

## **Idlewild Cultural Economic Development Readiness Initiative (2006)**

The Idlewild Cultural Economic Development (CED) Readiness Initiative set the stage for all plans that have followed since its creation. It was a strategic exploration of Idlewild's potential for economic development based on cultural tourism—i.e., tourism oriented specifically toward the appreciation of cultural identity and historical resources. This project, funded by the Michigan Council on Arts and Cultural Affairs (MSHDA, 2006) and conducted by a multidisciplinary team of experts in cultural tourism, architecture and landscape architecture, and historic preservation, established an “initial body of thought, interpretation, process, structure, resources, networks and vision” for CED in Idlewild (National Resource Team, 2006, iii). Based on their research, the team concluded that Idlewild was “a national treasure [with] the physical resources, history, authenticity, and broad culture to achieve great success with economic development via cultural tourism.” (ibid.)

Working from this conclusion, the team developed ten recommendations to begin the process of leveraging and stewardship of Idlewild's unique heritage:

1. **All efforts should be made to preserve Idlewild as an inhabited functioning community.** *Great care will be required to enhance the quality of life of the residents, preserve the dignity of the residents and authentic physical character while advancing economic growth. (p. SF 4)*
2. **The Idlewild community and State of Michigan must approach this project in a strategic manner.** *The strategic framework must include regional collaboration and partnerships (p. SF 22).*
3. **Invest in a community building process concurrent with major program and physical master planning.** *Local trust, organizational development, networking relationships, technical knowledge, conceptual mastery and problem solving capability require strengthening beyond current levels (p. SF 24).*
4. **Preservation of land, and landscape, must become as high a priority as preservation of structures.** *A detailed and comprehensive “land genealogy” should be created for each property in Idlewild. A local historic land resource plan should be prepared, and used to coordinate State and Federal management and disposal of “tax reverted properties” (p. SF 5).*
5. **Place greater local emphasis on environmental stewardship and historic preservation as integral with all quality of life issues in Idlewild.** *Protection and quality enhancement of natural resources must become the top community action item (p. SF 11).*
6. **A legal self-governing structure must be developed to allow Idlewild to plan and manage in its own behalf.** *Waiver of population requirements for charter township status or creation of a “special” governing district should be considered (p. SF 19).*
7. **Creative business formats, such as a small business incubator and locally owned food co-op, must be encouraged and evolve with traditional mature commercial scenarios and formats (p. SF 14).**

- 8. Develop a “special projects” structure to produce more effective State interdepartmental collaboration on Idlewild, and similar, projects. Full-time staffing, with assignment of some executive authority, will be essential (p. SF 22).**
- 9. Commit strategic State funding/budget for a major long-term involvement (p. SF 23).**
- 10. Ensure that all cultural, historic and physical planning will be facilitated by competent professionals experienced in African American historic cultural and community planning (p. 1:iv).**

### **Idlewild Concept Master Plan (2007)**

In 2007, Nederveld Associates Inc. prepared a conceptual master plan for development in central Idlewild. This plan consisted only of a map, so it is not summarized here or in Table 36. However, the map visualizes many of the recommendations in the plans that have emerged since then and therefore is a useful tool for visualizing what a downtown development scenario for Idlewild could look like. The map is shown in Figure 82.

Notable elements of the map include the following:

- Relatively dense commercial development in the existing neighborhood commercial district, with retention of key historic structures and the conversion of the large vacant lots in the heart of the district into central gathering spaces with a fountain and public sculpture.
- The addition of an amphitheater to Williams Island, with retention of the historic Flamingo Club.
- Relatively dense commercial development along the Broadway corridor, with close building frontages and parking behind the buildings. This district would include a welcome center at the intersection of US-10 and Broadway as well as a conference center and miniature golf course.

CONCEPT MASTER PLAN  
CITY OF IDLEWILD  
YATES TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN

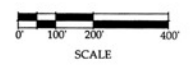
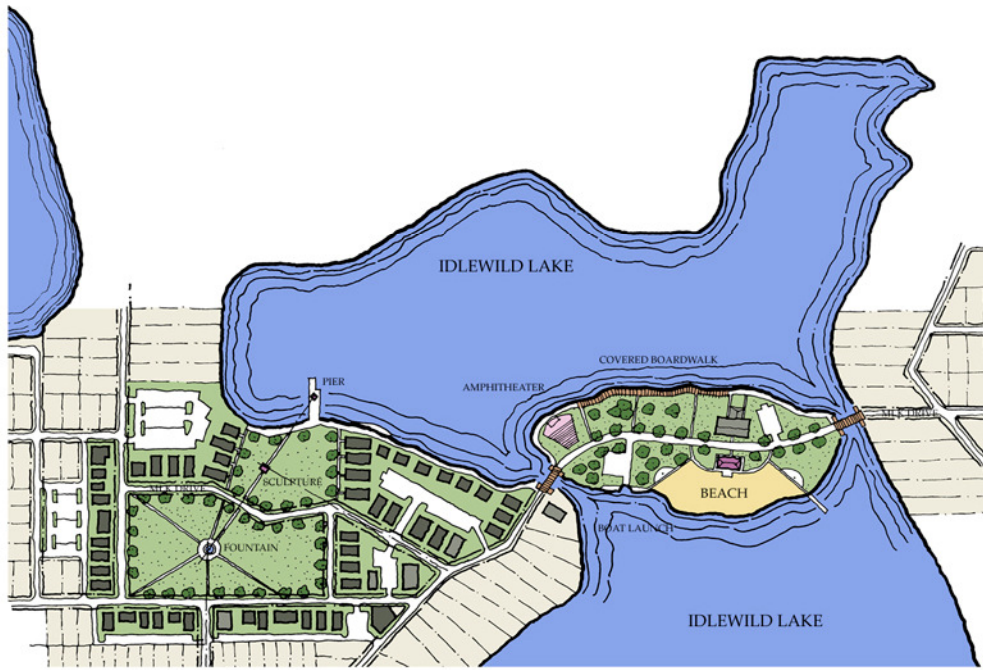


Figure 82: Concept Master Plan for Idlewild. Nederveld Associates, 2007.





## **Idlewild Economic Development Action Strategy (2008)**

Pursuant to the recommendations from the Idlewild CED Readiness Initiative, Jacobsen Daniels Associates created a comprehensive Idlewild Economic Development Strategy with the support of a grant from the State of Michigan. The strategy consisted of a very ambitious five-year vision and action plan, covering the period from 2008 to 2012. Its main focus was on cultural/heritage tourism; however, the strategy also encompassed business development, human resource development, community-based development, and natural environment development. It was informed by significant public input, including public workshops, interviews, focus groups, and a survey.

The strategy was built around the following overarching vision for Idlewild in 2012:

*By 2012, Idlewild will celebrate its centennial and be recognized as a beautiful, historic, safe, clean, welcoming community that offers quality of life for its residents, exceptional visitor amenities, and unique recreational and cultural experiences for all ages. Idlewild will achieve an appropriate balance between historic preservation and contemporary development. As zoning ordinances will be duly enforced, blight will be eliminated, there will be no tent or trailer living as permanent housing and property throughout the community will appear well maintained and attractive. Williams Island will be a historic focal point and designated entertainment and recreational area. A thriving downtown business district will host new specialty restaurants, shops, galleries, and services. Quality motel, hotel, RV and camping accommodations will be abundant. Businesses and jobs supporting Idlewild's unique culture and history will flourish throughout the community.*

*Good stewardship of Idlewild's lakes, forest and wildlife will be evident. Paying homage to the past, and honoring the legacies of former Idlewilders such as social activist and scholar W.E.B. Du Bois, entrepreneur Madame C.J. Walker, and writers Charles Waddell Chesnutt and Zora Neale Hurston, Idlewild will continue to serve as a nexus for artists, scholars, and other notables and host an exceptional music camp, exciting cultural festivals and events, educational and health retreats, and summer camps. Well designed signage, lighting, walking paths, by-ways and trails will efficiently guide residents and visitors through the community. The Idlewild Historic and Cultural Center will be open, active and routinely in use by the community. A special heritage trail and historical markers will help educate residents, visitors, educators, students, community activists and historians about Idlewild's unique role in our nation's history.*

*In 2012, Idlewild will be a strong, unified and thriving community which has the capacity to successfully accommodate visitors while serving as a cultural haven for seniors, retirees, young people and growing families. (Idlewild Economic Development Action Strategy, 2008, p. 4)*

The strategy established five major economic development goals:

- *To encourage new businesses; retain existing businesses; and promote doing business in Idlewild*
- *To develop Idlewild's cultural assets as economic drivers*
- *To develop Idlewild's community human resources, leadership, and collaboration*
- *To provide good stewardship of Idlewild's physical and natural assets*
- *To foster connectivity and promotion of non-motorized forms of transportation (Idlewild Economic Development Action Strategy, 2008, p. 13)*

To achieve the five goals above, the strategy identified seven economic development initiatives around which 41 projects were organized. Each of the 41 projects included specific goals, action steps, timelines, estimated costs, and potential resources. The goals and projects are listed below, with page numbers for easy reference.

#### **1. Priority Projects**

- Hire a Professional Economic Development and Planning Coordinator (p. 41)*
- Update Yates Township Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances (p. 43)*
- Establish the Idlewild Downtown Development Authority (p. 45)*
- Develop a Branding and Marketing Strategy – "A Sense of Place" (p. 47)*
- Initiate a 'Getting Ready' Initiative (p. 49)*
- Establish a Lake County Land Bank Authority (p. 51)*

#### **2. Community Projects**

- Solicit Proposals for the Flamingo Club (p. 53)*
- Develop Central Business District (p. 55)*
- Construct a Yates Township Civic Complex (p. 57)*
- Develop an Idlewild Contemporary Arts Center (ICAC) (p. 59)*
- Expand the Idlewild Memorial Library (p. 61)*

#### **3. Business Projects**

- Develop an Idlewild Website (p. 63)*
- Create an Economic Development Informational Package (p. 65)*
- Develop an Idlewild Resort Housing Directory (p. 67)*
- Implement Wireless Idlewild (p. 69)*
- Establish an Idlewild Convention and Visitor's Bureau (p. 71)*
- Develop Retail Business Incubators (p. 73)*
- Perform an Economic Impact Study of the Economic Development Action Strategy (p. 75)*
- Develop an Idlewild Farmer's Market and Co-op (p. 77)*

#### **4. Physical Development Projects**

- Develop a Golf Range (p. 79)*
- Construct a Lodge and Conference Center (p. 81)*
- Create Architectural Design Standards (p. 83)*
- Develop Eden Gardens and Parks (p. 85)*

## **5. Heritage Tourism Projects**

- a. *Apply for National Register and Landmark Status (p. 87)*
- b. *Apply for National Trust's Dozen Distinctive Destinations (p. 89)*
- c. *Create Idlewild Gifts and Souvenirs (p. 91)*
- d. *Become a Preserve America Community (p. 93)*
- e. *Develop the Idlewild Hall of Fame and Paradise Gardens (p. 95)*
- f. *Develop an Idlewild Walking Tour (p. 97)*

## **6. Arts and Culture Projects**

- a. *Host a Regatta at Lake Idlewild (p. 99)*
- b. *Host a Flamingo Festival (p. 101)*
- c. *Establish an Idlewild Arts and Cultural Council (p. 103)*
- d. *Host an Idlewild Arts Festival (p. 105)*
- e. *Implement an Idlewild Public Art Installation and Poetry Tour (p. 107)*

## **7. Sustainability Projects**

- a. *Develop an Idlewild ReCycle and ReUse Center (p. 109)*
- b. *Create a Natural Resource Management Plan (p. 111)*
- c. *Create an Idlewild Green Map (p. 113)*

The strategy also incorporates a transportation vision and action plan for Idlewild and Yates Township. The vision is to “foster a historic and rural community focused on safety, sustainability, and non-motorized transit that successfully connects people to places through a safe, effective and accessible transportation network” (Idlewild Economic Development Action Strategy, 2008, p. 8). Specific transportation projects included the following:

- *Establish Bike Idlewild Program (p. 134)*
- *Develop Streetscaping and Fencing along Arterials (p. 136)*
- *Apply for US-10 Heritage Route Status (p. 138)*
- *Develop Signage Plan and Wayfinding System (p. 140)*

The strategy's appendices included the following:

- **Appendix A (p. 1 of Appendix section):** Overview of documents reviewed and sources cited
- **Appendix B (p. 8):** Physical and natural asset inventory, including an overview of businesses, public and quasi-public facilities, historic buildings, and natural assets
- **Appendix C (p. 25):** Results of community visioning sessions that helped guide the recommendations
- **Appendix D (p. 28):** Detailed recommendations of the Idlewild Downtown/Economic Development Committee for the development of the Idlewild Downtown Business District
- **Appendix E (p. 31):** Results of public workshops that helped guide the recommendations
- **Appendix F (p. 34):** Results of stakeholder surveys that helped guide the recommendations

- **Appendix G (p. 44):** Market analysis, focused mainly on national tourism trends rather than on data specific to Idlewild or Michigan
- **Appendix H (p. 58):** Members of the Idlewild Centennial Commission, assembled to plan activities for the 100-year anniversary of Idlewild in 2012.
- **Appendix I (p. 60):** Members of the Idlewild Economic Development Committee
- **Appendix J (p. 61):** Templates of a request for qualifications/request for proposals and contract for the provision of professional services

## **Idlewild Cultural Resource Management Plan (2009)**

To implement the Cultural Economic Development Readiness Initiative’s recommendation to prioritize the preservation of Idlewild’s historic buildings and landscape, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) carried out an extensive historical asset inventory for Idlewild. Pursuant to the inventory, SHPO nominated Idlewild for an expansion of its National Register Historic District; this nomination was accepted by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior in 2010. The expansion of the National Register district fulfilled another recommendation in the CED Readiness Initiative report.

