



Activities Report

July 2021-April 2024

The Great Miami Riverway is a mixed-use district of vibrant city waterfronts interconnected by extensive land and water trails along the Great Miami River corridor. The member communities recognize the potential to maximize existing and planned riverfront investments and economic development by approaching the river corridor as a unified, connected, regional place.

The River Corridor Improvement Subdistrict of the Miami Conservancy District is leading this regional effort to address these challenges by facilitating a coalition of the communities. The purpose of the Great Miami Riverway Coalition is to enhance the community connections to our river, trail and each other — through communications, programs, outreach and development — so that we can achieve regional vitality.

The goal of the Great Miami Riverway initiative is to develop and implement ongoing marketing, planning, and programming to:

- Increase use of recreational, historical, and cultural assets
- Attract more visitors
- Support economic development
- Strengthen river corridor neighborhoods

To achieve these goals, the Coalition member communities executed agreements with MCD that included a Schedule and Budget of activities:

- Convene the Riverway Coalition
- Recruit and hire, and support a full-time Riverway Director
- Develop a Website
- Implement the Signage and WayFinding Plan
- Implement the Marketing Plan
- Create a Placemaking Plan
- Develop additional funding and programming partnerships and connections

This report summarizes the progress towards completing those activities for the timeframe July 2021-April 2024.

ACTIVITY: CONVENE THE RIVERWAY COALITION

In addition to the executed agreements with the ten communities, two counties, and three park districts listed below, MCD signed a new agreement with Great Parks of Hamilton County for a two-year financial commitment to the Riverway initiative beginning in 2020.

- Cities: Sidney, Piqua, Monroe, Tipp City, Troy, Trenton, West Carrollton, Miamisburg, Franklin, Middletown, Hamilton.
- Counties: Miami and Montgomery
- Park Districts: Miami County Park District, Five Rivers MetroParks, MetroParks of Butler County, Great Parks of Hamilton County

MCD also received sponsorship pledges from three organizations. Sponsors: Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission, Sidney Visitors Bureau, and the Miami County Convention and Visitors Bureau

The total agreements commit to \$812,750 paid to MCD in annual payments between 2021 and 2024.

The Coalition met bi-monthly during this timeframe and began to hold meetings via video conference software starting May 2020 in response to the pandemic.

The Chair of the Coalition facilitates the meeting. Christian Mattingly, Director of Parks, City of West Carrollton, began serving as Chair of the Riverway Coalition in April of 2022.

MCD staff compiles a Report of Riverway activity for review at each meeting (attached).

ACTIVITY: RECRUIT, HIRE, AND SUPPORT THE RIVERWAY DIRECTOR

MCD's Human Resources staff, Shannon Phelps, led the recruitment and hiring process for the full-time Riverway Director to fill the position after Elizabeth Connor resigned. Shannon engaged representatives of the Riverway Coalition to consult on the position description, the recruitment and interviewing of the candidates. MCD hired the director as a fulltime staff member and offers the same benefits package as other full time staff. MCD provides office space and support (such as IT, accounting, HR, etc.).

Dan Foley accepted the position in November 2019. Dan stepped down as Manager of the Great Miami Riverway on April 26th, 2024.

ACTIVITY: DEVELOP A WEBSITE

GREAT MIAMI RIVER WEBSITE (WWW.GREATMIAMIRIVERWAY.COM)

MCD contracted with Artistic Inspirations to host the website and provides maintenance services. Improvements to the website during this time included additional content, videos, and a new design to the home page. As of June 1st, 2021, the Riverway website had approximately 970 registered users.

TRAIL CONDITIONS MAP

Artistic Inspirations provides maintenance and troubleshooting for the trails conditions maps that shows when trail segment go under water, and when river conditions are unsafe for recreation.

In a partnership between MCD and the University of Dayton Innovation Center, a real-time Bacteria levels in river water map was developed for the Great Miami Riverway. The online tool helps river users check on bacteria levels before going out to use the Great Miami River Water Trail. UD students created a custom web crawler to integrate MCD and USGS river data into the Riverway website and

automatically updates every 15 minutes. Artistic Inspirations modified the code so that it works with the website.

GREAT MIAMI RIVERWAY APP

In a partnership between MCD and the University of Dayton Innovation Center, students researched potential virtual reality applications for the Riverway. The students completed the project and provided several recommendations to the Riverway including the creation of a “shell” app.

