



**ms consultants, inc.**  
engineers, architects, planners



# NILES

## Mahoning River Corridor Plan

Prepared by ms consultants, inc.



# NILES

## COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT

### Overview

The following toolkit explores how the corridor-wide objectives may be specifically applied to the Niles river section with an emphasis on the identified opportunity sites. Each community presents its own challenges and potential for revitalization and river restoration. The Community Implementation Toolkits outline these unique traits, provide context on existing conditions, and offer recommendations for the future. The recommendations are supported by action items and potential funding sources to support feasibility and help ensure implementation. The Community Implementation Toolkits should not serve as a stand-alone guide for the local community, but as an additional, specialized resource to the Mahoning River Corridor Revitalization Plan as a whole.

The Niles Community Implementation Toolkit includes the following sections:

- Existing Conditions
- Primary Opportunity Site
- Implementation Guide

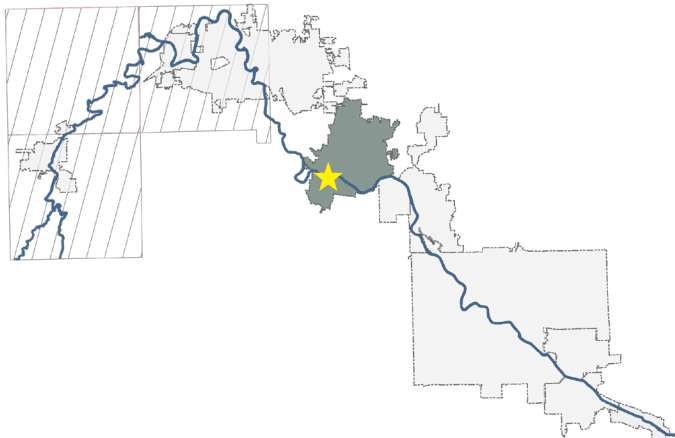
### Existing Conditions

#### OPPORTUNITIES

The City of Niles, centrally located on the River corridor, is an excellent blend of rural landscape and urban amenities. The Mahoning River passes by the middle school, presenting opportunities for nature education. The Niles Greenway and local parks offer residents recreation and the potential to connect with regional park and trail networks. The river's tributaries (Mosquito Creek and Meander Creek) present additional opportunities to capitalize on river restoration and improved habitat health.

#### CHALLENGES

The Mahoning River and its tributaries offer unlimited recreation and environmental potential, but also present challenges for clean up of invasive species and long-term protection and maintenance.



### MAHONING RIVER CORRIDOR RIVERFRONT COMMUNITIES

TRUMBULL COUNTY		MAHONING COUNTY
Newton Township	Newton Falls	Youngstown
Braceville Township	Leavittsburg	Campbell
Warren Township	Warren	Struthers
	<b>Niles</b> ★	Lowellville
	McDonald	
	Girard	

3.61	River Miles
SMALL TOWN CHARM	Character
18,176	People
0	Launches
1.4	Trail Miles

### Dam Removal & Riverbank Restoration in Niles

Removal of the remaining lowhead dams along the Mahoning River will be a monumental leap forward toward the environmental and recreational goals of the Region. Lowhead dams, though small, significantly disrupt the natural flow of water, negatively affecting the river's ecosystem and recreational opportunities.

These dams break the Mahoning River into segments requiring river-goers to have to spot and avoid these dams which are often almost impossible to see and are notoriously dangerous drowning hazards. Removal of these dams will also open to Mahoning to safer kayaking, fishing, and light boating and could create an economic spark for the communities along the River's banks.

Currently, the Mahoning River Water Trail terminates just before the Summit St Dam at Packard Park in Warren. Removal of upstream dams can open the blueway to extend into Niles, spurring recreational and commercial opportunities for the community and Region at large.