In connection with this work, the State of Michigan retained Commonwealth Cultural Resources Group (CCRG) to develop a cultural resource management plan for Idlewild. This document, titled Plan, Protect, and Promote: A Look at Idlewild’s Cultural Resources and Their Management, identifies the cultural resources in Idlewild and provides both generalized and resource-specific recommendations for managing them. In addition, the plan provides practical guidelines on how to change regulations and raise funds for cultural resource management.

The plan’s recommendations are based on the following central premise:

*Although much of Idlewild has changed over the past decades, it remains an authentic, unspoiled testament to the once pre-eminent African American resort. The landscape continues to give voice to the rituals, traditions, and customs of generations past, and to fulfill their promise for future generations; it is imperative to preserve Idlewild’s natural and built environments. Buildings that exist now should be protected; future construction should be built in harmony with Idlewild’s intimate, neighborly character; and the lush forested environment, alive with lakes and rivers, should be defended.*

-Cultural Resource Management Plan, 2009 (p. 1)

The guidelines and recommendations of the Cultural Resource Management Plan are summarized below. These include a mix of *general* guidelines and *specific* recommendations. For brevity, only the specific recommendations are included in Table 33.

### **1. Guidelines and Recommendations (p. 52)**

- a. **Natural Resources (p. 52):** Because Idlewild’s natural resources are integral to its character and beauty, the plan considers Idlewild’s natural features to be a

contributing historic resource in the Idlewild Historic District. As such, they should be treated with as much respect as Idlewild's historic structures, and any significant changes to these features should be evaluated carefully to minimize negative impacts.

***i. Lakes and Waterways (p. 52):***

1. Partner with Michigan Dept. of Environmental Quality (DEQ) or similar organization to monitor water quality.
2. Seek assistance and grant funding from the DEQ to study the condition of the north section of Idlewild Lake, which is separated from the south section by culverts that connect Williams Island to the mainland. The plan recommends that these culverts be replaced with bridges. In addition to restoring the beauty of the entrances and exits to the island, this will improve water flow to the north section of Idlewild Lake.
3. Develop a long-range plan for the management of Idlewild's water features, and for the management of impermeable surfaces that affect water quality.

***ii. Trees and Vegetation (p. 53):***

1. Evaluate the impacts of tree removal and other vegetation changes before performing work. Protect the health of existing vegetation. Seek guidance from DEQ and Huron-Manistee National Forest on how to do this.
2. Maintain formal plantings near buildings and roadways; retain character-defining landscape features (e.g., fences, stone piers, etc.) in same.
3. Where major development occurs, limit changes to surrounding areas.
  - a. When trees are trimmed to prevent their overhanging the roadways, the overhang should be similar to that of adjacent trees.
  - b. When opening areas to new construction, retain trees and vegetation comparable to nearby developed areas.
  - c. Retain distinction in vegetation between the northern and southern sections of the historic district. The northern section of the historic district [i.e., the focus area of the Idlewild Tourism Development Strategy] is more densely developed and has fewer trees and vegetation than the southern sections of the district. This distinction should be maintained.

***iii. Wildlife (p. 54)***

1. Minimize impacts on Idlewild's natural wildlife by current and future owners and visitors.

2. Minimize damage by tent caterpillars (gypsy moth larvae) and other pests. Partner with Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR), DEQ, Huron-Manistee National Forest, or similar.
- b. **Cultural Resources of the Idlewild Historic District (p. 54): Preserve, Rehabilitate, Restore, Reconstruct.** The plan recommends the following overarching standard for the stewardship of historic resources: “It is better to preserve than repair, better to repair than restore, and better to restore than reconstruct.” Definitions of these concepts include the following:
    - i. *Preservation: Maintenance and repair of existing historic materials; retention of the property’s form as it evolved over time.*
    - ii. *Rehabilitation: Adapting a historic property to ongoing or new uses while retaining its historic character.*
    - iii. *Restoration: Returning a property to its appearance at a particular historical period; removing evidence of its appearance at other periods.*
    - iv. *Reconstruction re-creates vanished or non-surviving portions of a property for interpretive purposes. (National Park Service 1995:63).*
  - c. **When Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, Follow the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation (p. 55):** Because rehabilitation is the most commonly applied guideline for the treatment of historic resources, the plan espouses the Standards for Rehabilitation of the Secretary of the Interior. In addition to being available on page 55 of the plan document, the Secretary’s Standards can be found by searching the Internet for the terms “Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.”
  - d. **General Cultural Resource Guidelines (p. 57):** In addition to espousing the Secretary’s Standards, the plan lays out several general guidelines for the stewardship of Idlewild’s historic resources:
    - i. *Establish flexible preservation priorities that recognize the changing threats to each resource. If a unique but modest resource is threatened with destruction, its preservation may take precedence over the preservation of a more elaborately styled resource that occurs more frequently in the district.*
    - ii. *Recognize that the district is a dynamic resource, continuously changing, and preservation activities and new development can reflect this.*
    - iii. *Add to a resource rather than subtract from it. For example, it is better to preserve a small porch and add a gazebo than to demolish the porch to construct a large deck in its place.*
    - iv. *Interpret the story of Idlewild for visitors while protecting the spaces of traditional residents.*
    - v. *Plan new development to physically fit within the framework of a town in a rural setting.*
    - vi. *Follow the historic precedent of low-impact creation of places of leisure when planning new development.*
    - vii. *Focus on land use that reflects Idlewild’s original back-to-nature philosophy.*

- e. **Cultural Resource Design Guidelines (p. 58):** The plan includes the following design guidelines for new development projects or for the modification of existing cultural resources:
- i. *Consider scale and proportion when undertaking new construction or changing existing resources. Most of the buildings in the Idlewild Historic District are modest single-story structures, so elaborate multi-story buildings would not fit with the existing built environment.*
  - ii. *Consult the National Park Service’s Preservation Briefs for information on the preservation and treatment of construction materials. [The Preservation Briefs can be found online using the search term “National Park Service Preservation Briefs.”]*
  - iii. *Consult with professional architects, landscape historians, and architectural historians before beginning any large-scale project. The Michigan State Historic Preservation Office maintains a list of qualified historic preservation professionals.*
  - iv. *Evaluate resources and their preservation in the context of their own time and place in history. In other words, avoid creating a false sense of history by creating new development or changing existing resources to reflect a history that did not exist.*
  - v. *Consider historic land use when planning for future development. A large franchise hotel might provide lodging and amenities for visitors, but such a land use would not fit with the modest resort character of the Idlewild Historic District.*
  - vi. *Design additions to be constructed at rear-facing locations, whenever possible. Building a detached garage at the rear of a house, where it would not interfere with the historic character of the building, would be preferable to building a prominent addition on the building’s façade.*
  - vii. *Continue the historic trend of placing buildings perpendicular to the lake edges and roads.*
  - viii. *Create twenty-five-foot by one hundred-foot development modules that replicate the early lot sizes.*
  - ix. *Limit building heights to one or two stories; most residences were built as one-story dwellings.*
  - x. *Create building footprints that occupy no more than thirty-three percent of any property to maintain the open, rustic character of the historic district.*
  - xi. *Avoid consolidating properties any more than necessary to form larger lots.*
  - xii. *View new development as an opportunity to demonstrate the scale and special spatial qualities of this particular place.*
- f. **Resource-Specific Guidelines and Recommendations (p. 59):** This section provides guidelines for the management of specific individual cultural resources, or categories of resources.



- i. **Archaeological Resources (p. 59):** *When a possible site is discovered, its location should be noted and then reported to the Office of the State Archaeologist (OSA).*
- ii. **Entrances (p. 60):** *Physically enhance entrances to Idlewild. Focus new development on main gateways and corridors.*
  - 1. **US-10 and Broadway (p. 60):**
    - a. Add historic district signage and/or maps.
    - b. Establish a visitor center with brochures, maps, etc.
  - 2. **Paradise Path at Baldwin Road (p. 61):**
    - a. Recruit a local group to restore garden medians.
    - b. Add a state historical marker.
  - 3. **Forman Road and US-10 (p. 61):**
    - a. Add a state historical marker.
    - b. Add a historic district map.
    - c. Add directional sign for local businesses.
  - 4. **Broadway and Lake Drive (location of Idlewild Historic and Cultural Center) (p. 62):**
    - a. Expand hours of Idlewild Historic and Cultural Center
    - b. Add directional sign for local businesses
    - c. Expand painted map at Historic and Cultural Center to include full historic district
  - 5. **Baldwin and Forman Roads (p. 63):**
    - a. Add a historic district map: *Provide a large map of the historic district with selected destinations highlighted.*
    - b. Add directional sign for local businesses: *Include a sign similar to the present sign at Broadway and East Martin Luther King Drive where some of the area businesses have placards. This may also be done with directional arrows*
- iii. **Roads and Parking Areas (p. 63):**
  - 1. **Retain Unpaved Roads:** Maintain most existing roads as unpaved, which diminishes runoff and benefits Idlewild's lakes and rivers. Retain pavement on primary routes like US-10, Broadway, Forman Drive, Lake Drive, Baldwin Road, and Martin Luther King Drive.
  - 2. **Maintain Grid Pattern:** Continue existing grid pattern of narrow roadways and small blocks. When platting new subdivisions, follow the street pattern of the original plat to the extent possible.
  - 3. **Road Features:** Avoid modern road features like curved streets, cul de sacs, traffic circles, and excessive traffic signs.
  - 4. **Parking Lots:** Keep parking lots small and unpaved where possible; retain large trees where possible.
  - 5. **Shared Parking Areas:** Consider shared parking areas where the concentration of businesses or traffic is expected (e.g., downtown).

**iv. Develop a Trail System (p. 64):** Work with Michigan DNR and/or Department of Transportation to develop a trail system that accommodates a variety of uses.

**1. Bicycle Loops (p. 65):**

- a. Establish a formal network of bicycle loops through the Idlewild Historic District.
- b. Create tended bike trails (unpaved where possible) that complement Idlewild's rural character.
- c. Once established, add bike trails to community maps, signage, and brochures.
- d. Add wayfinding signage to designate the bike route. (Sample bicycle loop sign provided on p. 66.)

**2. Walking/Jogging Trails (p. 67):**

- a. Establish a variety of walking/jogging trails in areas not conducive to bicycling.
- b. Add wayfinding signage to designate the walking/jogging trails. (Sample walking/jogging trail sign provided on p. 66.)