Finalized work with the Riverway’s website manager, Artistic Inspirations, to create a mobile app (a shell app of the current website) that launch the Riverway Summer Challenge, and provide easy access to the website’s interactive map.

ACTIVITY: IMPLEMENT THE SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING PLAN

Christian Mattingly of West Carrollton is the subcommittee chairperson, which meets as needed.

Riverway **kiosks** are installed in Sidney (2), Troy (2), Miami County Park District (1), MCD (4 total - 3 in Dayton, and 1 in West Carrollton), West Carrollton (1), Miamisburg (1), Franklin (1), Middletown (1). Kiosks are in development (ordered) by Tipp City and Hamilton.

Medallions are installed by each community using the signage and wayfinding plan as a guide for proper location.

The **Greater Dayton RTA** continued to maintain the Riverway informational signs at eight bus stops in Dayton, Miamisburg, and West Carrollton. The signs include information on nearby attractions.

Bike Trail Signs – To support the Riverway Brand, MCD added additional Riverway-branded sign components to eight bike trail signs on the Great Miami River Recreation Trail. Locations include:

DAYTON at tip of Triangle Park at junction of Great Miami and Stillwater recreation trails, Deeds Point, Third Street Ramp right bank, Fifth Street Ramp left bank; WEST CARROLLTON at K-Station/N end of Marina Drive; MIAMISBURG at Downstream of Linden Avenue; MIAMI TWP at Junction of Great Miami and Great-Little (Medlar Trail) – 2 signs. It was also added to two Mad River trail signs, with indication that the Riverway was ahead.

Window Clings – 100 window clings were ordered from Characters, Inc. in Troy and distributed to Coalition members and businesses.

SAFETY SIGNAGE

Held a press conference with ODOT and other partners to highlight the placement of location signs on all ODOT bridges from Sidney to Hamilton. The signs will assist paddlers who need to share their location with first responders in the event of an emergency on the river. We’ll be the first river in Ohio to partner with ODOT, and have these signs installed. We will work to encourage local governments to place location signs on the bridges they own.

ACTIVITY: IMPLEMENT THE MARKETING PLAN

A Marketing Subcommittee meets bi-monthly to guide the marketing efforts of the Great Miami Riverway. The purpose of the subcommittee is to market and promote Riverway assets, attract visitors, evangelize Riverway residents and leaders. Shelby Quinlivan of Middletown is the chairperson. The subcommittee helped create a Marketing Plan.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Executed an agreement with AMP Brand Studios (Agreement No. 2019-035A) in January 2020 to manage the Riverway's social media channels, and provide social media training and expertise to Riverway partners. That agreement was terminated in May 2020. Hired m.path pr in June 2020 on a month-to-month basis to manage the Riverway's social media channels, and to provide a marketing and social media plan to guide messaging. Beginning in June of 2023, MCD began to manage the social channels in-house with the hiring of additional staff.

The Riverway utilizes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Regular posts are scheduled each week.

- Facebook - @greatmiamiriverway
- Twitter - @GRMiamiRiverway
- Instagram - @grmiamiriverway
- LinkedIn - Great Miami Riverway

E-NEWSLETTER

The Riverway sends out a monthly E-newsletter through mailchimp.com. As of June 1, the total subscribers were **3,576**.

EXPANDED BRAND FUNDAMENTALS

MCD contracted with Guide Studio to develop additional graphics for use in social media including a revised logo and a graphic for use with the Riverway's new "99 Things To Do Along the Riverway" campaign.

VIDEOS

The Riverway contracted with Manavision to produce seven professional videos for use on websites and social media, in 2020. In 2021, the Riverway contracted with Pivot Media, LLC to produce 9 promotional videos featuring attractions and businesses, as well as to produce promotional videos for our 2022 and 2023 Riverway Summits. All Riverway videos can be viewed on the Youtube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCE4qJ3rUfPgyThhPTXfxIRA>

PAID MARKETING

In 2020 and 2021, the Riverway advertised in several printed guides: Butler County Visitors Bureau, Miami County Visitors and Convention Bureau, Sidney Visitor's Guide, Warren County Visitor's Guide, Downtown Dayton Partnership, Destination Dayton magazine, Ohio Magazine, and the Adventure Crew's Outdoor Adventures for All guide.

Targeted SEM (search engine marketing) for the Riverway began June 2021 and continues via a contract with Quest Digital.

