

Oakmont Water Trail Access Feasibility Study



Acknowledgements

Friends of the Riverfront

Special Thanks

to those who attended the project's site visit reviews:

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Introduction

The Oakmont Water Trail Access Feasibility Study is an effort of Friends of the Riverfront (FOR), Oakmont Borough, Oakmont Recreation Board, and the Allegheny Blueways Coalition to find the most suitable location(s) for development of a water trail landing within Oakmont Borough. The study considers best practices as well as PA DCNR requirements for site development and universal accessibility. The study encompasses Borough-owned property or property where the Borough could secure public rights-of-passage or legal easements for the use of a canoe/kayak launch. The Borough recommended an initial list of sites, and six sites were ultimately included in the study. Evaluation of the six sites considered components outlined within the project's request for proposal:

1. Construction Feasibility
 - Property rights acquisition needed, if any, for development
 - Potential extent of engineering and construction
2. Environmental Health and Safety Issues
 - Wildlife analysis within the corridor identifying any potential wildlife that could harm users and identification of any adverse long term impacts to the area's environment from developing the launch
 - Identification of whether there would be any adverse impact to sensitive vegetation as a result of the development of the water trail landing
 - Identification of any potential visibility and/or safety issues to users, adjacent properties and/or property owners in reference to construction and usage of the launch
3. Neighborhood Compatibility
 - Assessment of the suitability of the site in relation to neighbors and uses in the vicinity, such as security, visibility, traffic impact, noise and incompatible uses
4. Relative Financial Feasibility based upon physical needs and potential sources for improvement associated with water area landing, launch access and parking.

Overall, the project seeks to accomplish the following purpose:

- To assess the qualities and feasibility of six potential launch locations
- To engage the local stakeholders, business and residents
- To understand the implications associated with river improvements so that a clear path for implementation can be charted

The following summary report inventories site conditions, from both a land and water perspective, for six potential locations. A scoring or ranking system summarized in the Assessment Table grades each location in context of the other locations. The aggregate score of each potential location was then ranked in order of feasibility or suitability. The end of the report contains a detailed summary of each location. Statistical data, maps and photographs illustrate the conditions and unique considerations for each specific location.

Overall Trail Map



Site Summaries

A Municipal Property near Brenntag, Inc.

This site is owned by the Borough so there would be no need to secure public rights-of-passage or legal easements for the use of a canoe/kayak launch in this location. There is available space for parking on site. An ADA accessible route to the water from the parking area can be achieved without additional structures. The distance from the potential parking area to the potential launch location is an acceptable distance to carry a canoe/kayak. The site has a shallow, gradual gravel slope.

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY: \$

B1 Riverview Junior and Senior High School

A launch at this site would require a concrete mattress in the water because of the dynamic surface conditions. The acquisition of parking spaces would need to be negotiated with the School District and it is unclear if 20 spaces would be achievable. An ADA accessible route would need to be constructed down the steep historic blockstone slopes, a part of which would be in the floodway. The surface conditions at the potential launch location include large rocks, mud, and silt, which make water access difficult.

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY: \$\$

B2 Riverside Park

Conditions at this site are similar to conditions at the Riverview School site. Parking would need to be negotiated with the School District and an ADA accessible route would need to be constructed between the nearest parking area and the potential launch location. The surface conditions at the potential launch location include large rocks, mud and silt, which make water access difficult.

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY: \$\$

C Ann Street

Development of a canoe/kayak launch at this site would carry a high cost because of the need to create a concrete bulkhead wall due to the nature of the slope. There is currently no parking area available, however, the Borough owns a substantial amount of land in the immediate area and spaces could potentially be created there. The slope to the water exceeds a 60% gradient, and is made up of large rocks, trees and shrubs. This slope continues into the water creating an extremely sloped condition with deep water. Entry into a canoe/kayak would need to be a side-arrival/approach, which is a condition for moderate to expert paddlers only.

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY: \$\$\$

D California Avenue

This site would require regrading to achieve an ADA accessible route but there is inadequate area to accommodate all required grading; additional land would need to be secured. If regrading occurred in the current right-of-way, motor vehicle access would need to be eliminated. Currently, there are no areas available for parking, but spaces could potentially be negotiated with the adjacent property, owned by a Greek Orthodox Church. Within the river, the surface gently slopes into a gravel bottom at a moderate depth. The site presents a more feasible option of a "River Rest Stop", solely accessed from the water as a resting area for paddlers.

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY: \$\$

E Edgewater

Currently, there is no public access to this site and it is not foreseen as to when that ultimately may occur. The street will eventually be turned over to the Borough, which could allow for the long-term potential of accessing it from land. The existing site facilitates an ADA accessible route at minimal cost. However the distance from any potential on-street parking and the launch location is close to 750', far exceeding the acceptable distance for most individuals to carry a canoe or kayak. This site would be best suited as a "River Rest Stop".

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY: \$

Site Considerations

A wide array of site design/functionality factors, as identified below, were considered in evaluating each site. In addition to viewing the sites for the feasibility of a launch itself, the sites were also evaluated as related to potential inclusion of vessel rack(s), sun shelters/shade structures, pavilions and parking. Throughout the analysis, there was an assumption that all sites would be utility-free as there would be no need for water, sewage or electric. Subsequently, there is no known need for permanent restroom facilities.

This Feasibility Study also introduces a new type of paddling experience – the rest stop – that currently does not exist as part of the Three Rivers Water Trail system. A rest stop is aimed to provide a brief stopping area – or portion of space available for a riverside respite. In looking at this in context of the types of uses and amenities present at other Three Rivers Water Trail sites, Friends of the Riverfront has acknowledged there is a practicality and potential applicability of such an experience in other portions of the Water Trail system.

Italicized text denotes analysis criteria that was used for technical scoring.
(See Site Assessment Table)

Location: The specific location of the site.

Visibility of Site from Public Right-of-Way: Visibility of the site relates to site security, safety and ease of finding the location from the main road.

Existing Zoning Classification: Zoning classification is based on the current Oakmont Borough Zoning Ordinance and is provided to identify and restrictions on the development of a canoe/kayak launch in a particular location.

Potential Parking Availability: Parking availability describes whether there is adequate space on the site to accommodate parking; if there is not adequate space on the site, it describes potential nearby areas where parking could be available. This is a key component to the success of the site. Parking not only gets the user to the launch location, but also allows them to bring their personal canoe or kayak to the site.