**g. Open Spaces and Woodlands (p. 68)**

- i. Collaborate with DNR, Lake County, and townships to plan for an Idlewild parks system
- ii. Maintain large areas of unoccupied/undeveloped land as forest
- iii. Consider acquiring more land for public use
- iv. Create more public lake access, including handicapped accessibility

**h. Maintain Historic Views (p. 68):**

- i. To Idlewild from US-10: Use gateway or marker to reinforce view of entrance park and state historical marker
- ii. To Idlewild Lake from Williams Island & to Williams Island from shore: Maintain existing large trees but clear understory.
- iii. From lakefront properties to bodies of water: Keep most understory vegetation low.
- iv. To and from Pere Marquette Rail Trail: Develop Idlewild version of standard state trail marker where trail intersects with Broadway, Forman Drive, and recommended bicycle/walking/hiking trails.

**i. Williams Island (p. 69)**

- i. Develop comprehensive master plan specific to Island
- ii. Re-create bridged connections to island. To raise funds, consider offering inscription of family, business, or organization names on footboards/rails.
- iii. Install interpretive signage designating the past historical features of the island.
- iv. Construct an outdoor amphitheater.
- v. Enhance Williams Island beach as sand beach for swimming.
- vi. Create hub for small-scale/low-impact recreation such as bike and paddleboat rentals in summer and ice skates in winter.

- j. *Phil Giles' Flamingo Club (p. 70):***
  - i. Reestablish existing club for formal and informal events.
  - ii. Add modest amenities (e.g., snacks, picnic tables).
  - iii. Offer changing rooms and restrooms.
- k. *Downtown Area (p. 71):***
  - i. Construct small-scale infill development and retain surviving historic buildings.
  - ii. Consider reuse of concrete block houses, Chamber of Commerce building, and former LeeJon's/Idlewild Party Store as a cluster of souvenir and gift shops.
  - iii. Offer walk-up dining facilities like ice cream stands.
- l. *Daniel Hale Williams Property (15712 Lake Drive) (p. 71):***
  - i. Develop the parcel across the street from the Williams House as a small open space and garden.
  - ii. Link recommended walking/biking loops with this property.
- m. *Wilson's Grocery (332 E. Wilson Drive) (p. 73):***
  - i. Work with current owners to identify appropriate use and historic preservation tax credits or other incentives.
  - ii. Reestablish as a grocery store. If not possible, consider other appropriate uses, e.g., retail, professional service, food service, museum or gallery space, or visitor center.
  - iii. Offer outdoor amenities and refreshments to visitors.
  - iv. Maintain as an independently owned/operated business, not a franchise.
- n. *Casa Blanca Hotel (1362 E. Hall St.) (p. 75):***
  - i. Reestablish as a working hotel, rental hall, office space, or medical facility.
  - ii. Maintain as an independently owned/operated business, not a franchise.
- o. *Idlewild's Motels (p. 75):***
  - i. Reopen surviving motels, reconfiguring interior rooms to create larger facilities without altering exterior architecture.
  - ii. Convert small, well-situated motels into offices.
- p. *Lakeshore Houses and Cottages (p. 78):***
  - i. Retain/protect spacing of cottages along bodies of water.
  - ii. For new construction, maintain similar setbacks, scale, and density to existing construction.
  - iii. Limit construction of boathouses, docks, etc. that detract from historic resources, water, and landscape.
- q. *New Construction in the Idlewild Historic District (p. 78):***
  - i. General: Maintain the historic "look and feel" of Idlewild
  - ii. Houses: Not over two stories; shallow-pitched roofs; deep form and narrow frontage; simple form and decorative elements
  - iii. Condominium Complexes: Not over two stories; no long rows of units where possible; deep form and narrow frontage; only locate where no houses or cottages exist; no interference with lake viewsheds

- iv. Hotels and Motels: Consider rehabilitating surviving hotel/motels first; develop master plan for hotel and motel siting and development; one-story height by lakes.
  - v. Commercial Buildings: Seek a variety of retailers rather than a single “big box” store; follow overall form of historic Idlewild commercial buildings (small street frontage, low height, close to street); locate most commercial buildings in “downtown” area; new parking lots should have narrow street frontages and be unpaved where possible; retain/adaptively reuse original buildings where possible.
  - vi. Subdivisions: Streets similar in size, grid, surface materials, and block size to nearby housing; houses of similar building density, orientation to road, number of trees, etc.
- r. *Material Conservation for Cultural Resources in Idlewild Historic District (p. 82)***
- i. General: Documentation review, field survey, testing, and analysis of results to diagnose and treat building conservation problems.
  - ii. Concrete Block Material Conservation and Maintenance: Provides several guidelines on how to clean, maintain, diagnose and treat problems with concrete block, a common building material in Idlewild
  - iii. Building Mothballing: Stabilize and secure vacant buildings to prevent damage from weather, pests, and vandalism. Includes structural stabilization (exterminating rodents and pests; protecting against moisture infiltration) and securing the building (providing adequate ventilation; securing mechanical systems and utilities; carrying out monitoring and maintenance strategies).
- 2. *The Practical Side to Preserving Resources: Funding Options and Economic Benefits (p. 88)***
- a. *Zoning (p. 88):***
    - i. General: Carefully review zoning ordinances to find changes that balance the protection of existing cultural resources with the need to promote new development
    - ii. Consider revising zoning regulations to protect viewsheds and allow residential uses in commercial districts (e.g. in mixed-use buildings)
  - b. *Tax Incentives (p. 89):*** Provides guidelines on how to seek federal historic preservation tax credits and Michigan historic preservation tax credits. Note: Michigan’s 25 percent historic tax credit is no longer available; a federal 20% tax credit and a combined state/federal tax credit of 25% is still available (Michigan State Housing Development Authority, 2011). The client is urged to contact MSHDA for more information about current historic tax credit guidelines
  - c. *Establishing a Local Historic District (p. 91):*** Consider establishing local historic district ordinances and historic district commissions for the sections of the historic district in Yates and Pleasant Plains Townships.
  - d. *Revolving Funds (p. 92):*** Consider establishing a revolving fund program to acquire, rehabilitate and sell buildings, then use the proceeds to repeat the

- process with more buildings. The plan provides a case study of Boston-Edison Development Incorporated, a successful revolving fund program in Detroit.
- e. **Marketing Vacant Property (p. 93):** Consider seeking assistance from State Historic Preservation Office or Michigan Historic Preservation Network on how to market vacant properties in the historic district in a way that promotes their character-defining features. Advertise properties in historic preservation publications or Idlewild websites.
  - f. **Vacant Property Programs/Affordable Housing (p. 94):** Seek partnerships and grants with Michigan chapter of Local Initiatives Support Coalition (LISC); conduct neighborhood surveys/property assessments; identify community anchors/landmarks; communicate with the public through articles, Web media, and public meetings; adopt a “fix it first” policy; establish a land bank in Lake County; establish a community development corporation and/or community land trust.
  - g. **Stop Wasting Abandoned Properties (SWAP) (p. 97):** Case study of a CDC in Providence, Rhode Island that purchases abandoned properties and finds buyers at multiple income levels to renovate and live in them.
  - h. **Grants (p. 98):** General guidelines and considerations for seeking grant funding for community projects and activities.
  - i. **A Word About Cultural Heritage Tourism (p. 100):** Information on cultural heritage tourism and the types of amenities that would likely appeal to heritage tourists—e.g., historic buildings, businesses willing to adapt their development patterns to suit the look and feel of the Idlewild Historic District.
3. **For Further Reading (p. 103):** List of publications relevant to Idlewild’s history and stewardship.
  4. **Preservation Agency and Organization Contacts (Appendix A):** Contact information for the State Historic Preservation Office, the Michigan Office of the State Archaeologist, the Michigan Historic Preservation Network, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

## Yates Township Comprehensive Master Plan (2010)

The Yates Township Comprehensive Master Plan is the overarching blueprint and community vision for development in Yates Township—including Idlewild—from 2010 to 2020. This document received public input through meetings with the township planning commission and state partners as well as a public hearing and open house. According to a township planning commissioner interviewed for this project, work on a new zoning ordinance based on the comprehensive plan will begin in 2013.

The master plan is highly amenable to tourism-oriented commercial development that protects Idlewild’s historic structures and natural resources. The plan includes five goal statements, each with specific objectives and recommendations. The goals are shown below, with recommendations that seem especially relevant to tourism development under the goals to which they apply.

1. **Land Use (p. 19):** *Promote the orderly development and protection of the Township's rivers, lakes, streams, forestlands, wetlands and open spaces and reinforce sustainability efforts.*
  - a. *Update Yates Township Zoning Ordinance*
  - b. *Develop Central Business District*
  - c. *Develop Design Guidelines*
  - d. *Develop a Green Belt along Pere Marquette River*
  - e. *Transfer of Development Rights*
  - f. *Purchase of Development Rights*
  - g. *Develop Historic District Zoning [i.e., local historic district/historic district commission]*
  - h. *Require Site Plans*
  - i. *Develop a Natural Resource Management Plan*
2. **Transportation (p. 22).** *Develop accessible street networks, improve and maintain Yates Township's streetscape and signage.*
  - a. *Develop a Yates Township Public Parking Plan*
  - b. *Develop Signage Plan and Wayfinding System*
  - c. *Official and Honorary Street Names*
  - d. *Re-Design Traffic Routes*
  - e. *Develop Non-Motorized Facilities Plan*
  - f. *Pave Road Segments as Recommended by Community*
3. **Infrastructure Development (p. 29).** *Encourage commercial, residential and industrial development through improved utilities and infrastructure.*
  - a. *Municipal Water Service*
  - b. *Expansion of Sewer Network*
4. **Community Development (p. 32).** *Encourage public/non-profit/private partnerships and improve the community's social and economic quality of life.*
  - a. *Solicit Proposals for the Flamingo Club*
  - b. *Develop New Yates Township Civic Complex*
  - c. *Redevelopment of Casablanca Hotel*
  - d. *Expand Yates Township Public Library*
  - e. *Locate and Construct an Outdoor Amphitheater*
  - f. *Develop a Yates Township Recreation Commission*
5. **Residential Development (p. 40).** *Provide resources to improve housing standards and residential life. (Jacobsen Daniels Associates, 2010, p. 8)*
  - a. *New Housing Development*
  - b. *Infill Development*

The comprehensive master plan also includes several appendices. These include statements and resolutions regarding the legal standing for creating the plan, a plat history of Idlewild, an overview of community characteristics, a copy of the Idlewild Historic District tour brochure developed for the 2009 Cultural Resource Management Plan, and a very early draft of the Yates

Township Recreation Master Plan, which was completed in 2012 and is described in detail below.

### **Flamingo Club Development Feasibility Study (2011)**

In 2011, Jacobsen Daniels Associates was asked to assess the possibility of revitalizing the former Flamingo Club, a vacant but historic nightclub on Williams Island, as a community centerpiece and entertainment venue. The redevelopment of the Flamingo Club was one of the recommendations of the Yates Township Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

The project involved conducting a detailed physical assessment of the building, soliciting public input to generate ideas on new uses, and developing construction cost estimates. The goals of the project were to establish an appropriate identity for the site, to create a facility with year-round programming that benefited the community, and to create a plan that was affordable to implement and maintain.

The study found that the building was in need of approximately \$1.5 million in renovations to interior and exterior finishes, wiring, bathrooms, and windows. However, it was structurally sound, could be made ADA-accessible, was of sufficient size to accommodate large gatherings, and still contained original interior murals in good condition. In consultation with community members, the authors found that local residents wanted the Flamingo Club to be a restaurant, bar, and multipurpose venue, providing space for entertainment, recreation, community meetings, receptions, casino games, and more. The authors noted that because there were no other large entertainment and dining facilities in Lake County, a renovated Flamingo Club could be a countywide attraction.

To assist the community in pursuing this development, the authors included complete information on how to obtain a liquor license for the venue. They provided information on charitable gaming (e.g., bingo or poker tournaments to raise funds for nonprofits) that was permitted by the state. They discussed three different development scenarios, in which (a) the township developed and managed the facility alone, (b) the township leased the facility to a third party, and (c) the township partnered with a third party to develop and manage the facility. Finally, they provided a conceptual site plan for the development.

