PROJECT COSTS

PHASE I

Purchase Price	$19,500,000	Paid by GTRLC on December 13, 2024
Bargain Sale	$1,500,000	Discount from seller
Total	**$21,000,000**	Fair market value, based on appraisal, at time of sale to GTRLC

PHASE II

Acquisition Costs	$763,450	Appraisals, closing costs, property taxes, environmental assessment and remediation fees, surveys, legal fees
Immediate Project Costs	$1,490,500	Park planning, restoration and remediation, signage, infrastructure, demolition, ongoing stewardship
Betsie Valley Trail Extension	$1,000,000	Creation of beach-to-beach trail
Organizational Costs	$1,328,327	Staff time and travel, events, outreach, negotiations, etc.
Endowment for Elberta Parks	$2,000,000	To be held at the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation
Total	**$6,582,277***	

Grand Total	**$27,582,277**

**The total fundraising goal for this phase is estimated between $6.5 and $8 million. Final costs may be impacted by several factors that have yet to be determined. As details are finalized, the total funding needed may change. In the event that fundraising support for a project exceeds the original project fundraising goal, the Conservancy will allocate the overage to purposes that the Conservancy determines further its mission, such as organizational costs, to protect additional land, or to care for the long-term stewardship of protected land.*

YOUR GIFT WILL SUPPORT:

- **Protection and long-term stewardship of fragile, forested dune habitat.**
- **Park planning and development, including site preparation, remediation and demolition of obsolete infrastructure.**
- **Trail planning, design and construction for the Beach-to-Beach segment of the Betsie Valley Trail.**
- **Ecological restoration, including invasive species removal, native plantings and installation of fencing to protect fragile dune habitat.**
- **While gifts will not directly fund the endowment, proceeds from the sale of the nine-acre parcel will support the long-term care of Elberta's parks through a dedicated endowment held by the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation.**

CONTACT

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ELBERTA COMMUNITY WATERFRONT CONSERVATION PROJECT

Phase II

April 2025

Love the land. *Pass it on.*

The Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC) and our partners are advancing an ambitious effort to protect and revitalize 35 acres of Elberta's historic waterfront along Lake Michigan and Betsie Bay. GTRLC secured the property in December 2024 thanks to overwhelming community support, safeguarding globally unique coastal habitats while creating opportunities to enhance recreation and foster local economic growth. Now, the project's next phase is poised to transform the site into a thoughtfully balanced mix of protected natural land, public recreational spaces and community-focused redevelopment.

NATURE SANCTUARY

The ecological heart of this effort is establishing a roughly 10-acre nature sanctuary on an ecologically significant portion of the property. Located within a state-designated Critical Dune Area, this steep, forested dune represents the northern reach of a parabolic dune system rising 280 feet above Lake Michigan. The nature sanctuary supports a diverse range of habitats, primarily mesic northern forest and boreal forest, along with an open dune escarpment.

Situated behind the foredune, the backdune provides a more sheltered environment where forests can take root and wildlife thrives. Its rich forest floor hosts several high-conservation-value plant species such as foamflower, seersucker sedge and wood millet. The conifers within the boreal forest are especially crucial for migratory birds, providing essential nesting sites and food sources. Warblers, Scarlet Tanagers and Wood Thrushes are just a few bird species that rely on this rare and important habitat.

Because this area is less suited for the types of access typically found in parks, it will not feature any trails or recreational infrastructure. Instead, it will remain protected and cared for by GTRLC as a nature sanctuary to support biodiversity and safeguard this critical migratory corridor.

PUBLIC PARK

Approximately 16 acres of waterfront along Lake Michigan and Betsie Bay will ultimately be transferred to the Village of Elberta and designated as a public park. Until then, GTRLC will temporarily hold and care for this land, helping guide its transition to public use while assisting the Village in securing public grant funding for its acquisition and recreational development.

Featuring open dune and interdunal wetland habitats, this area supports numerous coastal species. Bald Eagles and monarch butterflies are frequently spotted along the lakeshore, which is also a vital resting and foraging location for migratory birds like the endangered Piping Plover. Rare plant species have also been observed, including a small but vibrant population of the threatened Pitcher's or dune thistle. Additionally, the imperiled interdunal wetland habitat supports sensitive species such as the Fowler's toad, a species of special concern confirmed near the site. Further inland, an open field and stabilized dune area, previously impacted by industrial uses, is now home to healthy populations of

native plant species like little bluestem, soapberry and wood lily.

