

# CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

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2013 Planning Grant

DISCOVERY PHASE – BARBERTON  
May 30, 2013



# CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

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## 2013 Planning Grant

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the discovery phase is to identify the primary needs in the Connecting Communities Planning Grant study area. This document will be used as a foundation and resource throughout the Planning Grant Process highlighting key concerns in Barberton.

In May, AMATS conducted a site visit to the study area. The staff drove through the area as well as walked portions of the area and took pictures to highlight issues identified. The key issues identified in the corridor include:

- Access between downtown and the Towpath
- Poor function, connectivity and visual aesthetic on Van Buren Ave and 2<sup>nd</sup> St
  - Barriers to connecting the area east and west
- Lack of community gateways

# CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

## 2013 Planning Grant

### Access between Downtown and the Towpath

Access to the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trail (Towpath) is located approximately one mile south of downtown off of Snyder Ave. 2<sup>nd</sup> St is the primary route to get from the Towpath to downtown, although there are no sidewalks or bicycle facilities from the trailhead to 2<sup>nd</sup> St along Snyder Ave, no wayfinding and the sidewalk along 2<sup>nd</sup> St is in poor condition.

There are sidewalks along Snyder Ave east of the trailhead through residential areas, but they do not connect all the way to the Towpath. They stop approximately a third of a mile before the trail.

Below: Towpath Trailhead at Snyder Ave looking east, trail crossing at Snyder Ave and Snyder Ave across from trailhead looking east. There are no sidewalks or bike facilities to the trail along Snyder Ave.



There is potential access closer to downtown from the Towpath further north near Robinson Ave. The Robinson Ave Bridge connects downtown to the east side of Barberton spanning the Ohio and Erie Canal, the Tuscarawas River and several railroad tracks. The Towpath is between the Ohio and Erie Canal and the Tuscarawas River under the bridge. The bridge was constructed with extra wide sidewalks separated from vehicle traffic which with a ramp on the east side of the bridge going down to the Tuscarawas River for future Towpath access. There is a public parking lot on the west side of the bridge that could be used as a future trailhead.

# CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

2013 Planning Grant



From top left: Ramp for future Towpath connection east of Robinson Ave bridge; potential site for bridge connecting east bank of Tuscarawas River to the Towpath looking west; looking west from east side of Robinson Ave bridge; Robinson Ave bridge and public parking looking east.

# CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

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## 2013 Planning Grant

### 2<sup>nd</sup> St & Van Buren Ave function, connectivity and visual aesthetic

Second Street from Snyder Ave to Robinson Ave is primarily industrial with Babcock and Wilcox (B&W) on the west side and vacant property and buildings on the east side. The sidewalks along Second St are in disrepair and it is not a very pleasant or inviting street. There are no bike lanes or other bike facilities, although the four lane road is very wide for the volume of traffic (2011 ADT = 3,300). Van Buren has sidewalks on both sides of the street for most of the road between Snyder and Robinson Avenues. The west side is industrial, including B&W offices, and the right is residential multi-family.

Below: 2<sup>nd</sup> St looking north



Below: 2<sup>nd</sup> St looking south



Below: West side of 2<sup>nd</sup> St looking south



# CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

---

## 2013 Planning Grant

Below: Van Buren St looking north



Below: Babcock & Wilcox on Van Buren St looking south



# CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

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## 2013 Planning Grant

### Lack of Community Gateways & Wayfinding

While the downtown and Lake Anna area streetscape has been improved through lighting and landscaping, wayfinding to and around downtown is lacking. Another challenge is that downtown is separated into two areas, along Tuscarawas Ave and 2<sup>nd</sup> St. Neither of these areas are accessible or visible from the Towpath or function as main city thoroughfares. The majority of through traffic stays on Wooster Rd and Robinson Ave. There is no signage or wayfinding to direct people to downtown from Wooster Rd and Robinson. Downtown is also very visible from either of these roads, making it very easy to miss if someone didn't already know it was there.

Below: Intersection of Wooster Rd and Hopocan Ave looking south and Hopocan Ave and 2<sup>nd</sup> St looking west (potential gateways to 2<sup>nd</sup> St downtown district).



If a Towpath Trailhead was built near the Robinson Ave bridge and utilizing the existing public parking lot on the southeast corner of Robinson Ave and 2<sup>nd</sup> St there would still be two blocks to get people to either the Tuscarawas or 2<sup>nd</sup> St downtown districts. While this doesn't seem like a huge distance the downtown areas aren't visible and lack wayfinding. The intersection of Robinson Ave and 2<sup>nd</sup> St is also busy and not bike or pedestrian friendly. Essentially, it's figuring out how to entice people around the block with McDonald's.

# CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

## 2013 Planning Grant

Below: Looking towards downtown from SE corner of Robinson Ave and 2<sup>nd</sup> St; looking toward Robinson Ave bridge from Tuscarawas St.



Below: Existing wayfinding sign from Wooster Rd.





# CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

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Below: View of 2<sup>nd</sup> St downtown district from NW corner of Tuscarawas and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets;