Site/Access Existing Grading (Distance from ramp/landing): The proximity of the parking location to the launch site is important in regards to users carrying a canoe or kayak from a vehicle to the launch location. It also considers the ease of regrading the current site to achieve ADA accessibility.

Water Edge Surface Condition: The edge surface conditions indicate the difficulty of walking into the water from the site and also how a paddler can enter or exit the water at the launch location.

Presence/Extent of Security/Safety Lighting: Security and lighting relate to the perception of safety on the site and the ease of using the site in the early mornings or at dusk.

Need for/Effort for Securing an Access Easement: The need to secure an access easement adds to the complexity of the process of securing and/or developing the site. It also adds to the uncertainty of whether the project could move forward based on legal requirements and costs associated with acquiring easements.

Nearest Upstream CSO/Daylighted Pipe: Recognizing these locations gives reference to the potential for combined sewer outfall overflows and the impacts that those overflows could have on the potential launch location.

Bank Stability (evidence of erosion, wake action, etc...): The longevity of each site's current condition can be inferred by the amount of wake action that occurs on the shoreline of each launch location.

Visibility of Site from Water: The visibility of the potential launch location from the water is important for paddlers when navigating the river in search of areas to exit the water.

Condition of Approach from River: The condition of the approach from the river is important to analyze in order to determine what type of entry and exit strategy is required for paddlers using the launch location.

General Water Condition: The general water condition evaluates what type of environment the paddler would experience at the launch location site.

Signage Potential/Coordination Needs (# of locations, property ownership, etc.): The potential/need for signage is important to demarcate the property lines as necessary, to assist with wayfinding to and from the launch location site, and to indicate where authorized parking is available.

Beauty of Site/Potential Launch Location: While this generally subjective criteria, as part of the review there was an evaluation of the relative scale of appeal, considering serenity, condition of vegetation and opportunities for viewing wildlife.

Minimal Canoe/Kayak Skill Level Needed: Evaluating the minimum skill level needed for paddlers at each site reveals what range of paddlers can use each launch location.

Site Inventory Table

This table is a compilation of details inventoried and evaluated for each site within this study.

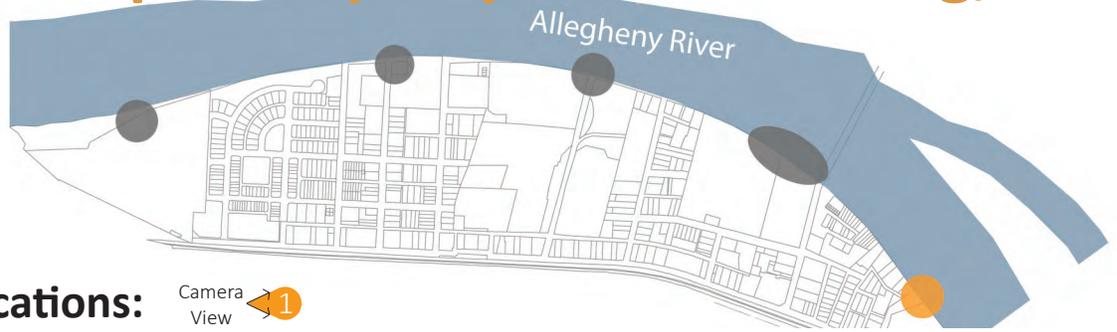
Analysis Criteria	Analysis Sites					
	Brenntag	Riverview School	Riverside Park	Ann Street	California Avenue	Edgewater
1 Location: Nearest Street Address	1041 Allegheny Avenue	100 Hulton Road	750 Second Street	10 Ann Street	22 California Avenue	2 Allegheny Avenue
2 Location: GPS Coordinates	40° 31' 42.55" N 79° 50' 28.54" W	40° 31' 33.88" N 79° 50' 42.26" W	40° 31' 31.43" N 79° 50' 45.05" W	40° 31' 16.72" N 79° 50' 53.94" W	40° 30' 56.22" N 79° 50' 56.13" W	40° 30' 31.84" N 79° 50' 50.37" W
3 Location: River Mile Marker	13.0 Miles Left Bank Descending	12.6 Miles Left Bank Descending	12.5 Miles Left Bank Descending	12.3 Miles Left Bank Descending	11.9 Miles Left Bank Descending	11.3 Miles Left Bank Descending
4 Existing Zoning Classification	I District	R-3 District and within the View Protection Overlay District	R-3 District and within the View Protection Overlay District	MXD-2 District within the Riverfront Overlay District	MXD District and within the Riverfront Overlay District	MXD District and within the Riverfront Overlay District
5 Visibility of Site from Public Right-of-Way	Poor	Visible	Poor	Visible	Visible	Visible
6 Potential Parking Availability	Space for 10-20 parking spaces is available	Would need to negotiate with the School District for access to existing parking spaces; unclear whether 10-20 spaces can be made available during peak school hours	May need to negotiate with the School District for access to existing parking spaces; unclear whether 10-20 spaces can be made available during peak school hours; could use the 2nd Street parking area owned by the Borough, however, the distance between the parking area and the potential launch location is more than 800' - far exceeding an acceptable distance for most individuals to carry a canoe/kayak	No parking area currently exists; however, the Borough owns a substantial amount of land in the immediate area; 10 parking spaces could be created; 20 spaces may not be possible	No parking area currently exists; however, the adjoining Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church and the Riverside Landing Banquet Facilities maintain two large parking areas immediately adjacent to the potential launch location; would need to negotiate for access to the parking spaces	No parking area currently exists, however on-street parking exists within the development site itself; would need to negotiate for parking spaces since none of the streets have been turned over to the Borough and are not within a public ROW; the distance between the on-street parking spaces and the potential launch location is approximately 750' - exceeding an acceptable distance for most individuals to carry a canoe/kayak
7 Site/Access Existing Grading (Distance from ramp/landing)	An ADA accessible route can be created with minimal cost; distance between potential parking and the potential launch location: 250'	Historic blockstone slope is approximately a 50% gradient; an ADA accessible route would have to be constructed between the nearest parking and the potential launch location; further a portion of which would be located within the floodway; distance between potential parking and the potential launch location: 100'	Historic blockstone slope is approximately a 50% gradient; an ADA accessible route would have to be constructed between the nearest parking and the potential launch location; further a portion of which would be located within the floodway; distance between potential parking and the potential launch location: 400'/800'	Extremely steep (>60% gradient) and rocky slope; an ADA accessible route would have to be created and would require the removal of many of the trees on the hillside and would project into the floodway; distance between potential parking and the potential launch location: 150'	Existing slope too steep to comply with ADA standards; regrading to create an ADA accessible route would be required; in order to free up the area for regrading efforts, additional land would have to be secured from Edgewater or the Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church or all grading would have to stay within the ROW and the motor vehicle/boat access would need to be eliminated; distance between potential parking and the potential launch location: 100'	An ADA accessible route can be created with minimal cost; distance between potential parking and the potential launch location: 750'
8 Water Edge Surface Conditions	Shallow, gently sloping gravel bottom; 1 to 2" diameter river rock; can support foot traffic a few feet into the water	Shallow, gently sloping mud bottom with occasional large rounded rock; difficult to walk because of the mud a few feet into the water	Shallow, gently sloping mud bottom with occasional large rounded rock; difficult to walk because of the mud a few feet into the water	Extremely sloped side edge condition; deep water; water edge is predominated by large rocks; cannot walk into the water; entry must be from the side (moderate to expert paddlers only)	Moderate depth, gently sloping gravel bottom; 2 to 4" diameter river rock; can support foot traffic	Shallow, gently sloping sand and gravel bottom; sand to 2" diameter river rock; can support foot traffic a few feet into the water
9 Presence/Extent of Security/Safety Lighting	None	Moderate	None	None	None	None
10 Need for/Effort for Securing an Access Easement	No additional access is needed	School District would have to grant access to potential launch location as well as to parking	School District would have to grant access to parking	No additional access is needed	Additional land may be needed to create an ADA accessible route (Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church or Edgewater)	Edgewater would have to grant access to potential launch location as well as to parking
11 Nearest Upstream CSO/Daylighted Pipe	100'	200'	Downstream	160'	Unknown	450'
12 Bank Stability (evidence of erosion, wake action, etc...)	Minor debris: bottles, wood, etc...	Moderate debris: bottles, wood, etc...	Moderate debris: bottles, wood, etc...	None	None	Minor debris: bottles, wood, etc...
13 Visibility of Site from Water	Moderate	Moderate	High	No	High	High
14 Condition of Approach from River	Direct, easy approach	Not direct; must work around mud flats and sand bars	Direct, easy approach	Difficult side approach in kayak/canoe	Direct approach; must be attentive to adjoining marina traffic	Direct, easy approach
15 General Water Condition	Calm, sheltered	Calm water, somewhat sheltered; subject to higher wind shear because of the vortexes created by the bridge structures	Generally calm, but subject to higher wind shear because of increased exposure and situation along river edge	Subject to severe wave action because of the steep slopes	Generally calm, but subject to higher wind shear because of vortexes created by adjoining marina	Generally calm, but subject to higher wind shear because of increased exposure and situation along river edge
16 Signage Potential/Coordination Needs (# of locations, property ownership, etc.)	Signage demarcating the property lines is necessary; signage needed on Hulton Road and Allegheny Avenue	Signage demarcating authorized parking spaces; signage needed on Hulton Road and 3rd Street as well as within the school property	Signage demarcating authorized parking spaces; signage needed on Hulton Road, 2nd Street, 3rd Street and Pennsylvania Avenue as well as within the school property (if used for parking)	Signage needed on Allegheny Avenue and Ann Street	Signage needed on Allegheny Avenue and California Avenue	Signage demarcating authorized parking spaces; signage needed on Allegheny Avenue and within the development site
17 Beauty of Site/Potential Launch Location	High	Low	High	Moderate	Low	High
18 Minimal Canoe/Kayak Skill Level Needed	Beginner	Moderate	Beginner	Advanced	Beginner/Moderate	Beginner

