

New fishing platform, gathering space part of proposal to expand Niles trail

By [Craig Haupert](#)

A new multi-use trail, fishing platform and outdoor gathering space are included among the items in a proposal to expand the Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail to the west side of the St. Joseph River in Niles.

The proposed addition would connect the Niles Main Street Bridge and the Broadway Bridge with a non-motorized trail that would run close to the river.

Currently, the trail is only located on the east side of the river.

The proposed plan also includes building a new railed fishing platform, outdoor plaza with seating and another plaza that would serve as an area where food vendors or food trucks could set up.

Bicycle racks and a wayfinding kiosk with a map of the trail and downtown Niles is also included in the proposed plan.

All of this would be located either on or near the Lakeland Health Niles campus parking lot north of Grant Street. [Renderings of the plan can be found by clicking here.](#)

The proposed expansion is a partnership between the City of Niles and Lakeland Health, which owns much of the land in the proposed development area.

City Administrator Ric Huff said the Lakeland Foundation has offered to contribute up to \$250,000 toward the project, which is estimated at approximately \$500,000.

“Without that I don’t know that it would ever happen,” Huff said. “Even with it there are some challenges still to overcome” including grant applications.

The city is applying for a state grant through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for \$220,000, leaving approximately \$30,000 left to cover the total cost of the project.

“Our goal will be by the time construction comes around that the city’s obligation will be minimal,” Huff said.

Marcy Colclough, of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, which is aiding the city with the grant application process, said the city would have to apply for the grant by April 1 and would not know the results until the end of 2016.

If the city receives the grant, construction could begin as early as spring of 2017.

“It would be a good amenity to have in the city of Niles,” Colclough said. “It would be used quite a bit.”

Huff said the riverfront trail is arguably the most widely used recreational facility in the City of Niles.



Adding to it, he said, would further enhance recreational and non-motorized transportation opportunities in Niles for residents and visitors.

“It (the trail) seems to be a great asset to the community,” he said. “People can choose to walk or bicycle to their destinations and use the trail system to get there.”

The Niles City Council was expected to set a public hearing about the proposed expansion at Monday’s regular meeting.

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