**Status:** As of early 2013, no further action has been taken on the rehabilitation of the Flamingo Club.

### **Yates Township Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2012)**

The Yates Township Parks and Recreation Master Plan is of great interest for the development of tourism assets and amenities in Idlewild. It was created pursuant to the Cultural Economic Development Readiness report of 2006 (summarized above) and was subjected to public review



and comment as well as a public hearing. The recreation master plan was a requirement for the township to be eligible for funding from the Michigan DNR, and it contains important recommendations for creating or enhancing the recreational amenities of Yates Township and Idlewild. Some of these recommendations may be incorporated into action timelines as part of the larger tourism development strategy in this report.

The recreational master plan includes an inventory of current recreational assets and amenities (discussed in greater detail in the Tourism Asset Inventory in this paper), goals and objectives for improving Idlewild's parks and recreation resources, and a brief description of actions steps for achieving those goals and objectives.

The parks and recreation master plan does not discuss timelines, logistics, or potential funding sources for fulfilling the goals, objectives, or action steps.

All of the plan's goals and objectives are relevant to tourism development. They include the following:

***I. Develop a Yates Township Parks and Recreation Commission (p. 18)***

- A. Improve and expand snowmobile trails and RV parking*
- B. Construct the Idlewild athletic field and perform playground improvements*
- C. Provide improved facilities and landscaping on Williams Island*
- D. Rehabilitation of the historic Flamingo Club on Williams Island*
- E. Develop a five acre community park*

***II. Develop a Natural Resource Management Plan (p. 18)***

- A. Form a Natural Resource Management Plan Committee*
- B. Identify and enlist key partner, i.e. MDNR, National Forest, MUCC, etc.*
- C. Conduct inventory and survey of natural resources features*
- D. Designate management plans for each natural resource feature*

***III. Develop Non-Motorized Facilities Plan (p. 18)***

- A. Provide signage linking walking and bicycling facilities with points of interest; including the Idlewild Historic Walking and Bicycling Tour.*
- B. Develop multi-use trails connecting the central business district with community and recreation facilities around Paradise Lake and Idlewild Lake.*
- C. Provide bicycle parking at community and recreational facilities and sites of interest.*
- D. Create bicycle lanes or shared-use roadway signage along major transportation corridors.*
- E. Connect the DNR trail to the Central Business District.*

***IV. Encourage public/non-profit/private partnerships and improve the community's social and economic quality of life (p. 19)***

- A. Consolidate community and recreational facilities so that they are located near each other and are supported by housing development.*
- B. Develop facilities that provide for the cultural needs of the community.*
- C. Serve the existing and future demand for community and recreational facilities.*

*D. Provide a balance of recreational infrastructure to meet the present and planned needs of the community.*

*E. Develop areas for recreational purpose and restore areas that are currently used for recreation.*

**V. Locate and Construct an Outdoor Amphitheater (p. 19)**

This permanent music facility would be located on Williams Island.

**VI. Develop a Green Belt along Pere Marquette River (p. 19)**

*A. Form a Pere Marquette Green Belt Commission*

*B. Create conceptual plan involving public and key stakeholders*

*C. Develop funding strategies and identify potential funding partners*

*D. Contract with landscape architectural firm to develop plans*

*E. Solidify financial planning per probable cost estimates*

*F. Determine programmatic and maintenance responsibilities and objectives*

*G. Execute plan*

**VII. Evaluate Existing Recreation Facilities (Natural & Man-Made) and Identify Needs and Service Gaps (p. 19)**

Establish and execute a protocol for regularly evaluating recreation facilities to ensure their safety, upkeep, and relevance/usefulness to the community.

(Yates Township, 2012, pp. 18-20)

**Status.** According to interviewees, none of the actions recommended in this plan had been implemented as of early 2013.

## CASE STUDIES

The following section provides examples of strategies for tourism development and historic preservation that may provide valuable examples for Idlewild. With a few exceptions, the case studies focus on accessible, grassroots approaches for initiating tourism development, as the practicum team believes that these approaches would be of the most value to the client at this time.

### *Special Events*

This section provides examples of special events that are being conducted by other communities in Michigan. Special events could be especially relevant to Idlewild because they do not necessarily require significant bricks-and-mortar investments and can be started at small scale. In addition, they may offer ideas that Idlewild could use for organizing new events—or for enhancing existing events such as the Idlewild Music Festival.

#### **Zora Neale Hurston Festival for the Arts & Humanities (Eatonville, FL)**

Located just six miles north of Orlando in central Florida, the town of Eatonville is home to about 2,000 people and is the oldest incorporated African American municipality in North America (Town of Eatonville, 2010).

Eatonville is known as one of the first incorporated black towns in the United States and was formed after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. The town is named after Union Army Captain Josiah Eaton, who owned the land and sold it to twenty-seven African-American men who wanted to start their own city. These men built their town under the legacy, “In the name of freedom and self-government.” (ibid.)

The town primarily thrived in music and arts, and in 1897 the Robert Hungerford Normal and Industrial School was founded. For years, the school was the most important school for blacks in the state of Florida because boys and girls from all over the state came to Eatonville to learn about great poets, writers, painters, and composers. The school stayed a private school until 1950, when the courts gave it to Orange County as a public trust. Today the school is known as Robert Hungerford Preparatory High School and is Orange County's first all-magnet high school.



**Figure 83:** Official Seal of the Town of Eatonville.

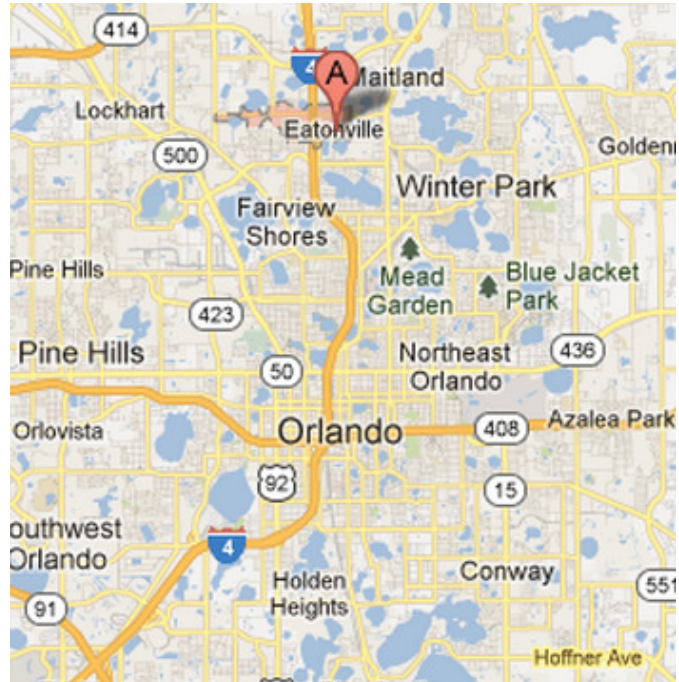
Today, the town is best known for its annual showcase of arts, literature and culture that celebrates its native daughter Zora Neale Hurston. The purpose of this showcase, called the Zora Neal Hurston Festival for the Arts & Humanities (Zora! Festival), is “To make Eatonville an internationally-recognized tourism destination of the arts and culture from throughout the African Diaspora, with special emphasis on the multidiscipline as represented in the life and work of Zora Neale Hurston.” (ibid.)

The festival is organized by Preserve the Eatonville Community, Inc. (PEC), a nonprofit historic preservation and arts organization. PEC raises funds for the festival by getting sponsorships and by requesting cash donations from adult attendees.

The community is relatively quiet year-round until the winter months, when thousands come from all over the country to the festival. The festival is built upon three main things. The first and most important is the celebration of the life and work of the writer, folklore, and anthropologist Zora Neal Hurston, a key figure of the Harlem Renaissance. The second is the celebration of the historic significance of Eatonville as the oldest African American municipality.

The third is to celebrate the cultural contributions that African Americans have made to the United States and to world culture (Zora! Festival, 2012).

The festival is unique and such a success because vendors from the town and even from all over the country come and sell tradition African-American clothing, art, paintings, and of course music. The event lasts one week and is free and open to the public. It unveils many aspects of African American culture that most people are unaware of.



**Figure 84:** Map of Eatonville Showing its Proximity to Orlando. Google Maps, 2013.



**Figure 85:** Eatonville entry arch. Town of Eatonville, 2012.

## **Analysis**

Much like Idlewild, Eatonville is rich in African American history, and the residents of this municipality use its historical significance strategically. Eatonville is best known for three things: it is the oldest incorporated African American municipality in America, it is the hometown of Zora Neale Hurston, and is the location where the annual commemorative festival takes place.

Eatonville has other similarities to Idlewild. It has only one motel, the 30-room Smith's Eatonville Motel. According to one of the individuals interviewed for this project, this is not an impediment to the success of the festival; the attendees simply use accommodations in surrounding communities. Attendees at festivals in Idlewild may do the same, even if no new accommodations are developed within Idlewild.

Eatonville is similar to Idlewild in several other ways. Apart from the festival, Eatonville has only a few attractions, including two small museums (the Zora Neale Hurston National Museum of Fine Art and the Wells Museum of African American History) and a modest downtown corridor. Like Idlewild, it also contains several lakes and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Based on this information, it may be possible for an organization such as the Idlewild Community Development Corporation, or a partnership consisting of ICDC, Yates Township, local business owners, and others to develop one or more seasonal festivals with themes that capitalize on Idlewild's history and intrinsic characteristics, without major up-front investments in bricks-and-mortar amenities such as hotels.

### **Contact Information for Eatonville, Florida and Zora! Festival**

Eatonville Town Hall

307 East Kennedy Blvd.

Eatonville, FL 32751

Phone: (407) 623-8900

<http://www.townofeatonville.org/>

<http://zorafestival.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Zora-Neale-Hurston-Festival-of-the-Arts-and-Humanities/163989369933>

### **Silver Lake Sand Dunes Apple & BBQ Cook-Off Festival (Hart, MI)**

This Oceana County cook-off is held every September. Located about an hour's drive from Idlewild, it features Kansas City-style barbecue and locally grown apples. In 2012, over 15,000 visitors attended the event (Apple and BBQ Cook Off Festival, 2013).



The Apple & BBQ Cook-Off Festival is sanctioned by the Kansas City BBQ Society (KCBS). KCBS representatives attend and provide judges for the contest, which includes both professional and amateur categories.

The professional category has an entry fee of \$225. Prizes include a \$1,100 “Grand Champion” prize and trophy, and a \$700 “Reserve Grand Champion” prize and trophy. The amateur category has an entry fee of \$50 and offers a \$100 “King of the Dunes” grand prize as well as first-, second-, and third-place prizes in smaller dollar amounts for ribs and chicken wings.



**Figure 86:** Apple & BBQ Cook-Off Event Photos. Apple & BBQ Cook-Off Festival, 2013.

To generate added interest, the festival also includes several associated events. These include a homemade apple pie contest, a rib eating contest, a classic auto and truck show, a dune buggy show, a Beautiful Baby Contest, and a craft show.

The festival takes advantage of several fundraising strategies. There is a vendor space where festival patrons can buy food; the festival collects 20% of the proceeds from food sales. The pies entered in the apple pie contest are either auctioned or sold piece by piece. In addition, the festival obtains business sponsorships. These are divided into several categories, based on the amount of money donated:

- “Smokin’ Big Apple” - \$1,000
- “Upper Crust BBQ” - \$750
- “Grillin’ Apple Crisp” - \$500
- “Saucy Apple Of My Eye” - \$250
- “Blazin’ Apple” - \$100

The festival also benefits from the coordination of volunteers, who are given assignments prior to the event. The festival’s definition of a volunteer is shown in Figure 87.

**Analysis**

A barbecue or other food festival could be a great attraction for Idlewild. This is an event that people of all ages from anywhere in Michigan or the U.S. can enjoy. It could start small



**Figure 87:** Definition of a Volunteer. Apple & BBQ Cook-Off Festival, 2013.

and grow over time. Charging entry fees and obtaining sponsors would keep costs at a minimum for the host.