ACTIVITY: DEVELOP ADDITIONAL FUNDING AND PROGRAMMING PARTNERSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS

The Riverway entered into an agreement with Aileron in June 2020 for the development of a Great Miami Riverway Strategic Plan. Community representatives from 14 agencies and organizations throughout the Riverway were invited to help shape the plan. Participants met twice and identified three focus areas for the strategic plan, an updated mission, and Strategic Priorities.

FOCUS AREAS:

- build and nurture stronger connections among Riverway communities
- build more awareness of the Great Miami Riverway
- build investment in riverfront development projects—both along the river, itself, and in the communities

THE MISSION OF THE GREAT MIAMI RIVERWAY IS:

To build a strong, vibrant network of communities, connected by 99 miles of river, by increasing economic and community investment to attract more visitors, customers, jobs, and talented workers to southwest Ohio.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2022-2027

Priority One: Build identity and awareness of the Great Miami Riverway.

- With our web vendor Artistic Inspirations, MCD/Riverway created a mobile app (a shell app of the current website) to utilize for regional passport programs, as well as providing access to the website's interactive map. This app has been used to help facilitate a Fall Challenge, a Food and Brew Challenge, and a Summer Challenge, all passport programs designed to connect people with restaurants, shops, and arts/cultural facilities along the Great Miami Riverway.
- Dan, Sarah, and MaryLynn appeared when opportunities presented themselves on local media channels and with civic groups for interviews/discussions about public and private investments, as well as to highlight events, on the Great Miami Riverway. For example:
 - Dan and Sarah were featured presenters to tell the story of the Great Miami Riverway in early 2022 for the Tennessee Riverline.
- MCD entered into an agreement with CitySpark to provide calendar services for the Great Miami Riverway. This site also serves as the promotion and ticketing application for major events where we charge entry fees.
- MCD/Riverway staff worked with Pivotal Media to develop and executive videos that highlighted key aspects of our corridor, and for promotional videos during our 2022, 2023, and 2024 annual Riverway Summits.
- Worked with LemonGrenade Creative of Hamilton to launch the Riverway poster series. Each Riverway Coalition member provided feedback which reflected unique aspects of their specific community.
- Developed a Riverway merchandise shop on our Great Miami Riverway website.

- Staff attended conferences to share and learn about other river and/or travel related organizations, including the Ohio River Way conferences in Lawrenceburg, and Madison Indiana, Tri-State Trails Conference in northern Kentucky, and the Ohio Travel Association Conference in Sandusky.
- Worked with the Riverway Marketing Subcommittee to initiate a broad range of marketing efforts, including:
 - Rack cards for local hotels and restaurants.
 - Social media channels
 - New brochures reflecting new Riverway Coalition members
 - New maps for Riverway kiosks
- Dan and Marylynn were featured presenters at the Ohio Chamber of Commerce Impact Ohio panel at the University of Dayton, as well as the I-70/75 Development Association.
- Staff and coalition members were present to support many Riverway community events, including:
 - Five Rivers MetroParks Adventure Summit
 - Five Rivers MetroParks Bike to Work Day
 - Five Rivers MetroParks Outdoor Experience
 - Tour de Donut, Troy
 - Great Miami Riverway RiverRide, Franklin to Middletown
 - PaddleFest, Cincinnati
 - Ohio Tourism Day, Columbus
- Darion Smith of MCD/Riverway working with Crooked Handle Brewery to launch the first Riverway Beer at the April 2024 Riverway Summit.

Priority Two: Advocate and nurture connections between Riverway Communities.

- The Riverway held a press conference with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to announce that ODOT was placing location signs on all bridges along the Great Miami River from Sidney to Hamilton. The signs are designed to assist paddlers who need to share their location with first responders in the event of an emergency on the water.
- MCD/Riverway staff have spent significant time helping to advocate for filling in critical gaps in our Miami Valley Trail system, specifically on the Great Miami River Recreation Trail. For example:
 - Franklin and Middletown worked to raise the funds to construct a section of trail to connect those two cities in 2021.
 - The city of Sidney and Shelby County have obtained over \$5 million that, when constructed, will bring the Great Miami River Recreation Trail from Sidney to the Shelby/Miami County border, leaving approximately one mile of trail to be constructed to connect to the City of Piqua.
 - Riverway staff worked with MetroParks of Butler County, who will manage the project, to obtain \$2.5 million from the Butler County Commissioners to fill in a key gap on the GMRT between Middletown and Hamilton.
- Annual Riverway Summits, with attendance each year of approximately 250 people, occurred in 2022 (Dayton), 2023 (Sidney), and 2024 (Piqua).
- Organized and implemented the Great Miami Riverway Smallmouth Bass Fishing Challenge in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

- Organized and implemented the Great Float in 2022 (West Carrollton to Miamisburg) and 2023 (Piqua to Troy).
- Supported the Great Miami Riverway Half Marathon with Piqua's Can't Stop Running, in 2022 and 2023 (Troy to Piqua).