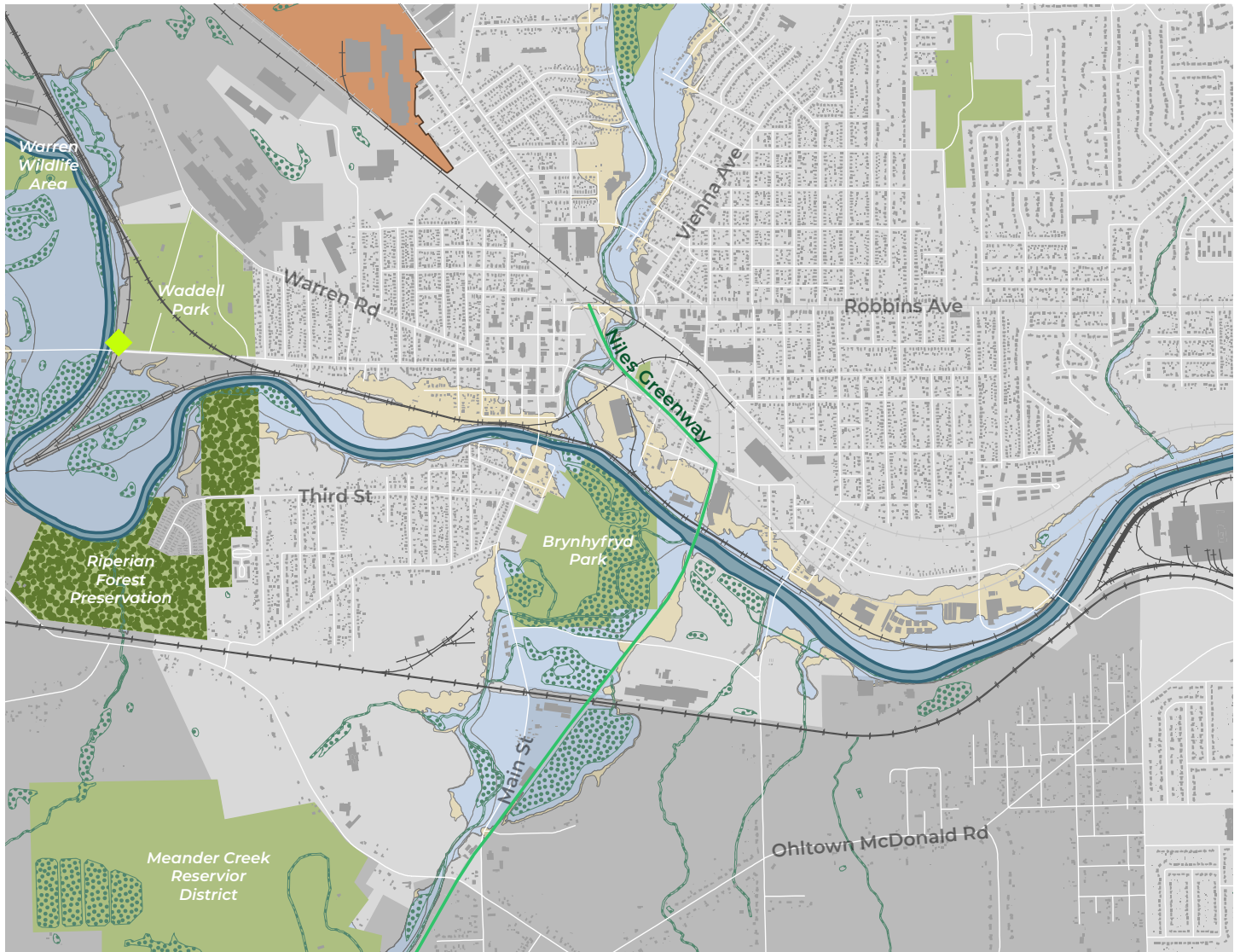
**NILES**



**MAHONING RIVER**  
Corridor Revitalization  
[www.mymahoningriver.com](http://www.mymahoningriver.com)



FIGURE1 EXISTING CONDITIONS - ENVIRONMENT



## THE ENVIRONMENT

### Existing Conditions

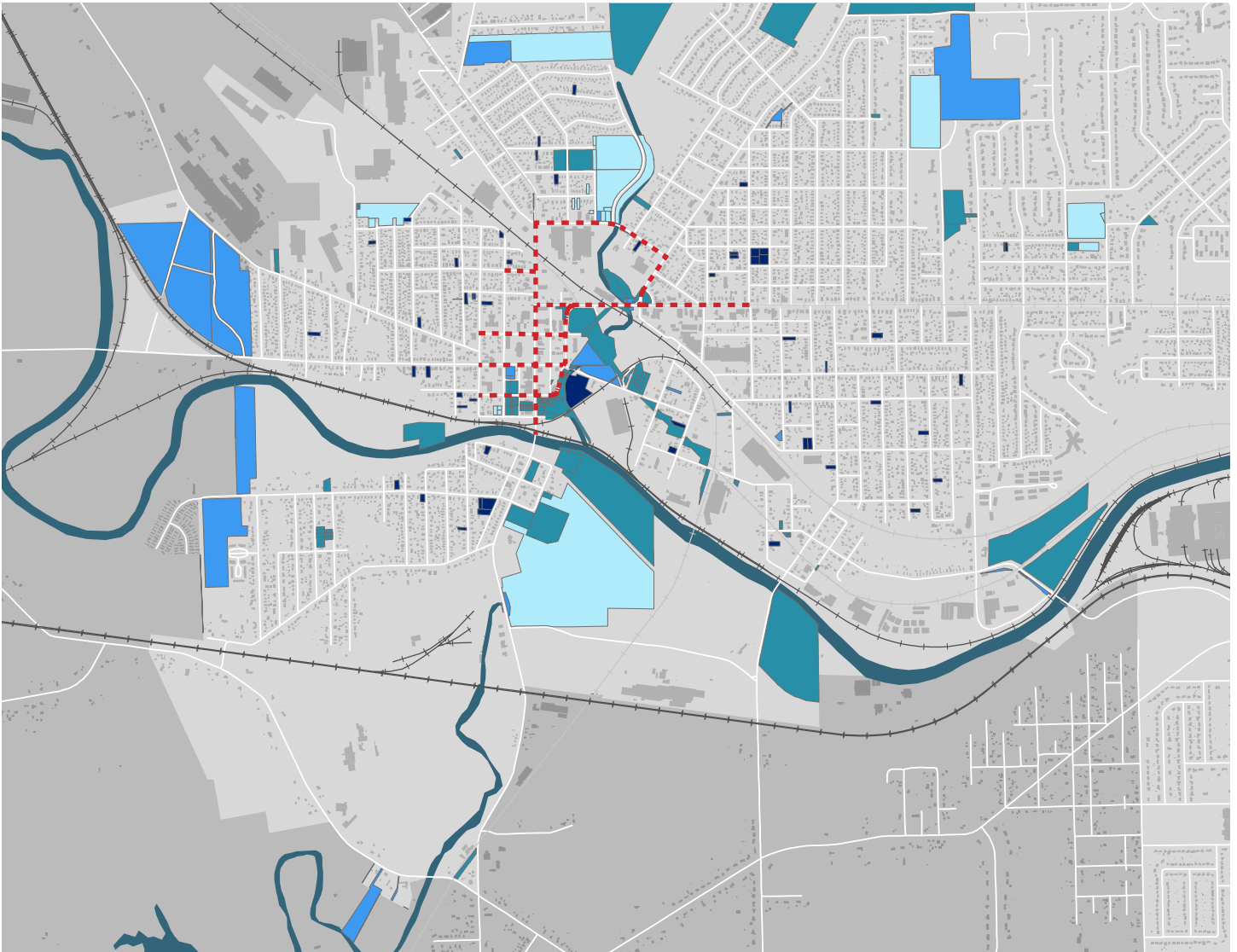
The wetlands of Niles are one of the region’s most precious environmental assets. The riparian forest preservation areas and the wetlands of Brynhyfyd Park line large segments of the River’s banks, filtering runoff and supporting diverse wildlife.

The Niles Greenway extends south of the community alongside the Meander Creek Reservoir, the largest provider of clean drinking water in Mahoning and Trumbull County, before connecting with the Mill Creek Metroparks Bikeway. This large regional trail connects the communities of Niles, Austintown, and Canfield.