Site Assessment Table

This table represents the technical assessment of features that were scored for each site within this study.

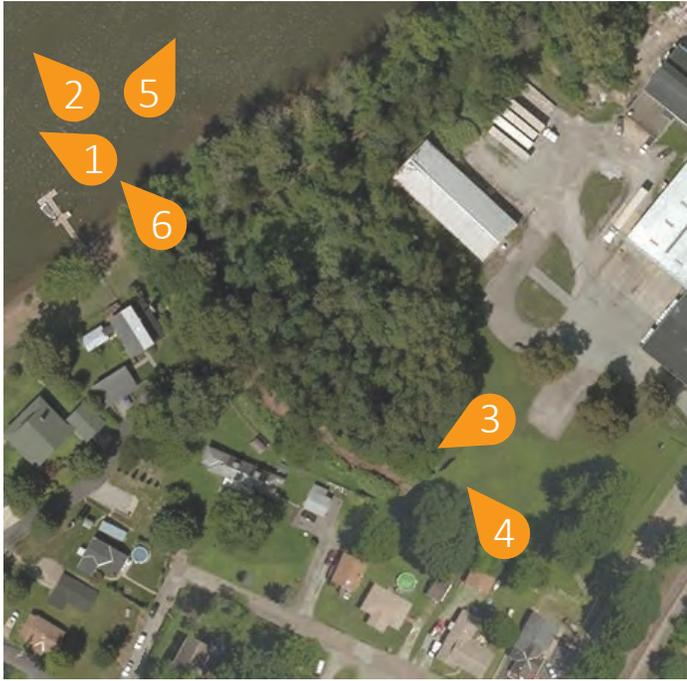
<i>Analysis Criteria</i>	<i>Analysis Sites</i>					
	Brenntag	Riverview School	Riverside Park	Ann Street	California Avenue	Edgewater
1 Visibility of Site from Public Right-of-Way	5	3	6	2	1	4
2 Potential Parking Availability	1	3	4	2	6	5
3 Site/Access Existing Grading (distance between potential parking and potential launch location)	1	4	3	2	5	6
4 Water Edge Surface Conditions	2	5	4	6	3	1
5 Presence/Extent of Security/Safety Lighting	5	1	2	4	3	6
6 Need for/Effort for Securing an Access Easement	1	3	4	2	5	6
7 Nearest Upstream CSO/Daylighted Pipe	4	6	2	5	1	3
8 Bank Stability (evidence of erosion, wake action, etc...)	3	5	6	2	1	4
9 Visibility of Site from Water	4	5	2	6	3	1
10 Condition of Approach from River	1	5	3	6	4	2
11 General Water Condition	1	5	3	6	2	4
12 Signage Potential/Coordination Needs (# of locations, property ownership, etc.)	3	4	5	1	2	6
13 Beauty of Site/Potential Launch Location	2	5	3	4	6	1
14 Suggested Minimal Canoe/Kayak Skill Level	1	5	2	6	4	3
Aggregate Score	34	59	49	54	46	52
Overall Ranking	#1	#6	#3	#5	#2	#4

