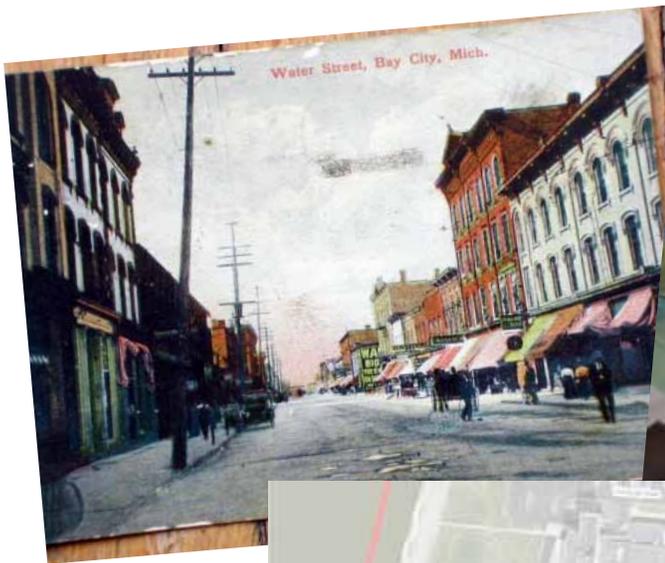


Above PAR

Planning for
**Placemaking,
Access, and
Redevelopment**
Bay City, Michigan

Final Project Report
October 2013



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The Land Information Access Association (LIAA) was a critical partner on this project, supplying technical expertise and indispensable planning support.

We are indebted to the City of Bay City for being willing to be a pilot community for the processes that are discussed in this report. We are thankful to Bay City’s planning staff, commission, planning commission, community leaders, and citizens for their participation in the process.

Several partners helped to ensure the project’s success including the Bay City Area Transportation Study (BCATS), the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), and the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) by supplying essential data and modeling, technical assistance and expertise, and facilitation support.

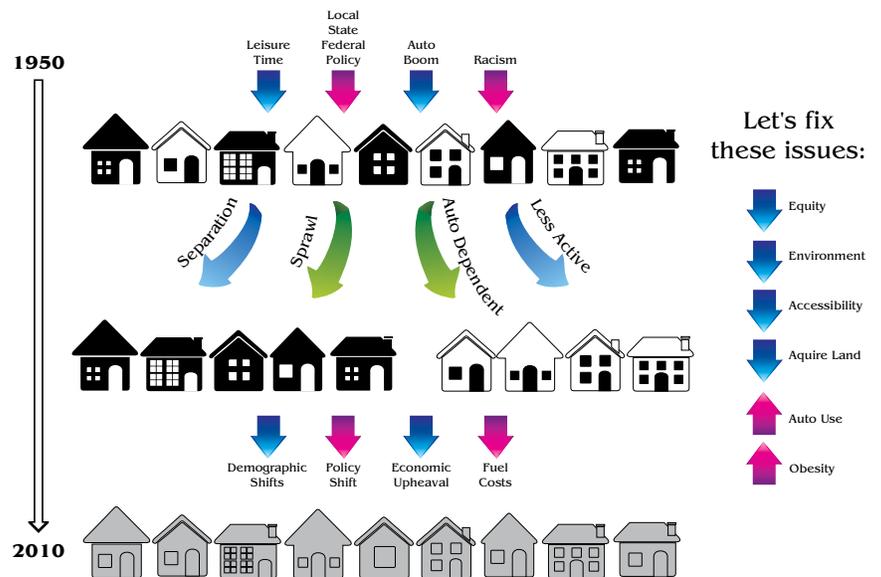


The Michigan Association of Planning exists so that Michigan will consist of healthy, safe, attractive, and successful communities built first and foremost on quality community planning.

Making great communities happen through information, education, and advocacy.
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INTRODUCTION

Community planning is one of the most important functions undertaken by local government, and yet it is often misunderstood, or overlooked as basic services like public safety and trash pick-up consume municipal budgets. Recent decades have seen what was at one time holistic and integrated approaches to community building devolve into a series of separate functions. This project sought to reintegrate those functions that have become disconnected, so that we can refocus on building the elements of a community that are most valuable to its residents. This planning process incorporates the foundations of three disciplines – planning, transportation and redevelopment – to intentionally converge the practices and connect each with the other to form a true systems approach.