Priority Three: Build investment in riverfront development along the river and in our communities.

- We co-sponsored a presentation with the Homebuilders Association of Greater Dayton to feature the City of Franklin's plan to attract new housing and investment. Jonathan Westendorf, City Manager, presented Franklin's strategic plan and outlined new housing projects that were currently in the pipeline.
- The Riverway held several zoom conversations focused on economic development, called Riverway Conversations, where we had between fifty and one hundred people registered to attend. We started this during COVID and continued them through the end of 2021. In November 2021, we held a zoom conversation to focus on how a developer teamed up with Franklin County MetroParks to repurpose an abandoned mineral quarry into a mixed-use housing redevelopment near the Scioto River. The Riverway is full of quarries, many in use, but some have potential to be reused, which is why this specific topic had some relevance to our coalition members.
- MCD/Riverway staff devoted specific time to supporting local economic development projects, either by helping identify potential investors for communities, advocating for public funds or grants to support new redevelopment projects, and helping focus public attention on public and private investments along the Great Miami Riverway. Just a few examples of projects include:
 - The redevelopment of the former Dayton Power and Light coal plant called Hutchins Station. This property is owned by Frontier Group, of Buffalo, and will be transformed into a \$200 million mixed use on the Great Miami River in Miamisburg.
 - The former Champion Paper Mill in downtown Hamilton, that has seen a \$140 million investment, serving as a catalyst for downtown redevelopment in that city.
 - West Carrollton is working on a \$10 million project to modify a low dam into a whitewater surfing facility. This amenity is surrounded by a 25-acre city owned parcel that will be designated as the West Carrollton River District, a mixed-use site with housing, retail, office space.
 - Virtually every Riverway city is adding on to or building new public spaces for their residents to enjoy the river. Miamisburg will soon open a \$5.4 million addition to their Riverside Park. Piqua will also open Lock 9 Park later this year which is almost a \$6 million dollar project. Over the last thirty years, Riverway communities have seen literally millions of public and private investments along the banks of the Great Miami River.
 - The City of Franklin launched the first phase of its downtown and riverfront improvement project. Council authorized the expenditure of \$13 million to start this transformational investment along the Great Miami River.
- MCD/Riverway staff participated in planning sessions at the request of our Coalition partners around major public investment projects that had and have significant economic development potential. Examples include:
 - North Hamilton Crossing, City of Hamilton.
 - City of Troy comprehensive plan.
 - City of West Carrollton, repurposing of two gravel quarries into a potential mixed-use development along the Great Miami River.

- Great Parks of Hamilton County Western Blueway program to connect the Great Miami River Recreation Trail to the Ohio River and add several new kayak/canoe access points along the southern stretch of the Great Miami River.
- MCD/Riverway entered into an agreement with UberMedia to purchase four years of visitor statistics and demographic information.
- MCD/Riverway began working with the City of Monroe to find solutions to a section of bike path between Monroe and Middletown that is funded, but since they obtained funding, has suffered significant erosion to the point where the original design will not work. This segment of trail is needed to fill the gap between Middletown and Hamilton.

Priority Four: Restructure the Riverway Coalition and broaden the funding platform

- Every Riverway coalition member who originally signed up in 2017, signed a new five-year agreement from 2022-2027, except for the City of Dayton, and later Middletown. The proposed five-year budget is \$846,250.
- Two new members, the City of Trenton, and City of Monroe, joined the Riverway Coalition in 2022, and 2023, respectively.
- Proposals for membership have been presented to the cities of Moraine, Riverside, and Lawrenceburg, Indiana.
- We formed a new Committee, the Events Committee, to strategically identify events the Riverway Coalition should support so that we have a better likelihood of making them sustainable and supported by membership. This committee makes recommendations to the Coalition about which events should be official events during the year.