Site A: Municipal Property Near Brenntag, Inc



Photograph Locations:

Camera View 1



Key Features:

GPS Coordinates: 40° 31' 42.55" N | 79° 50' 28.54" W

Mile Marker: 13.0 Miles Left Bank Descending

Existing Zoning Classification: Industrial District

Parking Availability: Available area for 10-20 parking spaces

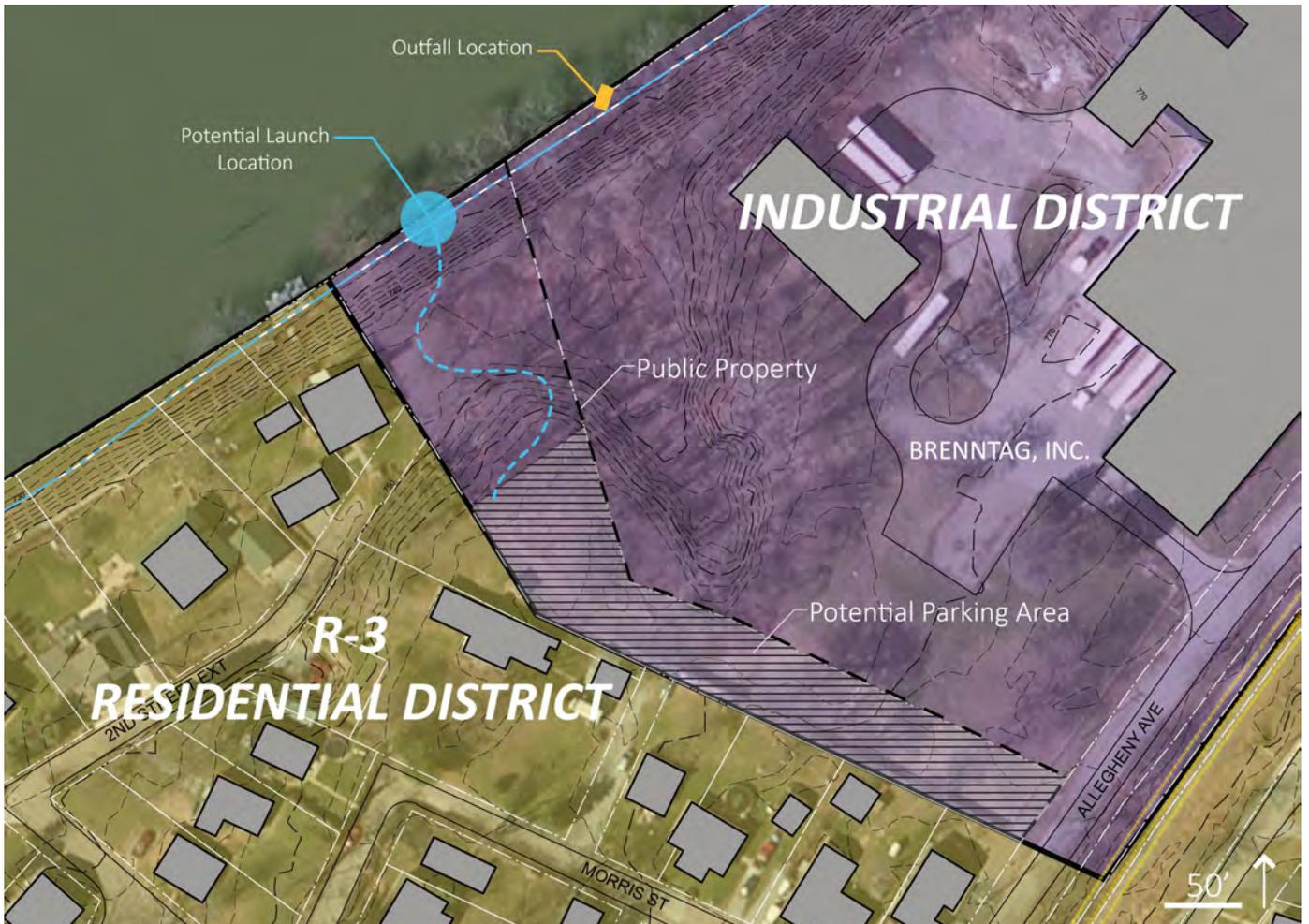
Distance Between Parking and Launch Location: ~350'

Site Surface Conditions: Shallow gradient, gravel bottom (2-4" round river rock)

Site Access from Land: ADA access possible with winding path

Site Access from Water: Easy, straight forward approach

Site Map



This site proposed for water access is currently owned by the Borough of Oakmont. Once knotweed, bamboo and other invasive plants are removed from the site, there will be enough space to park 10-20 cars within 250' of the proposed launch location. During site analysis work, evidence of white-tailed deer was observed. Proper signage, and potentially fencing, will be required to demarcate the property line and prevent trespassing. Capping the site is necessary based upon previous findings of environmental contamination (paint cans). This will ensure that no further contamination will occur. A lower cost item, such as a concrete pad with a pavilion above it, could serve the purpose of capping this area as well as introducing opportunity to create a sense of place. The water surface conditions do not require expert experience because of the shallow slopes and calm water. This site is 4,100' from an existing launch on the opposite bank of the Allegheny River within the Friends of the Riverfront Water Trail System.

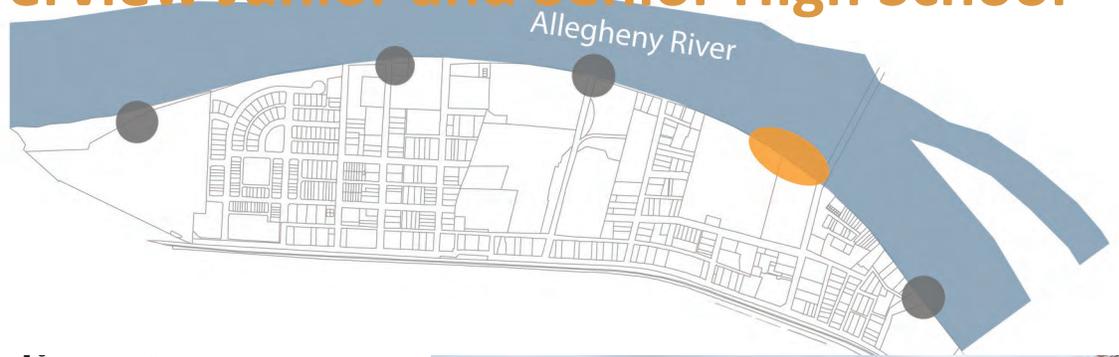


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Site B1: Riverview Junior and Senior High School



