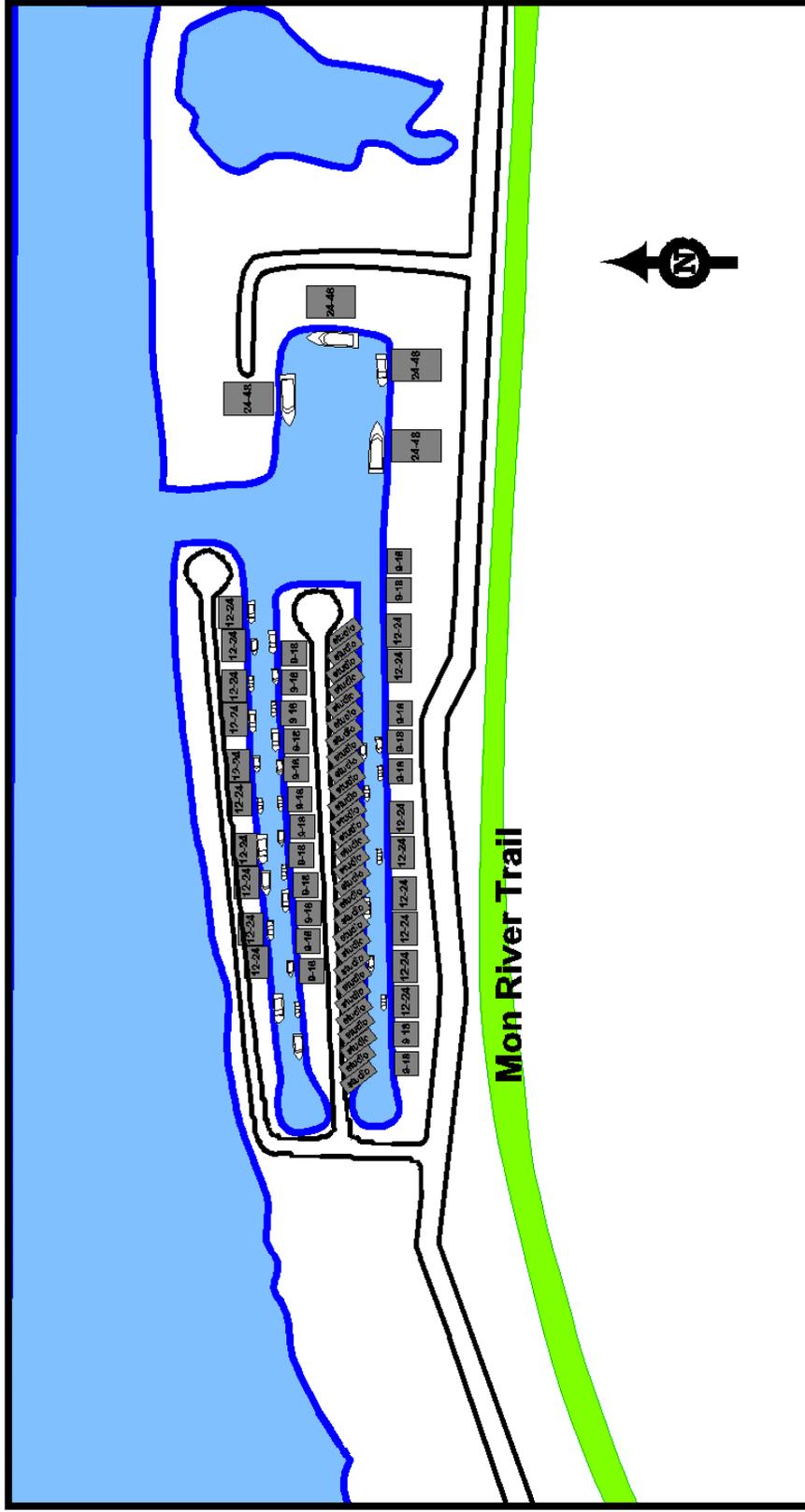
The Harbor

"The Harbor" is a residential community designed for boaters. It is based on housing units with small plots which might be condominium, rental, or privately owned. Canals allow each owner to have private docking.

Such an arrangement is unusual, particularly in the United States, but not highly original. Because of its unusual nature, it would provide something of a "tourist attraction," and a community selling point for the Morgantown area.

"The Harbor" is flood-plane area. This does not mean that it can not be developed, but that it must be developed in ways which reduce the economic impact of flooding. This concept uses two techniques toward this end. The first is to use materials generated in the canal excavation as fill for roadways, etc. The second is to use structures elevated on columns. Most surface area would be used for parking, patios, gardens, etc. as well as for informal greenspace.

Figure 2 shows a "weekend" housing unit based on these principles. This unit is about 550 square feet in living area, and adapts reasonably well to a minimum size "studio" apartment.