Because the Apple & BBQ Cook-Off Festival takes place only about an hour from Idlewild, an Idlewild food festival would need to differentiate itself in some way. For example, Idlewild's festival could take place at a different time of year, feature a different type of food, be associated with a particular holiday, or include additional events that were unique to Idlewild. The Apple & BBQ Cook-Off Festival features apples, an important West Michigan food crop, as a selling point for the festival. An Idlewild food festival could use the community's musical heritage as a selling point to set itself apart from other festivals.

#### **Contact Information for Apple & BBQ Cook-Off Festival**

P.O. Box 82

Hart, MI 49420

Phone: (231) 873-2247

<http://www.applebbqfestival.com/>

#### **Traverse City Winter Arts Comedy Festival**

The festival was the first event put on by filmmaker Michael Moore and comedian Jeff Garlin. The festival was so popular that it is now an annual event, occurring next year on February 13-16, 2014. In its first year there were almost one hundred sponsors for the event. The festival had several different venues in Traverse City for stand-up comedy shows, films, competitions, and other free family events.

The four-day event featured more than 50 comedians and filmmakers and was very well attended despite the poor weather. The festival was assisted by more than 600 volunteers and received sponsorships from some 250 businesses and individuals. According to the Traverse City-area online news site MyNorth.com (2013), "The four-day celebration of good humor surrounded by large drifts of snow logged 16,000 admissions indoors, and saw outdoor crowds that far exceeded the festival's wildest expectations for this first-ever collaboration between the festival organizer—Michael Moore's Traverse City Film Festival—and their new partner, the National Cherry Festival."

The website for the festival includes hotel information for various hotels in the area and after hours dining in Traverse City. In addition to comedy, the event included competitions for dog pulling, soup making, hot chocolate, and best downtown display for businesses. These fun competitions were open to local businesses and individuals to participate. Engaging local business exposed the city to out of town visitors. There were a lot of free events for families and tickets were available for films, other activities, and stand-up comedy.





**Figure 88:** Front door of comedy venue. Traverse City Winter Comedy Arts Festival, 2013.

### **Analysis**

Traverse City is in close proximity to Idlewild. Possible visitors to Traverse City could travel to attractions in Idlewild. Also, this was the first year of the festival and it did so well that it is already scheduled for next year and plans to become an annual event. Just as this event draws visitors from around the region, a well-organized Idlewild event in Idlewild could draw visitors from the Northwest Michigan region as well. Idlewild has no operating theaters at present; however, a restored Flamingo Club and/or band shell could host a winter music event with regional appeal similar to that of the Traverse City Winter Comedy Arts Festival. Given that such a festival would require the establishment of a music venue, this would be a long-range goal for Idlewild.

### **Contact Information for Traverse City Winter Arts Comedy Festival**

PO Box 4064

Traverse City, MI 49685

Phone: 231-392-1134

[info@wintercomedy.org](mailto:info@wintercomedy.org)

<http://wintercomedy.org/>

### ***Historic Preservation***

The following section illustrates two important African American landmarks that have become National Historic Sites. These examples may illustrate potential approaches Idlewild could take

for designating a National Historic Site, National Monument, or National Park; currently, there are 27 National Parks/Sites/Monuments that relate to African American history (National Park Service, 2013).

For this section, it is important to note the distinction between a National Historic Landmark and a National Historic Site, Park, or Monument. “National Historic Landmark” is a symbolic title designated by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior that indicates that a property is of national historic significance; it is a higher level of significance than the National Register of Historic Places, a designation Idlewild already has. Like a National Register property, a National Historic Landmark may be eligible for federal historic tax credits and other benefits, but it remains under the jurisdiction of its owner and is not regulated or managed by the federal government. A National Historic Site, Park, or Monument is usually authorized by an Act of Congress and is managed as a park by the National Park Service. The National Park Service provides additional details on how a National Park designation is made:

*Additions to the National Park System are now generally made through Acts of Congress, and national parks can be created only through such Acts. But the President has authority, under the Antiquities Act of 1906, to proclaim national monuments on lands already under Federal jurisdiction. The Secretary of the Interior is usually asked by Congress for other recommendations on proposed additions to the System. The Secretary is counseled by the National Park System Advisory Board, composed of private citizens, which advises the Secretary on possible additions to the System and policies for its management. (National Park Service, 1991)*



**Figure 89:** Visitor Center in Nicodemus, Kansas. National Park Service, 2013.

## **Nicodemus, Kansas**

Nicodemus is a small unincorporated village in Northern Kansas, and was founded as a Western village for African Americans in 1877 after the American Civil War (Kansas Historical Society, 2013). The village was founded by freed slaves from Kentucky and served as a haven for several years in the Central United States. The village’s growth faltered when it was passed over by the railroad companies, and it soon fell into decline (Washburn

University, 2012). In 1976, Nicodemus was designated as a National Historic Landmark (Kansas Historical Society, 1913). In 1996, the town, now with a population of just over 40, was designated by the U.S. Congress as a national historical site under the management of the National Park Service (Washburn, University, 2012). Today, many tourists come to Nicodemus to learn about the history of black settlement in the western United States.

## **Analysis**

This area faces similar challenges to those of Idlewild. Nicodemus is a small African American village tucked in the plains of northern Kansas, and has faced economic woes for many years. The town is reliant on its visitor center and National park status. The National Park service provides funding and other support. The costs for managing the historic site are covered by the National Park Service, which provides free admission to any visitors. Idlewild, being located in a national forest, could also seek funding from the National Forest for managing facilities; however, this probably would require an Act of Congress, which may be a significant challenge. In addition to the contact information for site staff at the Nicodemus National Historic Site, contact information for the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service is provided below to facilitate inquiry on Idlewild's potential for National Historic Site designation.

As an alternative to designation as a National Historic Site/Park/Monument, Idlewild could seek designation as a National Historic Landmark. As noted above, such a designation does not entail active management by the National Park Service, but it is an important symbolic honor. The website of the National Historic Landmark Program is provided below; the staff at the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service can provide information about the program.

### **Contact Information for Nicodemus, Kansas and National Park Service**

Nicodemus National Historic Site  
510 Washington Ave. Apt. B1  
Nicodemus, KS 67625-3015  
Superintendent: (785) 839-4321  
Administration: (785) 839-4321  
Visitor Information: (785) 839-4322  
<http://www.nps.gov/nico/index.htm>

National Park Service—Midwest Region  
Michael Reynolds, Regional Director  
601 Riverfront Drive  
Omaha, NE 68102-4226  
(402) 661-1736  
<http://www.nps.gov/aboutus/contactinformation.htm>  
National Historic Landmarks: <http://www.nps.gov/nhl/>

### **Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site & Preservation District, Atlanta**

The Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site and Preservation District is located in Atlanta, Georgia, near the boyhood home of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and was founded in 1980. The site, located on Auburn Avenue in the Sweet Auburn Historic District, includes a 35-acre property housing a visitor center, Dr. King's boyhood home, Ebenezer Baptist Church, and the old Firehouse, which now houses the gift shop. Like Idlewild, the concentration of African Americans in the Sweet Auburn neighborhood was the result of segregation laws, but it enjoyed

a measure of prosperity during the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century because African Americans had few other places to live in Atlanta. As with Idlewild, Sweet Auburn's fortunes changed in the 1960s after the Civil Rights Act made housing discrimination illegal; as residents migrated to other neighborhoods, Sweet Auburn's housing and commercial buildings fell into disrepair. Sweet Auburn also fell victim to the larger trends in urban disinvestment and freeway construction of the 1960s and 1970s. (Janiskee, 2008)

Like Nicodemus, Sweet Auburn was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1976. Shortly thereafter, intensive lobbying by civil rights and political leaders resulted in the 1980 designation of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site by the U.S. Congress. The original site included only Dr. King's birth home, his grave, and the Ebenezer Baptist Church. However, the district was later expanded to encompass a 68-acre area designed to preserve the core of the Sweet Auburn neighborhood, and the National Park Service began strategically acquiring selected properties there. Thus, the site became known as the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site and Preservation District. The establishment in 1994 of a community land trust (CLT) called the Historic District Development Corporation (HDDC) also helped facilitate the preservation of the surrounding neighborhood while maintaining affordability for low-income residents (*ibid.*). Finally, the Trust for Public Land assisted with the preservation of the district by purchasing and preserving more than a dozen properties (Trust for Public Land, 2013).



**Figure 90:** Birth home of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library of Congress, undated.

### **Analysis**

Like Idlewild, the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site & Preservation District covers a large land area with a large stock of historic housing. The approach taken in Sweet Auburn—strategic acquisition of a few selected sites by the National Park Service, with a historic district and CLT stepping in to protect the rest—may be applicable to Idlewild. Given that Idlewild sits within a national forest and already includes significant federally owned land holdings within its borders, perhaps the National Park Service would be interested in establishing an Idlewild National Historic Site that protects a few important properties such as the Daniel Hale Williams house or the Casa Blanca Hotel. However, even if it were not feasible for Congress to designate a National Historic Site in Idlewild, the establishment of a CLT may be a more reachable goal. For more information about CLTs and their potential for Idlewild, please see Appendix B.



### **Contact Information for MLK National Historic Site, HDDC, and Trust for Public Land**

Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site & Preservation District

450 Auburn Avenue, NE

Atlanta, GA 30312-1525

(404) 331-5190

<http://www.nps.gov/malu/index.htm>

Historic District Development Corporation

522 Auburn Avenue, NE

Atlanta, Georgia, 30312

(404) 556-7544

[info@hddc.net](mailto:info@hddc.net)

<http://www.hddc.net/>

Trust for Public Land

The Trust for Public Land

101 Montgomery Street, Suite 900

San Francisco, CA 94104

(415) 495-4014 or 1-800-714-LAND

<http://www.tpl.org/>

## ***Mixed-Use Development***

### **Mashpee Commons**

Mashpee Commons is a mixed village center in Mashpee, Massachusetts that has been nationally and internationally recognized for its smart growth design. Mashpee Commons is comprised of commercial, residential, and conservation-oriented development. It contains housing, dining options with live music, shopping, a movie theater, and weekly events. Also, Mashpee Commons houses festivals, fairs, and ceremonies throughout the year to attract tourists and to attract new organizations to the area. (Mashpee Commons, 2013)

### **Analysis**

This project is more of a long-term aspiration to be pursued after Idlewild has already begun to attract new business and tourism, as it would require very significant private investment. The population of Mashpee in the 2010 Census was 14,006, which is closer to Lake County's population of 11,539. In our recommendations we suggest developing a relationship with Lake County. After a relationship is developed with the county and the other townships/cities within Lake County, development similar to Mashpee Commons could be a hub for the area. The development could attract tourists as well as residents from surrounding counties and strengthen the area economically and culturally. The tourism market study shows that shopping and entertainment are important draws to the area, and the retail marketplace profile shows

that most businesses are outside of the Idlewild area. A development project that has the involvement of the whole county would benefit not just Idlewild but the areas where most of the leakage of businesses are located. A project similar to Mashpee Commons would be most appropriate in the Idlewild neighborhood commercial district or along the Broadway corridor. To make a project like this feasible and retain a measure of consistency with Idlewild's historical character, such development should occur at relatively small scale and low density, with buildings no taller than two stories; the Cultural Resource Management Plan (2009) offers design guidelines to harmonize new construction with the existing historic structures in Idlewild.

### **Contact Information for Mashpee Commons**

2 Market St.

Mashpee, MA 02649

(508) 477-5400

<http://mashpeecommons.com/>



**Figure 91:** Mashpee Commons, Massachusetts. Source: Buildabetterburg.org.





## TOURISM DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research in this paper, Idlewild is very well suited for a tourism initiative. It boasts the same natural beauty that attracted buyers from across the country a century ago, and that beauty is now overlaid with a long and rich history. Idlewild's socioeconomic condition is in need of improvement but does not appear to be in crisis. Idlewild sits at the center of an important regional tourism economy and appears to have strong potential for contributing to—and benefiting from—that economy.

However, as the client knows, more attractions are needed to make this happen. In the midst of a region overflowing with tourist attractions and natural beauty, Idlewild has few attractions to draw the volumes of tourist traffic that would ensure long-term prosperity.