Photograph Locations: Camera View 1



Key Features:

GPS Coordinates: 40° 31' 33.88" N | 79° 50' 42.26" W

Mile Marker: 12.6 Miles Left Bank Descending

Existing Zoning Classification: Residential District within a View Protection Overlay District

Parking Availability: Parking would need to be negotiated with school

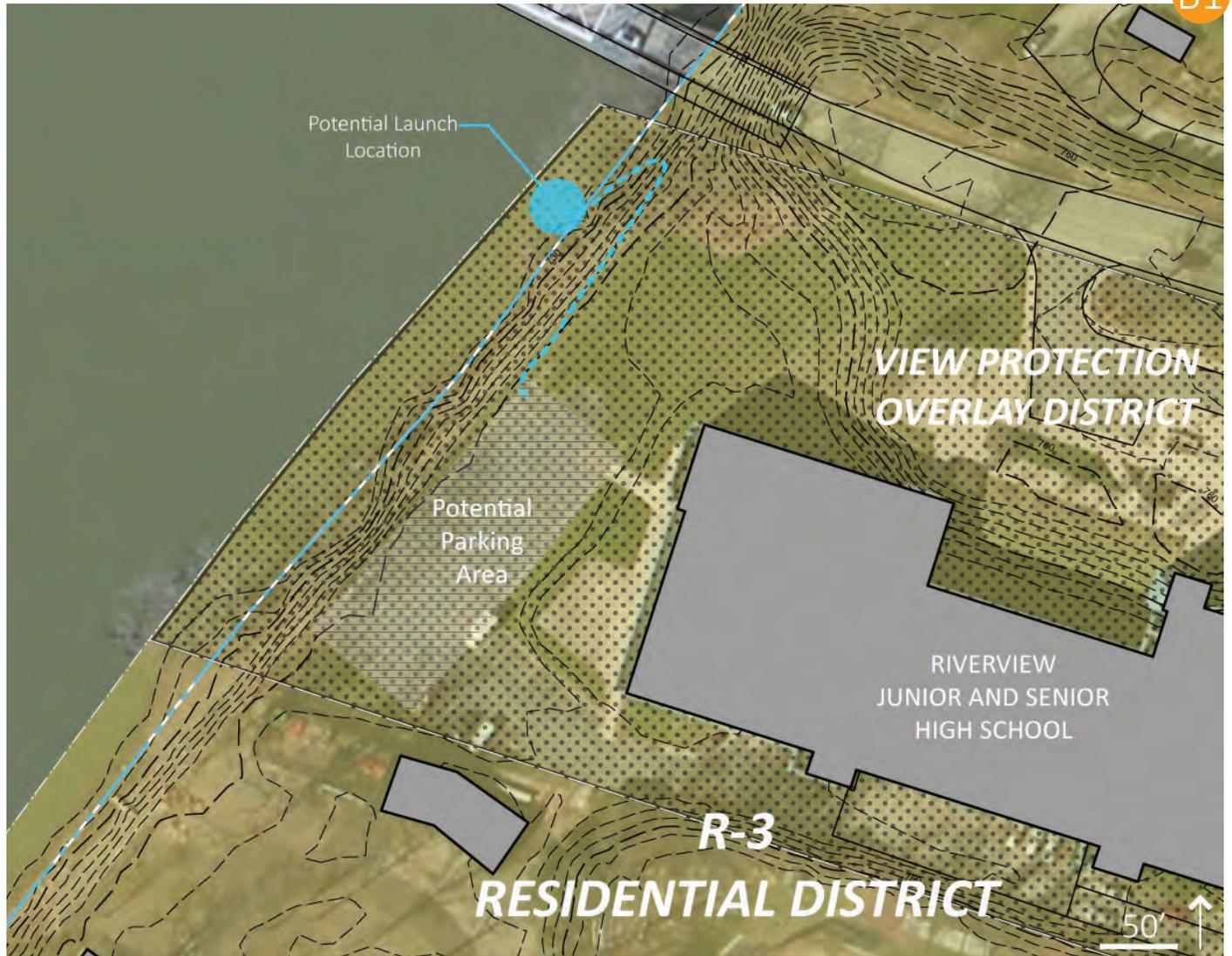
Distance Between Parking and Launch Location: ~100'

Site Surface Conditions: Shallow, rocky bottom

Site Access from Land: Slopes are extremely steep on this site

Site Access from Water: Easy, straight forward approach

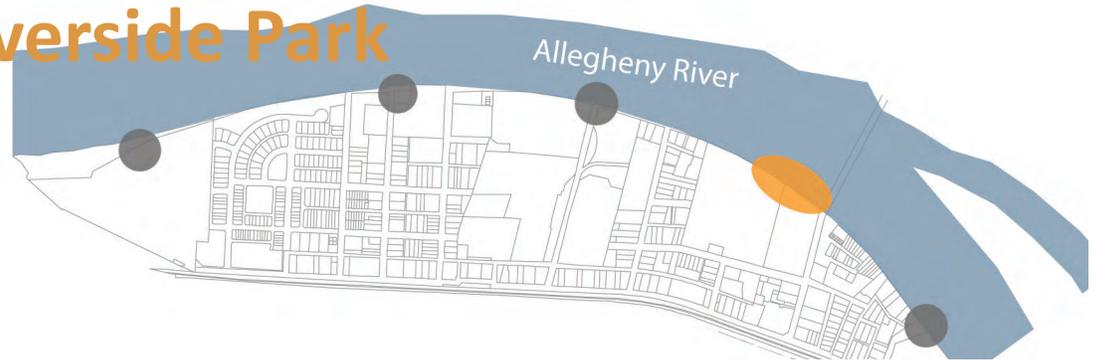
Site Map



This site proposed for water access is currently owned by the Riverview School District. There is currently no open available space for parking, and any parking spaces would need to be acquired by negotiating spaces from the School District’s Faculty parking lot. The 50% gradient slope contains remnants of historic blockstone that are being penetrated by tree roots. If access were to happen on this site, it would be safer on the upstream side, where the slope is more gradual and less of the blockstone wall remains. This slope is still extremely steep on the upstream side and would not easily facilitate ADA access to the water’s edge. This site does not require any additional amenities because of its proximity to the adjacent park, although signage would need to be added to direct visitors to nearby restroom locations.