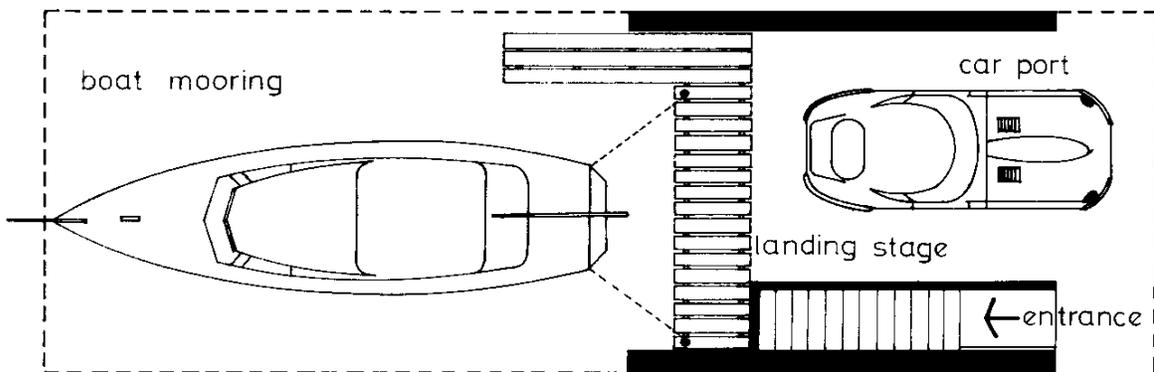
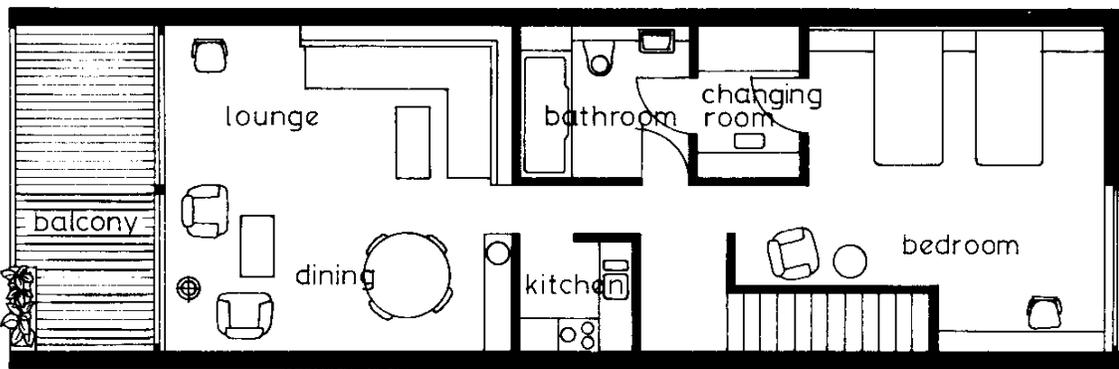
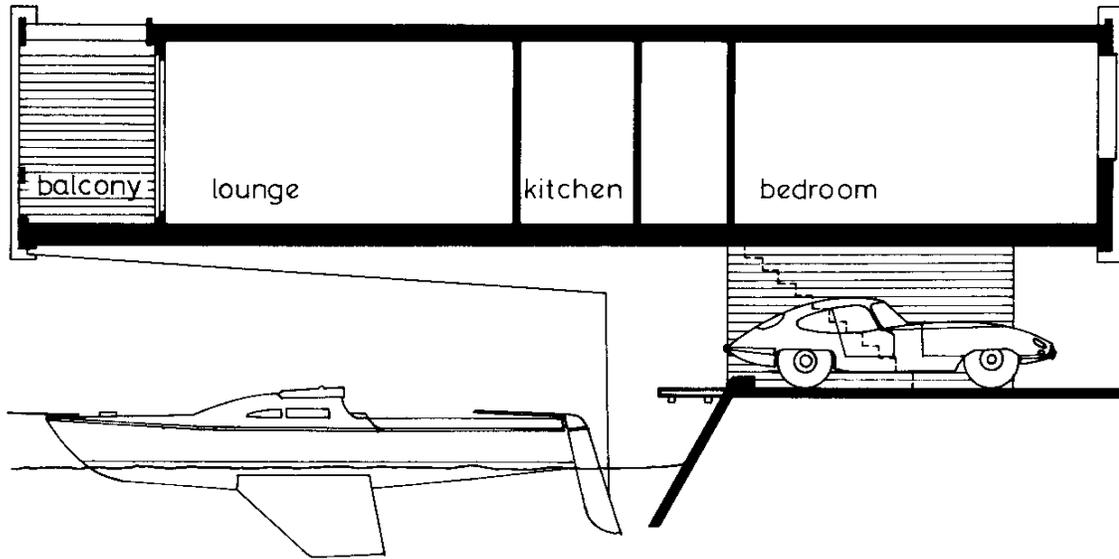


The Harbor - Vanvoorhis

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5.52 Week-end house unit. Within the village, week-end house units take the form shown here. It seems rather fortunate that the keeled boat has no mast.

The Colony

As a university community, Monongalia County has a large and valuable population of workers in the visual arts. Some of these people earn their primary income from teaching, while others work full time at art.

Monongalia County has a variety of galleries, theaters, and arts education sites. At the present time there is no area of the county which provides a concentration of the specialized facilities which can help art flourish as a primary economic activity.