Future visitors will enjoy a variety of recreational activities at the public park, including access to the lakeshore between the pier heads, fishing in the deepwater channel where migratory fish congregate, and outstanding bird-watching opportunities. This area also provides a key connection for a high-quality, recreational trail system for walking, biking, cross-country skiing and more.

Phase two of the project focuses on establishing park infrastructure while ensuring the land's long-term stewardship. Initially, this work includes activities like park planning, remediation, environmental assessments, demolition of obsolete infrastructure and removal of chain link fencing along the lakeshore. As the project progresses, recreational infrastructure and informational signage will be installed. Meanwhile, efforts to manage invasive species and promote native plant growth will aid in restoring this ecologically significant coastal habitat to support its diverse flora and fauna.

BEACH-TO-BEACH TRAIL

A key feature of this project is completing the Betsie Valley Trail's long-awaited Beach-to-Beach segment. This extension, a top priority for the Village and Benzie County, will connect the Frankfort and Elberta Lake Michigan beaches and link to 22 miles of existing scenic trails.

The Village has already secured easements for every other necessary parcel to extend the trail, while GTRLC has protected a trail corridor through the property to permanently safeguard this critical connection. After the property is successfully transferred, the Village plans to apply for public grant funding to support the trail's construction. Meanwhile, as the project progresses, GTRLC will continue working alongside the Village, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail to bring this vision to life.

MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

After retaining an easement ensuring the Beach-to-Beach Trail can move forward regardless of future ownership, GTRLC transferred the nine acres east of the Waterfront Park to the State Land Bank Authority (SLBA), a state agency that facilitates the productive reuse of land to create positive economic outcomes.

The SLBA will hold the land while guiding a community-driven redevelopment process. This includes conducting a market analysis and identifying a developer with the expertise, financial capacity and commitment to bringing the community's priorities to life. Design workshops will engage residents, local leaders and stakeholders in refining a feasible plan. With the Village Council's endorsement, construction will proceed with oversight to ensure it aligns with the shared vision.

As part of the agreement, proceeds from the land sale will establish an endowment, held by the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation, to support the ongoing stewardship of Elberta's parklands in perpetuity. This investment will ensure that as the Village expands its public access to the waterfront, it also secures the funding needed to maintain these vital community assets.

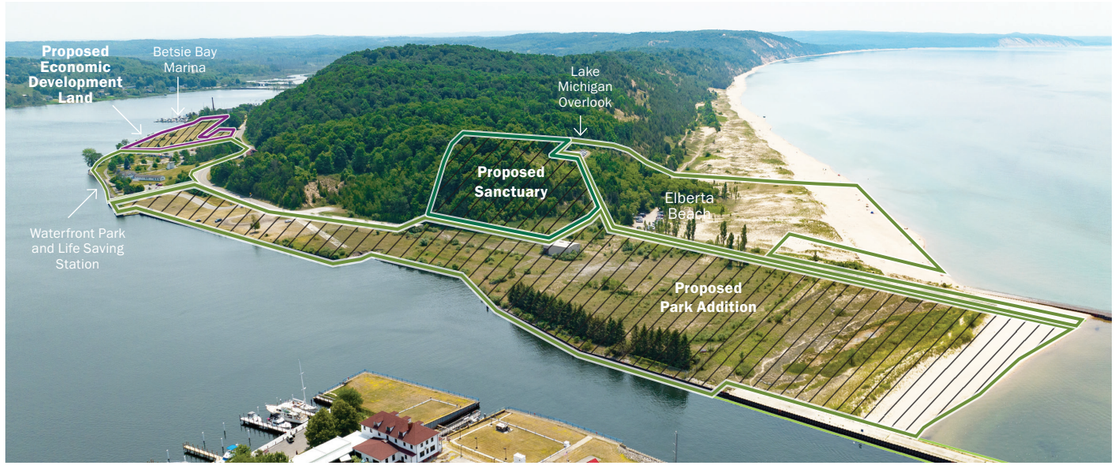
This thoughtful approach aims to foster new businesses, housing and services that strengthen Elberta's local economy while preserving its small-town character.