Site B2: Riverside Park



Photograph Locations: Camera View 1



Key Features:

GPS Coordinates: 40° 31' 31.43" N | 79° 50' 45.05" W

Mile Marker: 12.5 Miles Left Bank Descending

Existing Zoning Classification: Residential District within a View Protection Overlay District

Parking Availability: Parking would need to be negotiated with school

Distance Between Parking and Launch Location: ~100'

Site Surface Conditions: Shallow, rocky bottom

Site Access from Land: Slopes are extremely steep, historic block stone wall

Site Access from Water: Easy, straight forward approach

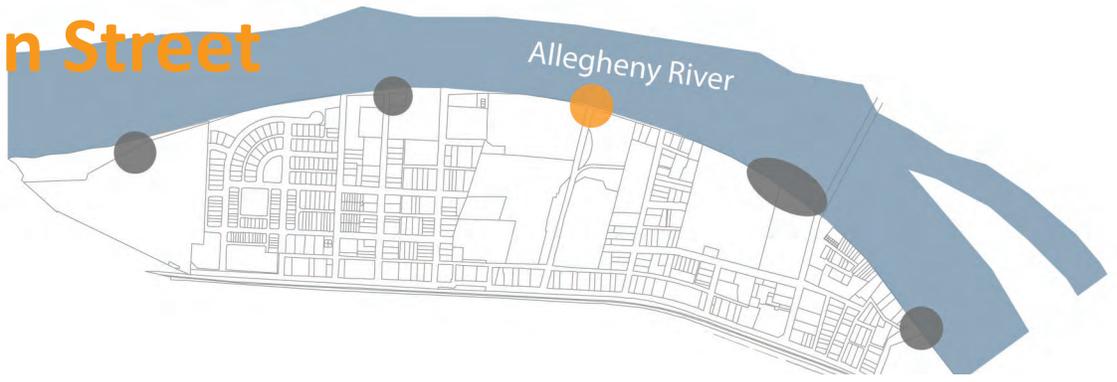
Site Map



This site proposed for water access is currently owned by the Borough. There is no available space for immediately adjacent parking, however parking is available quite a distance away up the hill within the park. Although a connection is possible, the distance from 2nd Street to the proposed launch location would exceed acceptable standards for an individual carrying a canoe/kayak. The river's edge between the park and the water consists of a historic blockstone slope with a 50% gradient. This slope would require an ADA accessible ramp to be built. Obstructing this wall for any type of water access would disturb the slope and could cause erosion problems in the future. No additional amenities are needed because of the existing presence of park features.

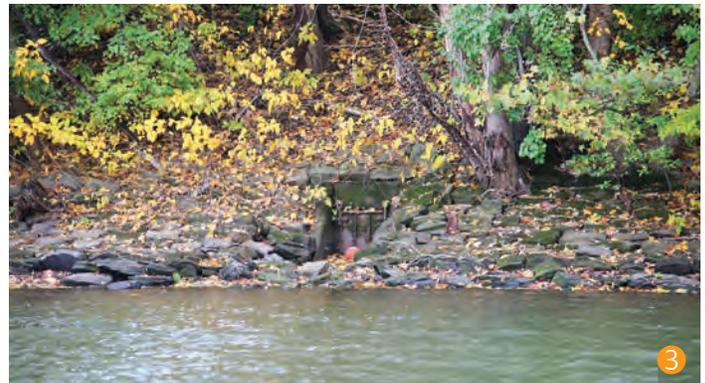


Site C: Ann Street



Photograph Locations:

Camera View 1



Key Features:

GPS Coordinates: 40° 31' 16.72" N | 79° 50' 53.94" W

Mile Marker: 12.3 Miles Left Bank Descending

Existing Zoning Classification: Mixed Use District within a Riverfront Overlay District

Parking Availability: No existing parking; Borough owns substantial land nearby

Distance Between Parking and Launch Location: ~100'

Site Surface Conditions: Deep, large rocks

Site Access from Land: Extremely steep slopes to water

Site Access from Water: Difficult, side approach necessary to get in and out of a canoe/kayak

Site Map



A portion of this site proposed for water access is in the public right-of-way; another portion of the site is owned by the Oakmont Water Authority. North of the Ann Street right-of-way is an Oakmont Water Authority sewer treatment facility; Chelsea Building Products, a company who makes PVC-based products, is south of the Ann Street right-of-way. Land would need to be acquired to provide adequate parking, potentially from the Borough-owned properties in the immediate area. The slope to a potential launch location is extremely steep and rocky. The water level at the shoreline is deep and would require a side-arrival/approach. This approach is difficult for beginners and could potentially discourage boaters from using this access point because of the level of difficulty to get in and out of the water. There is no available room for additional site amenities unless they would be located at the parking lot or carefully designated within the right-of-way.

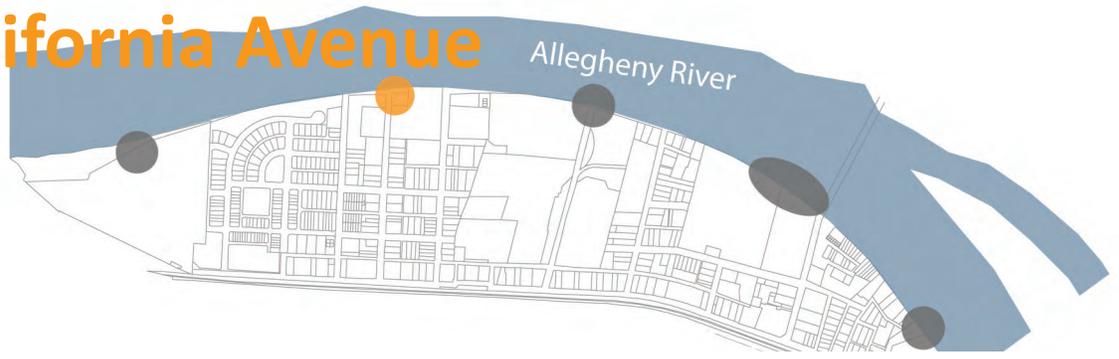


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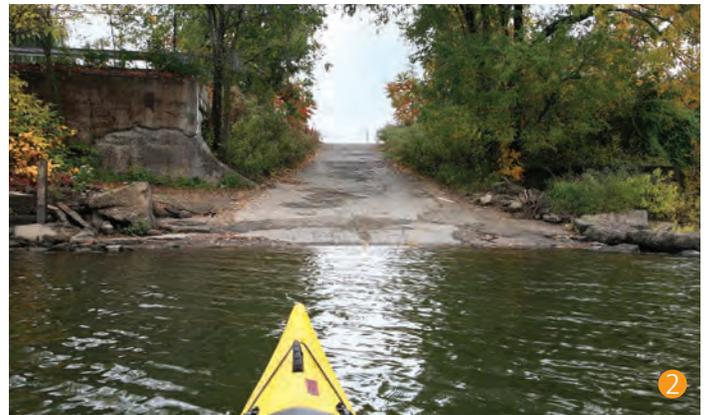