The recent plans that have been done for Idlewild are of paramount importance. They provide a wide array of well-informed recommendations for developing Idlewild as a prosperous tourism destination while ensuring the stewardship of the cultural resources that make Idlewild unique and attractive. However, these plans seem lacking in accessible, inexpensive, small-scale strategies for initiating a community-driven effort to set the stage for tourism. In addition, some of the proposed implementation timelines may have been overly ambitious in retrospect. Finally, while they were prepared by highly competent planning professionals and were *informed* by community input, the extent to which they were *driven* by local initiative is unclear.

To that end, the practicum team proposes that Idlewild begin with an array of small-scale, low-cost, grassroots approaches that set the stage for the important but costly bricks-and-mortar investments that will help sustain Idlewild's tourism economy in the long run. In addition to being accessible for a cash-strapped community, these approaches are devised to generate maximum participation, collaboration, and buy-in from all sectors of the community—including local citizens, Yates Township and Lake County officials, nonprofits, and business owners. This will be important for ensuring that the full community takes ownership in Idlewild's identity as a 21<sup>st</sup>-century historical tourism attraction.

In general, the practicum team recommends that Idlewild focus on developing unique and interesting tourist *attractions* before exerting significant efforts to pursue additional tourism *amenities* such as hotels and motels. As shown by the case study of Eatonville, Florida, it is not necessary to have a hotel in order to attract tourism; visitors to the Zora! Festival use accommodations in surrounding communities. The practicum team's market study has demonstrated that the counties near Idlewild boast large numbers of lodging facilities. By focusing first on the attractions, tourists will have compelling reasons for visiting Idlewild and will be able to use these existing accommodations. As Idlewild's attractions grow, the market for additional amenities may grow in kind.

The same is true of marketing. While marketing is of utmost importance for attracting new visitors of all ages and demographic groups, it should not be unveiled prematurely. The addition of promotional highway signs or billboards seems unlikely to generate repeat visits if the tourist attractions are not sufficiently enticing.

This set of recommendations carries over several of the recommendations from the previous plans, but attempts to provide a more realistic time frame for implementation. Most of the original recommendations by the practicum team are concentrated toward low-cost or no-cost, grassroots strategies to be completed in the next three years. In addition to achieving modest gains in capacity building, community beautification, and other areas, these strategies are designed to generate community engagement and support for the work so that the residents of Idlewild are involved in Idlewild's development. The public engagement and momentum from the implementation of the grassroots strategies may increase the feasibility of the more ambitious recommendations featured in the earlier planning documents.

The recommendations are presented first in narrative form, and then are summarized together in Table 37.

## **Capacity Building**

Local capacity building activities will help nonprofits like the Idlewild Community Development Corporation as well as Yates Township public officials to build the expertise to organize, work together, and generate locally driven tourism investment. Capacity building often requires little or no investment; it simply involves taking advantage of available training opportunities and working together to create an atmosphere of collaboration.

### **Short Term/Low Cost (2013-2016)**

**Capacity Building—Training.** Many organizations hold annual conferences which highlight strategies that are relevant to the development and stewardship of Idlewild. Often these organizations offer scholarships to waive part or all of the attendance fees. In addition, all of these organizations provide free or low-cost technical assistance and capacity building resources on their websites.

- **Land Trust Alliance** [www.landtrustalliance.org](http://www.landtrustalliance.org)
  - *Training Portal:* <http://www.landtrustalliance.org/training>
- **Michigan Historic Preservation Network** [www.mhpn.org](http://www.mhpn.org)
  - *Education and Outreach Portal:* [http://www.mhpn.org/?page\\_id=182](http://www.mhpn.org/?page_id=182)
- **Center for Community Progress** [www.communityprogress.net](http://www.communityprogress.net)
  - *Technical Assistance and Capacity Building:*  
<http://www.communityprogress.net/capacity-building-pages-45.php>
- **Michigan Nonprofit Association** [www.mnaonline.org](http://www.mnaonline.org)
  - *Nonprofit Resource Center:*  
<http://www.mnaonline.org/nonprofitresourcecenter.aspx>
  - *Upcoming Capacity Building Events:*  
<http://www.mnaonline.org/capacitybuilding.aspx>
- **MI Place** [www.miplace.org](http://www.miplace.org)
  - *Tools and Resources for Community Development:*  
<http://www.miplace.org/resources>

**Capacity Building—Collaboration.** According to the SWOT analysis and interviews, development in Idlewild has been challenged by internal conflicts within the community. To initiate a tourism development initiative that reflects a strong community consensus and takes advantage of the important resources that all stakeholders have to offer, an atmosphere of strong communication and collaboration is needed. The practicum team proposes the following approach for building collaboration around tourism:

- Establish an Idlewild Tourism Committee with Yates Township and county officials; Lake County Land Bank; Lake County Chamber; Lake County MSU Extension District 5; West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission; Idlewild Chamber; nonprofits; and business representatives
  - Coordinate volunteers
  - Coordinate subcommittees to carry out specific activities

- Meet regularly to discuss status of activities and address problems
- Conduct a monthly conference call with State of Michigan contacts to provide updates on the status of activities and coordinate strategic assistance from the State

### **Medium Term/Medium Cost (2016-2019)**

At this stage, it is hoped that the initial capacity building work will lead to the ability to expand the operations of the ICDC. With the resources generated through fundraising, conduct the following activities:

***Hire a part-time planning and development coordinator.*** This staff position would increase the capacity of the ICDC to engage in the strategic acquisition and management of properties as well as other community development work. It will be essential for the expansion of the organization's impact on the community.

***Establish official ICDC headquarters.*** This will give the organization a more permanent identity in Idlewild, as well as a base of operations for conducting business. The headquarters could be in a historic building acquired through the Lake County Land Bank or the Michigan Land Bank, thus illustrating the ICDC's commitment to preservation and stewardship.

***Expand Idlewild Chamber of Commerce.*** As the number of businesses in Idlewild increases, it should be feasible to expand the operations and business-support capacity of the Idlewild Chamber of Commerce.

### **Long Term/High Cost (2020-2023)**

***Hire a full-time planning and development coordinator.*** At this stage, it is hoped that the growth of Idlewild's tourism economy will be sufficient to merit additional staff capacity increases. Increased tourism revenues should make this possible.

## ***Physical Development***

### **Short Term/Low Cost (2013-2016)**

Although bricks-and-mortar development projects are very expensive, several projects could be completed in the near term through private investment or grant funding. These are described below.

***Issue request for qualifications for reopening the Flamingo Club.*** The rehabilitation and reopening of the Flamingo Club is prioritized in several of the recent plans that have been completed for Idlewild. Based on the research for this report, the practicum team concurs that a revitalized Flamingo Club could serve as an anchor for tourism development in Idlewild. With private investment, this could be done at little or no cost to Yates Township. The Economic Development Action Strategy (2008) includes sample request for proposals (RFP) language in its appendices; however, a request for qualifications (RFQ) may allow better chances for execution. Unlike an RFP, in which the community requests a highly specific proposal, an RFQ is much shorter and focuses more on the qualifications and practical experience of the developer. After the developer is selected, the community enters into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the developer, which is a statement of mutual understanding about the general parameters of the project and is not legally binding. Under the MOU, the community works with the developer to design the project and explore its feasibility in a manner that balances the needs of the community and the site with the profit motive of the developer. Based on the findings from this work, the community enters into a legally binding Development Agreement with the developer, which details the specific project to be completed. (Van Ravensway, 2011.)

Appendix D provides a sample RFQ, MOU, and Development Agreement for East Village, a proposed development in East Lansing. Although the materials are from a much larger community and project, the RFQ and MOU are short, simple documents in a format that should be easy to adapt to the search for a developer for the Flamingo Club. The Development Agreement is much more detailed, but a qualified developer may have the necessary expertise to help complete such an agreement. If further assistance is needed to complete the RFQ, MOU, or related documents, an economic development organization like the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC) may be able to provide assistance or a referral. WMSRDC's contact information is provided below.

West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission  
316 Morris Avenue, Suite 340  
Muskegon, MI 49440  
Stephen Carlson, Senior Planner, Community Development & Local Government Services  
(231) 722-7878 ext. 11  
[scarlson@wmsrdc.org](mailto:scarlson@wmsrdc.org)

**Solicit public grant funding for specific development projects.** Several development projects would help set the stage for tourism development in Idlewild and could potentially be carried out with public funds.

- *Solicit Michigan Department of Natural Resources funding for Williams Island bridge replacement.* This is a recommendation of the Cultural Resources Management Plan. It would increase the water flow and health of the north section of Idlewild Lake while reinforcing the scenic identity of Williams Island as an island.
  - *Contact information for Michigan DNR Waterways Program Grants:*  
Paul Petersen, Waterways Grant Program Manager  
DNR, Parks and Recreation Division  
P.O. Box 30257, Lansing, MI 48909  
(517) 335-3033  
[petersenp@michigan.gov](mailto:petersenp@michigan.gov)  
[http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-58225\\_37985-124962--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-58225_37985-124962--,00.html)
- *Solicit U.S. Department of Agriculture or other funding for broadband development.* Broadband development will be critical for attracting a 21<sup>st</sup>-century tourism economy and also for reinforcing the connectivity of Idlewild's residents. The client was actively pursuing this funding at the time this report was written.
  - *Contact information for USDA Rural Development Telecommunications Programs, Broadband Division:*  
USDA - STOP 1599  
1400 Independence Ave., SW, Rm 2868-S  
Washington, DC 20250-1599  
Ken Kuchno, Director  
(202) 690-4673  
[kenneth.kuchno@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:kenneth.kuchno@wdc.usda.gov)  
<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/RUSTelecomPrograms.html>

### **Medium Term/Medium Cost (2016-2019)**

***Solicit State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) grant for evaluation, stabilization, and/or rehabilitation of Casa Blanca Hotel.*** This is a recommendation of the Cultural Resources Management Plan. Although the development of a hotel may not be advisable until Idlewild has more tourist attractions to provide a consistent flow of guests for a hotel, a small-scale first step would be to evaluate and stabilize the historic Casa Blanca hotel building, which is one of Idlewild's most striking historic structures. It may be possible to obtain state funding to carry out this work. The SHPO Historic Preservation Fund is a 60/40 matching grant (SHPO, 2013), which makes this a medium-term/medium-cost recommendation.

*Contact Information for Michigan SHPO Historic Preservation Fund Grants:*

Michigan State Historic Preservation Office  
702 W. Kalamazoo St., P.O. Box 30740  
Lansing, MI 48909-8240  
(517) 373-1979

[preservation@michigan.gov](mailto:preservation@michigan.gov)

[http://www.michigan.gov/mshda/0,4641,7-141-54317\\_19320\\_61958---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mshda/0,4641,7-141-54317_19320_61958---,00.html)

***ICDC partners with Lake County Land Bank to redevelop or rehabilitate strategic properties in target area.*** By this time, it is hoped that the ICDC will have built sufficient capacity to begin the strategic acquisition and management of properties. In collaboration with the Lake County Land Bank and the Michigan Land Bank, the ICDC will acquire properties for rehabilitation or redevelopment, focusing especially on (a) commercial properties in the neighborhood commercial district and the Broadway corridor, and (b) historic housing throughout the district. The acquisition of Idlewild's historic homes by the ICDC will carry out a dual function: the provision of affordable housing and the preservation of the modest cottages that typify historic Idlewild.

***Construct welcome center at US-10 and Broadway.*** The Cultural Resource Management Plan recommends that a welcome center be constructed at US-10 and Broadway to provide brochures and other resources to visitors. The acquisition of land and the construction of a welcome center could be a medium-term project of the ICDC.

### **Long Term/High Cost (2020-2023)**

***Hotel(s) established. Commercial development occurring.*** By this time, it is hoped that market-driven commercial development will be occurring in the neighborhood commercial district and the Broadway corridor. The Casa Blanca Hotel and/or other lodging facilities will have been established.

***Build amphitheater on Williams Island.*** With increased revenue from tourism and also an increased business presence in Idlewild, it may be possible by this time to raise funds locally to match grants from the state for the construction of a permanent amphitheater on Williams Island.