Housing for the arts and crafts presents its own set of problems. The activity spaces share characteristics with light industry, warehousing, light commercial, and residential neighborhoods. In addition, some artists choose to work on very unusual schedules, particularly if they are also employed in another occupation such as teaching. Providing a special area for the arts both reduces conflicts and improves public recognition of art as an economic activity.

We have use a "village" model with lanes and small structures, rather than an "art factory" model. Most of the buildings would have an atelier space with a 12 to 16 foot ceiling height, and a garage door.

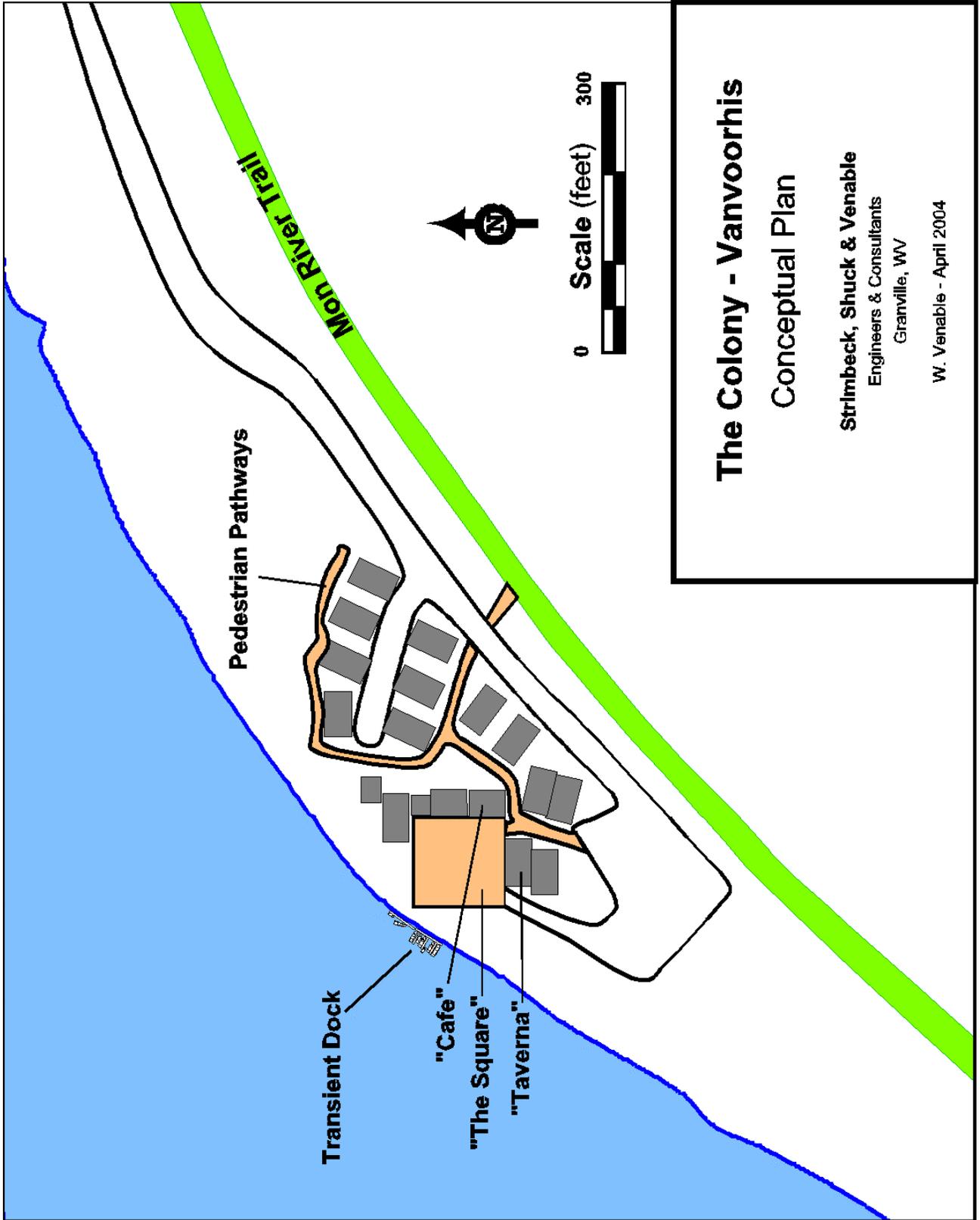
We would envision that tenants or owners might include painters, sculptors, potters, glass blowers, furniture and wood crafters, fabric artists, and more.

We would expect some units to serve as primary residences, while others might be simply workshops.

Architecture should be "eclectic and eccentric," although, of course, health and safety issues will be an important consideration. For aesthetic, as well as functional and economic reasons, the structural design should heavily involve the initial occupants.

Covenants should be considered which require an active studio in each unit in order to maintain the character of an art community, as opposed to a "collectibles" retailing area.

We would envision a café and/or "taverna" and a village square as integral parts of The Colony. These would serve as Rail-Trail highlights, increasing their economic viability.



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