LEGEND			
	Mahoning River		Wetland
	River Access Point		Brownfield
	Existing Trail		100-year Floodplain
	Public Park		500-year Floodplain
	Clean Ohio site		Niles Boundary



**FIGURE2 EXISTING CONDITIONS - ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**



## ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### Existing Conditions

Parcels owned by public entities demonstrate potential for acquisition, redevelopment, and leveraging of incentives. The City of Niles owns several parcels on the riverfront and in the downtown. Therefore, there can be greater control over a long-term strategy for public space, recreation and conserved areas, and income-generating commercial uses.

Niles also demonstrates strong economic development support for the downtown. Partners in revitalization include the Niles Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) which offers grant programs for improvements to commercial property and helps promote business incentives, such as the Downtown District Tax Incentive and Grant Program. Eligible projects must be located on the streets identified in Figure 2.

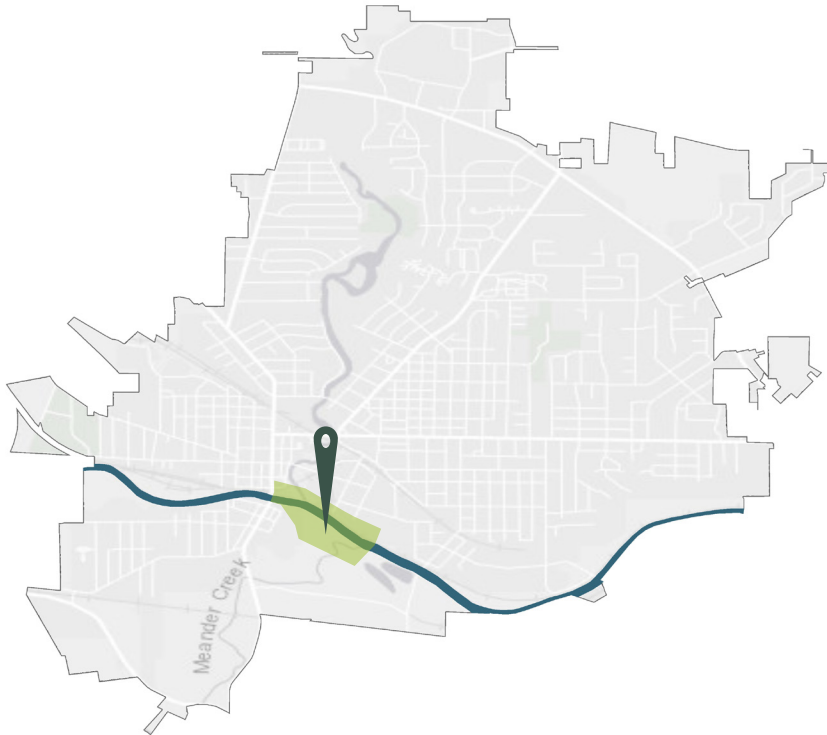
LEGEND	
	Publicly-Owned Parcels
	City of Niles
	School District
	Other Government
	Development Partners*
	Downtown Incentive Program Streets

\*Trumbull County Land Bank, Niles Community Improvement Corporation (CIC), Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership

# NILES: PRIMARY OPPORTUNITY SITE

## Meander Creek & Niles Greenway

FIGURE3 SITE LOCATION WITHIN NILES



### EXISTING CONDITIONS

<b>Ownership</b>	City of Niles, Private
<b>Current Use</b>	Civic, commercial, light industrial, vacant
<b>Local Zoning</b>	Residential & Manufacturing
<b>River Access</b>	Informal Launch
<b>Size</b>	69.85 Acres

### Additional Notes:

- The City of Niles applied to ODNR for funding of proposed launch
- A nature area currently exists adjacent to the Niles Middle School on the primary site
- The Niles Greenway, a four-mile paved trail, connects the downtown trailhead with the Mill Creek MetroParks

FIGURE4 PRIMARY OPPORTUNITY SITE: EXISTING IMAGERY





## Primary Opportunity Site Overview

The vision for the future of the primary opportunity site on the Mahoning River in Niles is a peaceful retreat for recreation enthusiasts. The central connector breathing life through the site is the Niles Greenway. Its shelter and bike station at the rail bridge allows users to take a break from the path and enjoy the Meander Creek boardwalk and conservation area - which also provides environmental education through local programming. Fishing at the site is enhanced through river and subsequent habitat restoration.