## **Marketing**

### **Short Term/Low Cost (2013-2016)**

**Engage volunteers for social media awareness building.** Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest are free and popular. Add new content often—daily if possible. If event information is not available, post interesting historical information, videos, etc.

**Establish a central Idlewild website.** This should be Idlewild’s main point of contact. The website should have a domain that is short and easy to remember. For example, “visitidlewild.com” was available for \$43.97 in April 2013 (Godaddy.com, 2013).

**During Idlewild Week, gather contact information (emails, addresses, phone) of all Idlewilders Club members.** This will allow the ICDC to reach out to the Idlewilders about special events in the community and could also offer the possibility of conducting research to better understand the characteristics, preferences, and future prospects of this market.

**Research Historically Black Colleges & Universities and the Divine Nine.** This is another potentially important target market. As shown by the market study, educated individuals are more likely to visit cultural tourism sites. The website [www.blackgreek.com/divinenine](http://www.blackgreek.com/divinenine) has information on the “Divine Nine” historically black fraternities and sororities that make up the National Pan-Hellenic Council—an audience of highly educated African Americans.

### **Medium Term/Medium Cost (2016-2019)**

**Increase investment in marketing.** As events and attractions grow and diversify, it should be feasible to make the following investments in marketing by the 2016-2019 time frame:

- Hire a part-time marketing coordinator.
- Hire a marketing firm to create promotional videos.
- Purchase ads in major Northwest Michigan markets as well as Detroit, Chicago, Grand Rapids.
- Advertise in-state through Pure Michigan.
- Generate targeted marketing materials, e-newsletters.
  - Idlewilders Clubs
  - Historically Black Colleges & Universities
  - “Divine Nine” Fraternities & Sororities

### **Long Term/High Cost (2020-2023)**

**Reach out to major markets.** By this time, the growth in tourist attractions and amenities may justify broader outreach to major markets and the establishment of a more permanent marketing agency. This could consist of the following:

- Establish Idlewild Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Purchase ads in major North American markets
- Advertise nationwide through Pure Michigan
- TV commercials in major Midwestern cities



## ***Beautification***

### **Short Term/Low Cost (2013-2016)**

***Form a volunteer beautification subcommittee to set ongoing local priorities for beautification.*** This would be a subcommittee of the Idlewild Tourism Committee in the Capacity Building task.

***Wildflower Day.*** Wildflowers are one of Idlewild's hidden treasures. To highlight this seasonal feature, organize local residents to plant native wildflowers at entrances to Idlewild and along major corridors. To supply seeds/plants, seek donations or sponsorships from greenhouses around the region.

***Engage local artists to make decorative signs and other promotional materials.*** During the SWOT analysis, residents pointed out that Idlewild's promotional materials use clip art. The Cultural Resource Management Plan (2009) noted that several of Idlewild's street signs are used signs from Grand Rapids that still have logos specific to that city. Where possible, seek out local artists and artisans to develop these promotional materials. To compensate the artists for their work, seek mini-grants such as the Lighter Quicker Cheaper grants offered by the Michigan Association of Realtors (<http://www.michiganhomeownersalliance.com/lqcchallenge.htm>).

### **Medium Term/Medium Cost (2016-2019)**

***Work with DNR/DEQ to coordinate ongoing evaluation and maintenance of the lakes.*** Idlewild's lakes are a critical tourism asset, and their long-term health is related to the health of Idlewild's economy. Their condition should be evaluated, and issues rectified, on a regular basis.

### **Long Term/High Cost (2020-2023)**

***Establish a program for sustained evaluation and maintenance of beautification activities.*** This program would be a long-term initiative of the Idlewild Community Development Corporation or Yates Township. It could be established through a business improvement district, in which businesses in the target area pay a small tax or fee that is applied to general evaluation and maintenance as well as specific beautification initiatives; alternatively, it could solicit donations from businesses to carry out such projects. Because such a program would require a critical mass of businesses to be viable, this is considered a long-term approach.

## **Special Events**

### **Short Term/Low Cost (2013-2016)**

**Special Events.** The practicum team feels that special events could be a critically important early-stage approach for cultivating tourism. They can start small and be scaled up gradually, and they do not necessarily require a large up-front investment. Idlewild has already had an annual music festival for several years, and this festival could be expanded. In addition, new festivals could be established.

- **Form a volunteer special events subcommittee; set priorities and assign tasks.** This would be a subcommittee of the Tourism Development Committee.
- **Begin a Father's Day BBQ Festival.** Based on Internet research by the practicum team, the closest major barbecue festival is in Hart (profiled in the previous section) and occurs in the fall. An Idlewild Father's Day Barbecue Festival could bring together not just members of the Idlewilders' Clubs, but also their children and grandchildren. It also could attract other residents from Lake County and the surrounding region. The timing of the festival in June would help differentiate it from the festival in Hart, and it could include additional events and branding unique to Idlewild, perhaps tied to music or to imagery connected with the Flamingo Club. (The Idlewild Economic Development Action Strategy proposes a "Flamingo Festival" with this theme; for information about that concept, see page 101 of the Economic Development Action Strategy.)
- **Seek additional sponsors to expand the Idlewild Music Fest.** The scope of this festival could be expanded by seeking additional sponsors with the help of the special events subcommittee. The addition of sponsorships from businesses outside Lake County would both increase the available operating funds for running the event and contribute to generating interest in the festival among visitors throughout the region.

### **Medium Term/Medium Cost (2016-2019)**

**Increase investment in event coordination.** As events and attractions grow and diversify, it may be feasible to make the following investments in event coordination by the 2016-2019 time frame:

- Hire a part-time special events coordinator
- Expand/seek additional sponsors for Barbecue Festival
- Seek major acts for Idlewild Music Festival
- Establish a Flamingo Club Summer Concert Series (pending reopening of Flamingo Club)

### **Long Term/High Cost (2020-2023)**

**Establish full-time events coordination staff.** If the growth of and interest in Idlewild's special events continues, it may be feasible to establish a full-time special events coordinator and staff.

## ***Preservation and Stewardship***

### **Short Term/Low Cost (2013-2016)**

***Provide nonbinding design guidelines using language from Cultural Resource Management Plan.*** The Comprehensive Master Plan and the Cultural Resource Management Plan both advocate for the establishment of a local historic district to protect the historic structures that make Idlewild unique. However, the establishment of a local historic district is difficult because local historic districts are a regulatory tool that requires landowners to obtain local government permission to alter the exterior appearance of their properties. To provide landowners with education about the features that define Idlewild's historic resources and build support for historic preservation, it may be more feasible to post nonbinding design guidelines for the treatment of historic structures. These can be readily adapted from the Cultural Resource Management Plan.

### **Medium Term/Medium Cost (2016-2019)**

***Begin initial steps toward establishing a Local Historic District.*** As knowledge and support of historic preservation increases, it may be feasible to take initial steps toward establishing a local historic district. This is done by establishing a Historic District Study Committee consisting of local officials, interested citizens, and historic preservation specialists. The committee would develop a report of the historic resources that the historic district would protect. For Idlewild, the committee could use the State Historic Preservation Office's existing historic resource inventory as starting point, updating the inventory to reflect demolitions and other changes to the properties since the Cultural Resource Management Plan was written.

### **Long Term/High Cost (2020-2023)**

***Establish local historic district.*** Once the historic district study committee's report is complete and sufficient support exists among local residents and officials, it may be feasible to establish a local historic district. This would require a public hearing and comment period, followed by a vote of the township board.



**Table 37: Tourism Development Recommendations, 2013-2023**

Short Term/Low Cost (2013-2016)	Medium Term/Medium Cost (2016-2019)	Long Term/High Cost (2020-2023)
<p><b>Capacity building--training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Michigan Nonprofit Association, Michigan Historic Preservation Network, Center for Community Progress</li> </ul> <p><b>Capacity building—collaboration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish Idlewild Tourism Committee with Yates Twp, county officials; Lake County Chamber, Land Bank; Lake County MSU Extension District 5; West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission; nonprofits; business reps               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate volunteers</li> <li>Coordinate subcommittees for activities below</li> </ul> </li> <li>Meet regularly to discuss status of activities and address problems</li> <li>Monthly conference call with state partners</li> </ul>	<p><b>Capacity building</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hire part-time planning and development coordinator</li> <li>Establish official ICDC headquarters</li> <li>Expand Idlewild Chamber of Commerce</li> </ul>	<p><b>Capacity building</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hire full-time planning and development coordinator</li> </ul>
<p><b>Physical development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Issue RFQ for Flamingo Club and Williams Island band shell</li> <li>Solicit DNR/DEQ funding for Williams Island bridge replacement</li> <li>Solicit USDA funding for broadband development</li> </ul>	<p><b>Physical development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ICDC partners with Lake County Land Bank to redevelop strategic properties in target area</li> <li>Construct welcome center at US-10 and Broadway</li> <li>Issue RFQ for redevelopment of Casa Blanca Hotel</li> <li>Solicit SHPO grant for Casa Blanca Hotel</li> </ul>	<p><b>Physical development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hotel(s) established; commercial development occurring</li> <li>Raise funds locally to build permanent amphitheater on Williams Island</li> </ul>
<p><b>Marketing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage volunteer for social media marketing—start with historical information and existing events. Content updates at least 3x/week</li> <li>Establish central Idlewild website (e.g., “visitidlewild.com”)</li> <li>During Idlewild Week, gather contact information (emails, addresses, phone) of all Idlewilders Club members</li> <li>Research Historically Black Colleges &amp; Universities, Divine Nine</li> </ul>	<p><b>Marketing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hire part-time marketing coordinator</li> <li>As events &amp; attractions grow/diversify, increase marketing investment</li> <li>Hire marketing firm to create promotional videos</li> <li>Purchase ads in major Northwest Michigan markets as well as Detroit, Chicago, Grand Rapids</li> <li>Advertise in-state through Pure Michigan</li> <li>Targeted marketing materials, e-newsletters               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Idlewilders Clubs</li> <li>Historically Black Colleges &amp; Univs.</li> <li>“Divine Nine” Fraternities &amp; Sororities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Marketing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish Idlewild Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>Purchase ads in major North American markets</li> <li>Advertise nationwide through Pure Michigan</li> <li>TV commercials in major Midwestern cities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Beautification</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form a volunteer beautification subcommittee to set local priorities</li> <li>Wildflower Day—each year, plant native wildflowers at entrances and major corridor (seek donations from area greenhouses)</li> <li>Engage local artists to make decorative entry signs, wayfinding signs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Beautification</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with DNR/DEQ to coordinate ongoing evaluation and maintenance of the lakes</li> </ul>	<p><b>Beautification</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate sustained beautification activities through business improvement district or donations from local businesses</li> </ul>
<p><b>Special Events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form volunteer special events subcommittee; set priorities and assign tasks</li> <li>Begin Father’s Day BBQ Fest or other food festival</li> <li>Seek additional sponsors for Idlewild Music Fest</li> </ul>	<p><b>Special Events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hire a part-time special events coordinator</li> <li>Expand/seek additional sponsors for BBQ/food fest</li> <li>Seek major acts for Idlewild Music Fest</li> <li>Establish Flamingo Club Summer Concert Series (pending reopening of Flamingo Club)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Special Events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full-time special events staff</li> </ul>
<p><b>Preservation and Stewardship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Propose nonbinding design guidelines using language from Cultural Resource Management Plan</li> </ul>	<p><b>Preservation and Stewardship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish Historic District Study Committee</li> <li>Develop updated report using existing historic resource inventory as starting point</li> </ul>	<p><b>Preservation and Stewardship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish local historic district</li> </ul>



## **SUMMARY**

This report provides the client with an array of data, maps, resources, contacts, and recommendations for initiating and sustaining a community-driven tourism development strategy in Idlewild, Michigan. It is the product of extensive research and analysis on the part of the practicum team as well as the support of many partners who contributed time, background information, and thoughtful commentary.