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Site D: California Avenue



Photograph Locations: Camera View 1



Key Features:

GPS Coordinates: 40° 30' 56.22" N | 79° 50' 56.13" W

Mile Marker: 11.9 Miles Left Bank Descending

Existing Zoning Classification: Commercial District

Parking Availability: Parking would need to be negotiated with adjacent properties

Distance Between Parking and Launch Location: ~150'

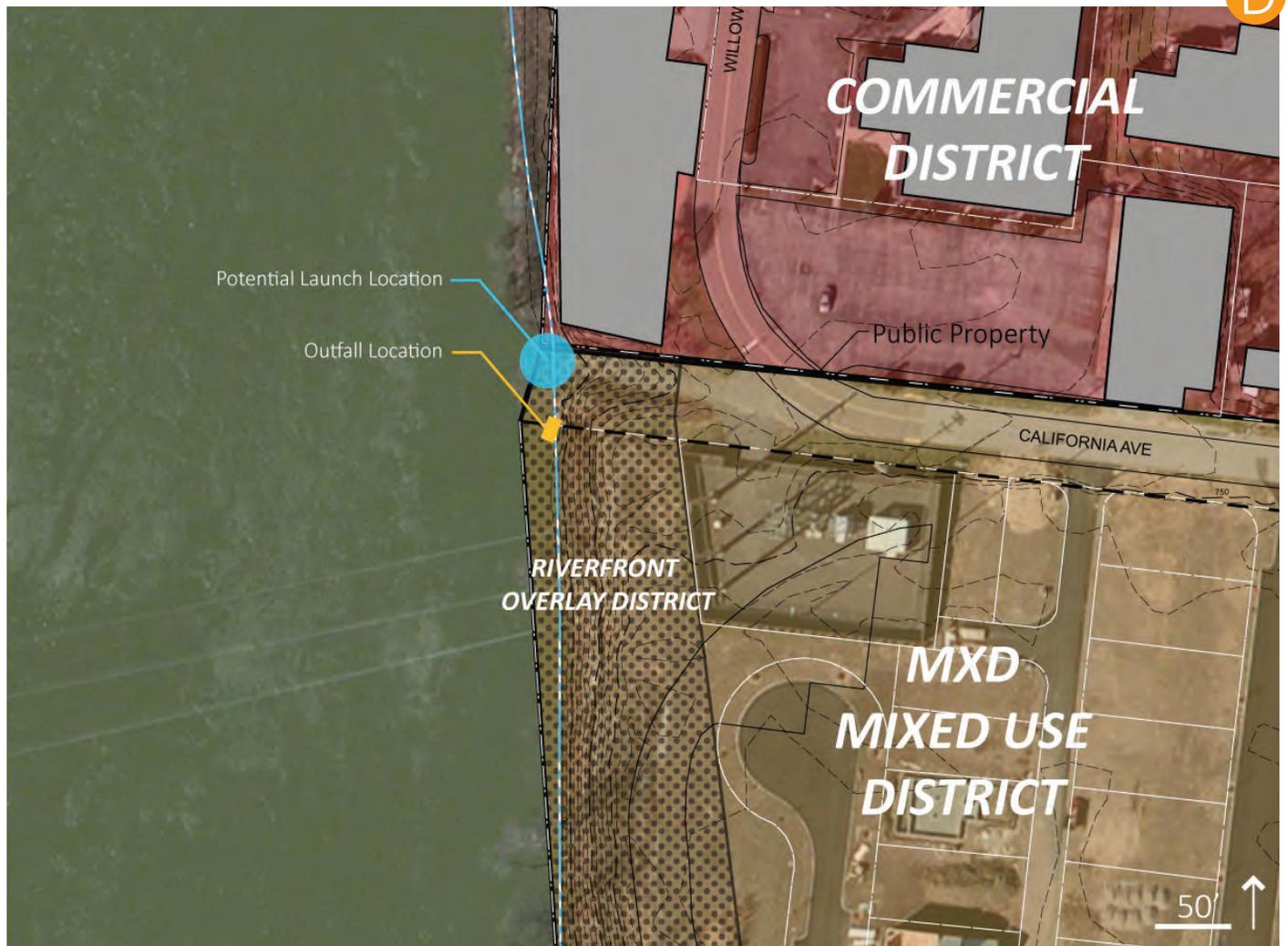
Site Surface Conditions: Shallow, gravel bottom