In addition to a renewed commitment to the natural environment, the site extends economic development opportunities with walkable neighborhood mixed-use development on Main Street south of the new paddling launch. This additional development and connection effectively expands the community's downtown, allowing for multimodal access across the Mahoning River. This connection can be a game-changer for the community, creating a destination for users of the Niles Greenway and Mill Creek MetroParks Bikeway.



FIGURE 5 PRIMARY OPPORTUNITY SITE: FUTURE RENDERING



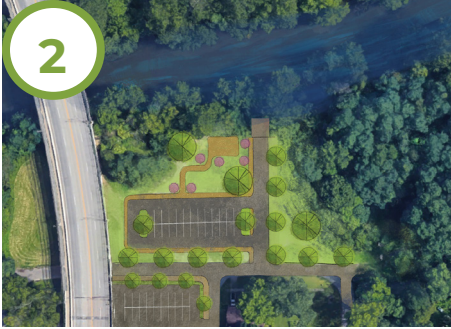


# NILES: PRIMARY OPPORTUNITY SITE

## Meander Creek & Niles Greenway

FIGURE 6 PRIMARY OPPORTUNITY SITE: PROPOSED





2



### Proposed Character:

- A new launch and park area safely connect the public to the river
- Recreation activities, including canoeing and kayaking, are highly encouraged



3



### Proposed Character:

- Streetscape improvements and economic development initiatives extend the character of downtown to south of the river
- Recreation users can walk or bike to commercial amenities



4



### Proposed Character:

- Visitors can learn about and admire the local wetlands and natural habitats
- Partnerships with education institutions such as Niles City Schools and YSU help support conservation

# NILES: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

---

## Preparing for the Future Now

The recommendations provided within the Mahoning River Corridor Revitalization Plan represent goals for the region over the next few decades. The future vision for the Niles river segment should be pursued strategically by breaking down the ideal long-term state into manageable short-and immediate-term projects. The Implementation Guide provides further insight to assist local decision-makers in working together to achieve a revitalized downtown river district with best practices, industry standards, and potential funding sources. Though the guide is designed to be a simple and straightforward reference, these guidelines should not be treated so rigidly as to prevent adaptation should unforeseen circumstances arise during implementation. The Implementation Guide is not an exhaustive list and should be pursued in concert with the corridor-wide objectives identified in the larger Mahoning River Corridor Revitalization Plan. Regional collaboration and coordination is highly encouraged.

*To learn more about funding opportunities, visit Chapter 05 Next Steps of the Mahoning River Corridor Revitalization Plan.*



# MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION

## Defined Project(s)

Entering the priority opportunity site in Niles on S Main St., visitors are greeted with local commercial uses - primarily auto sales, commercial garages, and convenience retail. This section of roadway before the bridge is oriented to cars with little infrastructure to serve pedestrians and no relation to the nearby recreation and natural attractions.

As the City invests in long-term improvements to the Mahoning River, this commercial area south of the River and west of the bikeway presents an excellent opportunity to showcase Niles' local charm. The area may act as an extension of the downtown

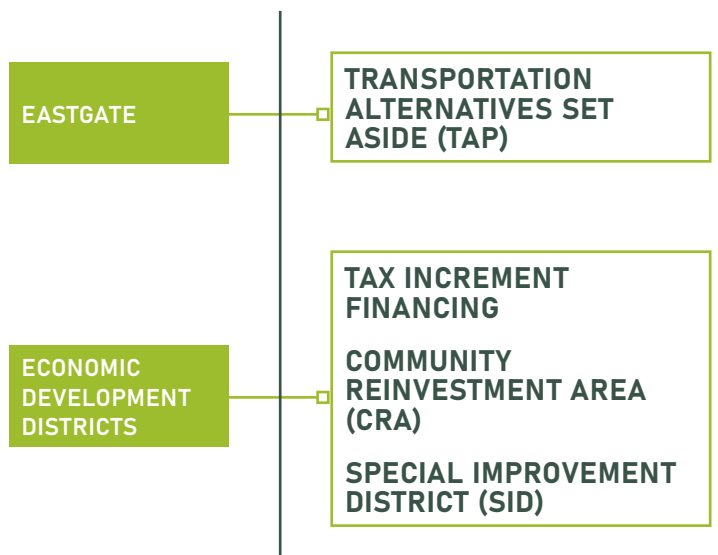
In order to accomplish such this visionary goal, short-term actions and ongoing policies should be applied. Appropriate methods for main street revitalization include:

- Zoning ordinance - The code must allow and encourage the identified uses and styles. Approved site plans should promote walkability, connectivity, and add to the collective vision for the river corridor. Examples include decreased setbacks and inclusion of eating and drinking establishments as permitted uses.
- Strategic acquisition - The City, Land Bank, Western Reserve Port Authority, and other partners in land purchasing should routinely collaborate on opportunities to acquire and consolidate parcels in the study area, as appropriate.
- Gap financing & grant funding - A key role of riverfront communities in the promotion of desired development is decreasing the barriers for private investment - and doing so in a way which creates private buy-in to the long-term vision. This can be done through leveraging local funds for grants or incentive programs.



The current view of S Main St relative to local attractions (facing north)

## Funding Opportunities



## Design Elements



Landscaping, lighting, façade enhancements, public art, etc.



Local retail, restaurants and cafes, professional services, etc.



Outdoor dining, plazas, bike racks, sidewalks and crossings, etc.

# THE NILES LOOP

The Mahoning River corridor segment in Niles is perfectly positioned to link cultural and recreation assets within the community. As shown below, key local attractions can be connected, aesthetically and structurally, to offer a seamless transition from one space to another.

- The Niles Greenway Trailhead**  
 The Niles Greenway and planned Western Reserve Greenway terminate at the trailhead park located near Downtown Niles. The facility features a pavilion, restrooms, and parking.
- The Niles Greenway Rail Bridge**  
 As shown in the rendering (p.7), the former industrial bridge has the potential not only as a bikepath, but as a popular place for rest, relaxation, and water activities.
- Natural & Protected Parkland**  
 The location of river restoration and environmental

education, the Meander Creek conservation area provides a natural retreat.

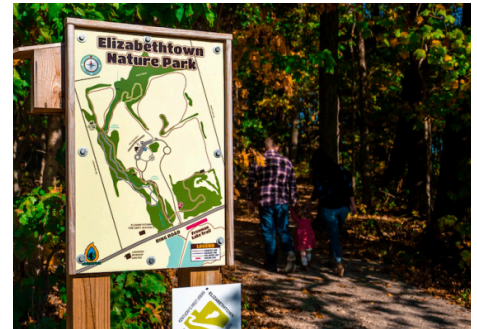
- Walkable Mixed Use**  
 Revitalization and improvements to S. Main St. support visitors to the launch and trail system.
- Launch & Riverfront Park**  
 The planned launch and accompanying amenities celebrate the river and are a short walk from downtown.
- Downtown Niles**  
 The center of the community, downtown provides a concentration of business, government, services, and entertainment attractions.
- Western Reserve Greenway**  
 Phase IV of planned segments to the Western Reserve Greenway in Trumbull County would connect the Niles Greenway with a regional trail network.



# PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

## ENVIRONMENTAL & RECREATION

- A.1** Identify and design a riparian zone.
- A.2** Conduct a feasibility study for proposed trail connections.
- A.3** Create a branding and wayfinding strategy for the proposed Niles Loop.
- A.4** Work with regional partners to develop a trail town narrative and marketing strategy as part of the Mahoning River Greenway and other multi-county trail networks.
- A.5** Establish a launch and parkspace south of the Mahoning River at E 1st St. and S. Main St.
- A.6** Collaborate with institutional and educational partners on a plan for wetland protection and education at the primary opportunity site.



## ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- B.1** Identify streetscape enhancements for S. Main Street (primary opportunity site).
- B.2** Update zoning regulations to encourage downtown and riverfront revitalization.
- B.3** Identify key properties for acquisition potential by the City or economic development partners (CIC, TNP, etc.).



*Enhanced wayfinding around the Mahoning River and trail networks in Niles should include physical signage, as well as digital marketing and branding components. Coordination with other riverfront communities and regional tourism and recreation partners is highly encouraged.*