The practicum team has learned a great deal about the history, characteristics, and potential of Idlewild, and the recommendations in this report are the product of that accumulated knowledge. It is the hope of the practicum team that this report will provide a point of departure for a tourism initiative that is defined and driven by the local residents and organizations of Idlewild, with support from external partners such as Lake County and the State of Michigan. As time passes, the recommendations in the report should be evaluated, adapted, and updated to suit the changing needs and local realities of the community members who will implement them and will be affected by their results.

The practicum team is grateful for the opportunity to learn about the beautiful community of Idlewild and to make this small contribution in support of its revitalization.





## **APPENDICES**



# APPENDIX A: SWOT ANALYSIS DISCUSSION GUIDE

## Discussion Guide for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis

Hello, I'm \_\_\_ from the Michigan State University urban planning program. As you probably know, our team is working on a practicum project at MSU where we'll do a tourism asset and market study of Idlewild and create a strategy for revitalizing Idlewild as a tourist destination. I'd like to ask you a few questions to help inform our research. This interview should take about 40-45 minutes.

1. First, please give me a short overview of the work you do and your personal connection to Idlewild.
2. One of our tasks is to develop a socioeconomic profile of the area. What are your impressions about the current socioeconomic condition of Idlewild?
3. Another task is to make an inventory of existing tourist assets in the area—both locally and regionally. These include both tourist *attractions* like Sleeping Bear Dunes and tourist *amenities* like hotels, motels, restaurants, welcome centers, and transportation services. What do you consider to be the most important tourist assets in:
  - a. Idlewild?
    - i. *Probe:* attractions
    - ii. *Probe:* amenities
  - b. Yates Township?
    - i. *Probe:* attractions
    - ii. *Probe:* amenities
  - c. Lake County?
    - i. *Probe:* attractions
    - ii. *Probe:* amenities
  - d. The region? (Manistee, Mason, Newaygo, Osceola, Wexford Counties)
    - i. *Probe:* attractions
    - ii. *Probe:* amenities
4. We're also going to do a SWOT analysis—an overview of *internal* strengths and weaknesses and *external* opportunities and threats that Idlewild faces. What do you see as Idlewild's most important *internal* strengths? When I say internal, I mean things that are integral to Idlewild and to the larger community in Yates Township.
  - a. *Probe:* It's probably going to require a group effort to make Idlewild into a major tourist attraction again. What are your impressions about how well people communicate and collaborate in Idlewild, Yates Township, Lake County? Do different stakeholders get along well?

5. Next, what are Idlewild's most important weaknesses? These are the specific characteristics *internal* to Idlewild and Yates Township that make it hard for Idlewild to become a popular tourist attraction and be a prosperous community.
6. Now I'd like to ask about external factors—issues outside the community that affect Idlewild. First, what are the most important *opportunities* you see for Idlewild?
  - a. *If more info needed:* This is where you can talk about investment possibilities (both public and private investment) as well as what kind of community you think Idlewild *could* and *should* become in the next ten years. It could include markets that you think might be interested in Idlewild.
7. Finally, I want to ask you about threats. What are the most important *external* factors outside the community that make it difficult for Idlewild to become a popular tourist attraction?
8. We're going to compile a set of case studies of communities similar to Idlewild that have used a particular asset to attract community development and investment. We're especially interested in *recent* success stories. What examples do you know of?
  - a. *Probe:* In what ways was that example similar to Idlewild?
  - b. *Probe:* What do you know about funding sources? How long did it take? What partnerships were involved?
9. What are your short term goals for Idlewild? What do you think can be done with little to no funds over the next 1-3 years?
10. Those are all the questions I have. Is there anything else we should keep in mind as we do this work?

## APPENDIX B: CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN IDLEWILD COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

### About Community Land Trusts

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are community-based nonprofit organizations that promote stewardship and affordability in a community by safeguarding its buildings and land. CLTs operate by acquiring properties and then keeping them in trust in perpetuity. They issue long-term leases or purchase agreements to individuals, businesses, nonprofits, etc., to occupy and use the properties. The leases can be ground leases (i.e., the CLT retains ownership of the land but not the structures on it), or leases of both the land and any structures on it. In a purchase agreement, the property is sold to a buyer outright, but the agreement typically offers the CLT the option to buy back the property at a price that is below market rate but still offers property owners a return on their investment. CLTs have been formed in urban, suburban, and rural areas and have contributed to the preservation and revitalization of housing, commercial and nonprofit enterprises, farmland, natural areas, and more. (Oakland Community Land Trust, 2013.)

The Oakland Community Land Trust lists an array of benefits of CLTs, many of which are highly relevant to Idlewild:

**Housing:** *CLTs provide permanently affordable housing through below-market pricing and long-term contractual controls over the sub-letting and re-sale of owner-occupied homes.*

**Jobs:** *CLTs provide jobs through the development of small businesses, the use of local contractors, and through cooperative agreements with local banks.*

**Environmental Quality:** *CLTs provide environmental benefits through cleaning up toxic sites, rehabilitating blighted properties, and constant attention to environmentally sound housing design and energy-efficient materials.*

**Community Spaces:** *Many CLTs develop and manage vest-pocket parks and community gardens. Some have developed public facilities like community centers, job training centers, and incubators space for nonprofit service organizations, all located on the CLT's land.*

**Ownership Opportunities:** *Most CLTs develop housing that is owner-occupied, subject to long-term controls over occupancy, condition, subletting, and resale. (Ibid., par. 6)*

The initial formation of a CLT simply consists of establishing a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization or adjusting an existing nonprofit to accommodate the mission and work of a CLT. Next, the

CLT must establish its service area, decide what functions it will carry out, and begin to rally support from local public officials, nonprofits, philanthropic organizations, citizens, and other stakeholders (ibid.).

### **CLT/Land Bank Partnership: A Possible Model for Idlewild**

Land banks, in particular, can be excellent partners for a CLT, according to affordable housing expert John Emmeus Davis (2012). Like CLTs, land banks aim to return derelict properties to productive use. However, unlike the nonprofit CLTs, land banks are public or quasi-public agencies; for example, the Lake County Land Bank operates through the Lake County Treasurer. In addition, land banks usually sell properties outright to private owners within three to five years of acquisition without imposing restrictions on the future sale price or use of the properties. Often these sales occur through public auctions, where the properties are sold to outside speculators who have no stake in the community. After the sale, the land bank has no involvement with the property, unless it is returned to the land bank through tax foreclosure; as a result, the property remains subject to cycles of disinvestment or gentrification. In contrast, CLTs are dedicated to the long-term, “counter-cyclical stewardship” of a community’s land and buildings (Davis, 2012, par. 6).

While the weakness of land banks lies in the disposition of property, a major struggle for CLTs is the acquisition of property. Unlike land banks, which quickly obtain large numbers of properties that have been surrendered through tax foreclosure, CLTs struggle to obtain enough properties to make a real difference in their communities and often remain small as a result (ibid.). This could be a particular challenge for the Idlewild CLT, which is just beginning its work.

According to Davis, the designation of a CLT as a priority recipient of land bank properties would be a “game changer” for CLTs, eliminating the single most important impediment to their growth. “With fewer worries about finding their next piece of property,” Davis observes, “A greater proportion of a CLT’s energies and resources could be devoted to what a CLT does best: stewardship” (ibid., par. 9).

The transformative potential for land bank/CLT partnerships is beginning to be recognized at a national level. In October 2011, the Women’s Community Revitalization Project, a Philadelphia-based community development organization, hosted a national symposium on the possibilities of these partnerships. A number of national experts spoke at this symposium, including Dan Kildee, the founder of the Genesee County Land Bank and the Center for Community Progress:

*Imagine the relationship between a land bank and a CLT, when the land bank can say to itself and to the community, our first priority for the use of this land is to support the mission of our land trust in trying to achieve its goals. Rather than exposing a property first to public auction, then [making it available only] after the scavengers decide they don’t want it ... we can take any property that comes in and say the first priority for the use of this land is to go to that CLT and see if that fits their mission—or we can assemble land for the CLT for its ultimate disposition.*

—Dan Kildee, 10/6/11, cited in Davis, 2012

This is where a CLT-land bank partnership could be highly beneficial to Idlewild. As noted in the “Overview of Idlewild” section of this report, the Lake County and State of Michigan Land Banks are, collectively, the third-largest landowners in Idlewild. Land bank parcels are scattered throughout the Idlewild Historic District. If the Idlewild CLT were to partner with the Lake County Land Bank and/or the State of Michigan Land Bank, its property holdings—and its impact on facilitating community-controlled development in Idlewild—could be very significant.

As of early 2013, many land banks have transferred properties to CLTs on an ad hoc basis, but there are no examples of formal partnerships where land banks transfer properties to CLTs on a regular, predictable basis. According to Davis, the first example of such a formal partnership is currently being pursued in the city of Atlanta, where the City of Atlanta-Fulton County Land Bank Authority is working with the Atlanta Land Trust Collaborative to establish a “property pipeline” to develop and sustain affordable housing in the area surrounding the Beltline, a major transit-oriented development project (*ibid.*, par. 13).

The practicum team recommends that the Idlewild Community Development Corporation actively pursue such a partnership with the Lake County Land Bank and/or the Michigan Land Bank Fast Track Authority. Even if it is not feasible to establish a formal partnership like the one that is being piloted in Atlanta, the transfer of selected properties to the ICDC on a case-by-case basis—especially strategically important properties within the focus area of the tourism development strategy—could make a significant difference in the ICDC’s ability to generate a positive impact on the community.

### **References/Additional Reading**

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## **APPENDIX C: IDLEWILD HISTORICAL TOUR MAPS**

This appendix contains the following walking-tour itineraries:

1. **Idlewild Lake Walking Tour.** This tour was developed for Idlewild in 2011 by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.
2. **Idlewild Historic District Tour.** This tour was developed in 2009 by Commonwealth Cultural Resource Group as part of the Idlewild Cultural Resource Management Plan.





# Idlewild Lake Walking Tour

## Heritage Route

### 5. Bayview

Constructed in 1926 from a design by the original owner, Mr. Henry Gregory, Bayview serves as the summer retreat for the Gregory family four generations later. Mr. Gregory was instrumental in the early electrification of Idlewild.

### 6. Charles Waddell Chesnutt House

Mr. Chesnutt, a Cleveland-based attorney, was the most widely-read African-American author of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Among his works were *The House Behind the Cedars* and *Conjure Woman*. The house remained in the family until 2007.

### 7. Rollins/Hudson House

Dr. Ida Gray Nelson Rollins, for whom this cottage was constructed, became the first African-American woman to earn a doctor of dental surgery degree in the United States when she graduated from the University of Michigan Dental School in 1890. She has the distinction of being the first female African-American dentist in Chicago.



# Idlewild Lake Walking Tour

## Heritage Route

### 8. Williams Island and the Flamingo Room

Williams Island formed the center of Idlewild activity from its earliest days. In the 1920s, the Oakmere Hotel was constructed on the island and, in 1949, new owner Phil Giles added attractions including a boat launch, amusement park and the Flamingo Room. LaVern Baker, Little Willie John and Butterbean and Susie performed at the club.

### 9. LeeJon's Confectionary and Gift Shop

The Idlewild Party Store, constructed in 1949 by Mr. and Mrs. John and Leona Simmons, included a soda bar and souvenirs.

### 10. Red Rooster/Rosana Tea Room

Constructed in the early 1920s, Ms. Lottie Roxborough and her son, Mr. Charles A. Roxborough III, purchased the property and converted the tea room into a popular bar.

### 11. Post Office

The first post office in Idlewild was established on August 18, 1923 on Williams Island. Ms. Susie J. Bantom served as the first postmaster and was a regular contributor of Idlewild news to the *Chicago Defender*. The post office moved to its present location in 1957.

### 12. Tabernacle African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME)

Idlewild's first church, the Tabernacle AME Church, was completed in 1923. In the winter of 1928-1929, the building's original canvas roof collapsed under the weight of heavy snows. A new edifice was completed in 1929 and Michigan Governor Fred. W. Green presented the dedication speech. In 1963, the church was reoriented to its present configuration.



### 13. Dr. Daniel H. Williams' Home

In 1898, Dr. Daniel Hale Williams was the first surgeon to perform successful open heart surgery. He was a founding member of the Idlewild Improvement Association.