Site Access from Land: Access area is narrow and steeper than ADA slopes

Site Access from Water: Site Access from Water: Easy, straight forward approach

Site Map

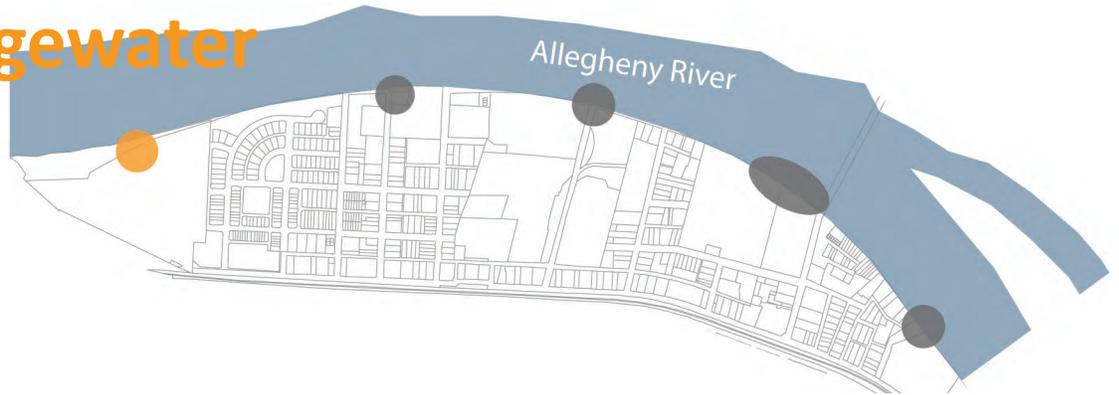
D



This site proposed for water access is in the California Avenue right-of-way. To the south of the proposed launch location is property owned by Edgewater Properties, LP and to the north is property owned by a Greek Orthodox Church. The existing boat launch ramp should be retained in order for vehicles to have access to drop boats in the water. The existing ramp is not at an ADA compliant slope, and land would need to be acquired in order to create an ADA accessible path to the launch location. Parking spaces would need to be negotiated with the Greek Orthodox Church or Duquesne Light. Both of those parking scenarios would still pose the issue of the steep slope to the shoreline. The site does not present any possibility for the inclusion of additional amenities or restrooms. While no fencing may be needed to distinguish this space from surrounding activities, concern may exist as to the security of the neighboring boat/dock area. Evidence of white-tailed deer was observed during the site review.



Site E: Edgewater



Photograph Locations: Camera View



Key Features:

GPS Coordinates: "40° 30' 31.84"" N | 79° 50' 50.37"" W

Mile Marker: 11.3 Miles Left Bank Descending

Existing Zoning Classification: Mixed Use District within a River Front Overlay District

Parking Availability: Potential of street parking availability

Distance Between Parking and Launch Location: ~450'

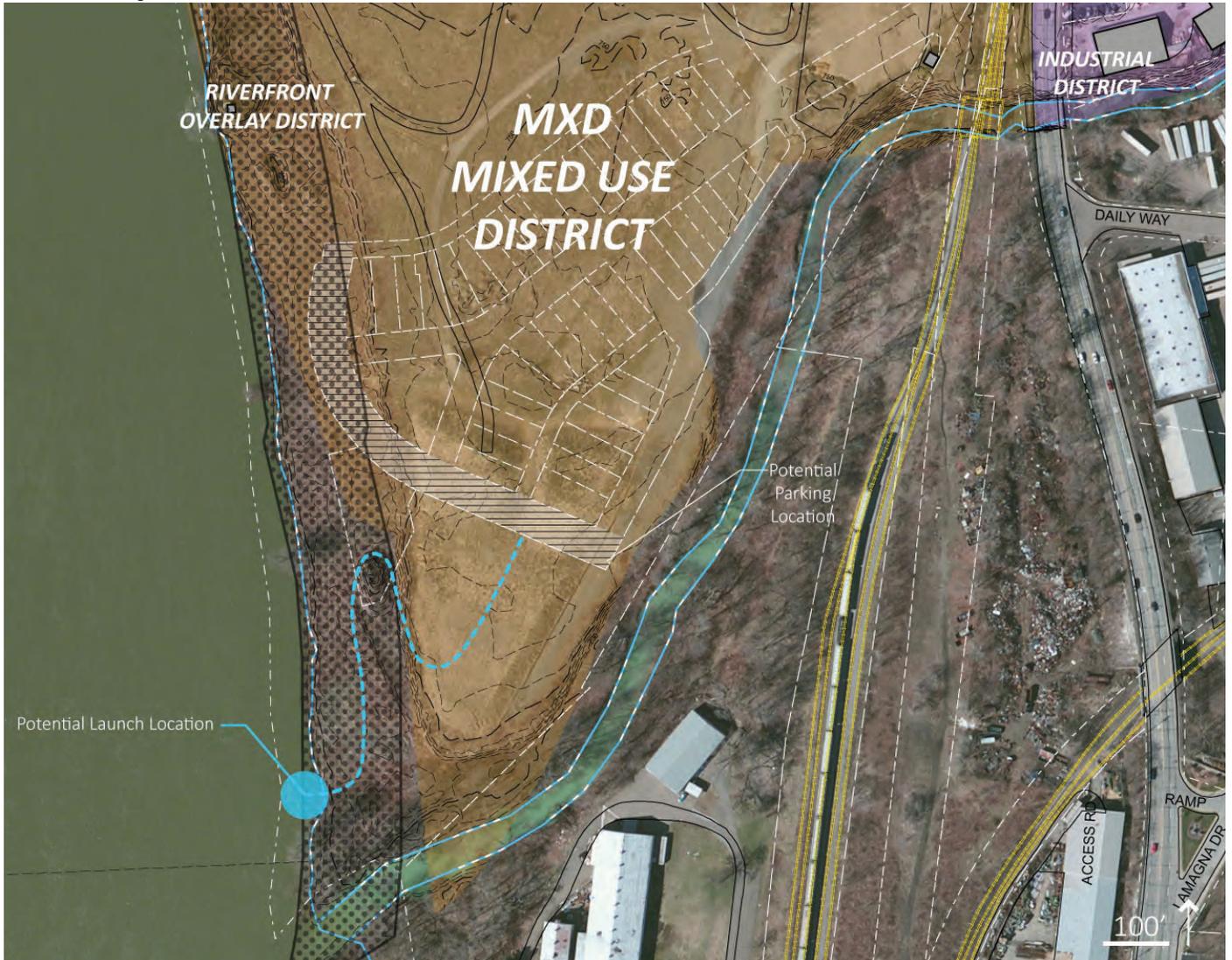
Site Surface Conditions: Shallow, sand and gravel bottom

Site Access from Land: Gradual slope down to the shoreline from development

Site Access from Water: Easy, straight forward approach

This site proposed for water access is currently owned by Edgewater Properties, LP. Beyond the immediate developed area, the site gradually slopes down and would not require an ADA ramp to access the launch location. However, the distance from the potential on-street parking to the launch location is over 450', exceeding the acceptable distance for most individuals to carry a canoe or kayak. This right-of-way will eventually be turned over to the Borough but the timeframe for that turnover is not currently known. While this site does not have a feasible parking or land access

Site Map



component, it is ideal to be a “River Rest Stop” along the water trail. The surface conditions at the launch location are easily accessible while the river features shallow water and a gradual slope. Based upon short-term and potentially long-term site ownership, it is not foreseen that it is possible for there to be the inclusion of additional amenities or restrooms. Within the new neighborhood and future common areas, there could be concern for area security. It is unknown as to how security of the site and surrounding uses could be achieved. As seen during the site review, the beginning stages of knotweed were observed as well as evidence of white-tailed deer.



3



4