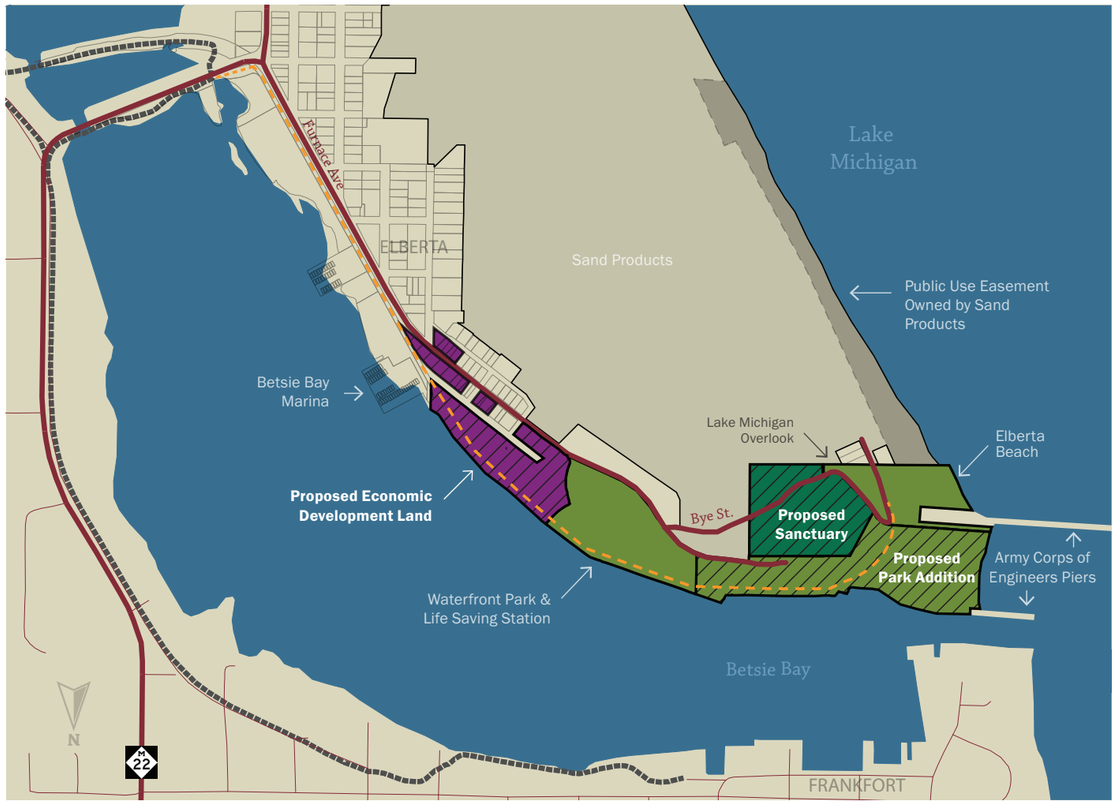
ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION

In the late 19th century, Elberta's waterfront was a hub of industrial activity, its bay and harbor channels facilitating the transport of iron and wood products. The small village was home to Frankfort Iron Works, the largest manufacturing operation in Benzie County, which was later repurposed into a railway hub. These industrial uses, including a coal dock and asphalt storage, resulted in widespread contamination.

Today, the property is designated as a Brownfield site, suitable for redevelopment but requiring remediation. Significant progress has already been made in preparing the land for development, including the removal of twelve former asphalt storage tanks, several structures and asbestos. The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) approved the site for residential development following a Baseline Environmental Assessment. Developers must follow specific "due care" requirements to mitigate contamination; however, these are standard for Brownfield sites and will not prohibit full-scale development.

Future remediation will be customized for specific areas of the property as plans for park amenities and mixed-use development progress. While some zones may need additional EGLE-approved construction plans, public water and sewer access are already available for the nine-acre area, and developers may benefit from Brownfield funds to help offset cleanup costs.





PROPOSED NATURE SANCTUARY
GTRLC will retain 10 acres of the highest conservation importance that contain critical dune habitat.

PROPOSED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LAND
Nine acres east of the Waterfront Park, which has access to municipal water and sewer, will be set aside for community-aligned redevelopment.

EXISTING VILLAGE OF ELBERTA PARKS AND NATURAL AREAS

PROPOSED PUBLIC PARK ADDITION
16 acres near the Elberta Pier at the mouth of Betsie Bay, including 578 feet of Lake Michigan shoreline, will be transferred to the Village of Elberta for use as a public park with an endowment for long-term care and stewardship.

EXISTING BETSIE VALLEY TRAIL

BEACH-TO-BEACH TRAIL
The acquisition would allow the Betsie Valley Trail to extend through the property, connecting Frankfort and Elberta's municipal Lake Michigan beaches. This segment would also link to 22 miles of scenic trails in Benzie County.
Trail location is approximate and subject to change.