

## Michigan's Twin Cities Sustainable Harbor Project

### Project Description and Purpose

The Twin Cities Harbor is a deepwater port tucked between the cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph. In its prime, the harbor bustled with ships transporting everything from fruits to industrial materials throughout the Great Lakes and beyond. But, like many places once dominated by the boom of past industry and manufacturing, times are changing. A 2015 harbor study found that while there are many assets, it is challenged by vacant land, empty buildings and underutilized waterfront opportunities. Community leaders in Benton Harbor, St. Joseph and surrounding townships interested in reviving their shared harbor through a charrette process sought to expand community engagement to ensure that the vision included as much community representation as possible. To support that goal, NCI led a workshop to prepare the charrette. Additionally, NCI and MSUE provided facilitation during the charrette and a SPDC graduate student provided design and facilitation support to the Twin Cities Sustainable Harbor charrette.

### Partners and cities involved

- City of Benton Harbor
- City of St. Joseph
- St. Joseph Township
- Benton Township
- Twin Cities Harbor Conservancy
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources Office of the Great Lakes
- Michigan Sea Grant

### Results

In June 2018, NCI Director Holly Madill led a diverse set of community stakeholders, including city, township and county officials and staff; regional planners; developers; business owners; and faith leaders, along with the project steering committee, in a 1.5-day Charrette Ready Workshop to assess and organize a joint visioning project for the harbor. At the end of workshop, partners produced defined goals, a project scope area and a charrette schedule implemented in fall 2018.

The charrette began with a kick-off meeting on Sept. 19 and continued with the design charrette on Oct. 9-11. With over 200 people participating, outcomes included a renewed interest in continued joint planning and action for the harbor as well as a deeper understanding of community concerns, which ranged from affordable housing to recreational opportunities to job creation.

The National Charrette Institute, School of Planning, Design and Construction, and MSU Extension all played a role in the October 9-11 charrette with Madill returning to facilitate the kick-off event on the evening of the 9th. SPDC student, Rabia Faizan was invited to be part of the charrette design team, and MSU Extension's Harmony Gmazel helped facilitate stakeholder meetings on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

### Impact (next steps, new grants, new partners etc)

The harbor project team recognized that further community engagement efforts were needed to ensure the vision for the waterfront reflects perspectives from each community. To foster greater engagement, the harbor project team continues to host additional community focus groups and meets with community leaders to discuss implementation strategies and governance structure to make the vision a reality. For more information about the charrette and outcomes, visit [St. Joseph-Benton Harbor 2018](#).