Integrating placemaking and multi-modal transportation options can create a community culture that supports quality communities where people WANT to live and work. Integration not only expands access to services and encourages healthy lifestyles, but also better supports the accessibility needs of vulnerable residents, lowers traffic congestion, reduces air pollution, attracts and retains residents and businesses, supports mixed use, compact development, promotes economic development, and improves equity in transportation access. **Placemaking**, **Access** (transportation), and **Redevelopment** are the dots to be connected through systems planning to create accessible, resilient, and just communities that are planned, designed and constructed around quality community planning principles.

This project sought to reintegrate functions that have become disconnected, so that we can refocus on building the elements of a community that are most valuable to its residents.

The Michigan Association of Planning (MAP) in partnership with the C.S. Mott Foundation and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) developed a model, integrated,

Integration not only expands access to services and encourages healthy lifestyles, but also better supports the accessibility needs of vulnerable residents, lowers traffic congestion, reduces air pollution, attracts and retains residents and businesses, supports mixed use, compact development, promotes economic development, and improves equity in transportation access.

planning process which incorporates the practices of three distinct disciplines – transportation, planning and redevelopment – and integrates placemaking philosophies to connect the systems. MAP and the Land Information Access Association (LIAA) provided direct planning services to Bay City through an approach that includes education, asset mapping, and community engagement. Deliverables include analysis and evaluation of existing transportation and planning policies and programs, and recommendations for specific changes to the community’s plans, policies, and codes that will result in an opportunity to implement innovative and connected planning and regulatory approaches.

Bay City has a relatively progressive master plan that underwent a major revision in 2000 and subsequent minor updates in 2005 and 2011. Its planning commission is quite knowledgeable and experienced on many planning topics and techniques. While the community (and county) does possess a non-motorized plan, it has not formalized its intent to develop it through adoption of a Complete Streets policy. Bay City has also been involved in several MSHDA programs through the years. Bay City is interested in developing a form-based code for its Downtown and saw this project as the perfect prelude to accomplish it.



It is important to note that although this project focused on Bay City’s Downtown, there was much discussion about how it fit within larger, regional contexts: County and Tri-Cities of Saginaw, Bay City and Midland. And while these discussions were outside of the scope of this project, a countywide strategic community and economic development planning effort was independently launched by the Bay Area Chamber of Commerce during this timeframe.

Deliverables include analysis and evaluation of existing transportation and planning policies and programs, and recommendations for specific changes to the community’s plans, policies, and codes that will result in an opportunity to implement innovative and connected planning and regulatory approaches.

Population (estimated), 2012	34,521
Land Area	10.17 square miles
Median Household Income	\$36,113
Percent of Population living below poverty level	21.1%
Mean commute time	19.7 minutes
White	89.7%
Black/African American	3.5%
American Indian	1.6%
Asian	0.5%
Two or more races	3.9%
Hispanic or Latino	8.5%



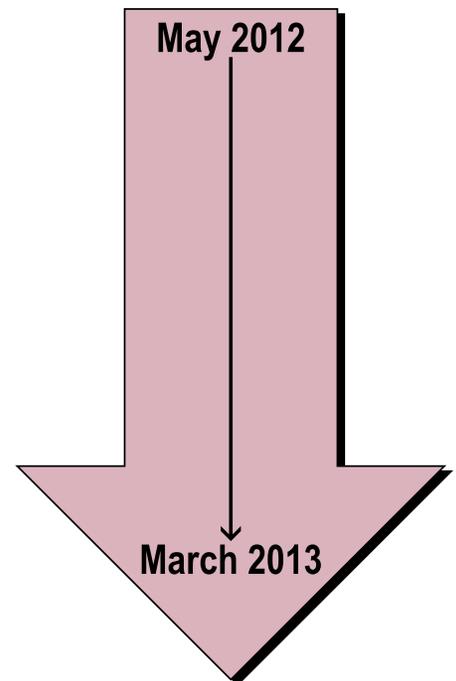
PROJECT OVERVIEW

The nearly year-long project began in May 2012, and culminated in January 2013. This project employed a multi-faceted process to deliver comprehensive training, technical support and information and tools to connect the concepts of transportation with placemaking and design. Through the following activities, the project sought to

- unify local leaders and key stakeholders,
- deliver uniform information, training, knowledge,
- build community consensus,
- introduce ideas on equity and health,
- lead collective learning and problem solving exercises, and
- utilize multidisciplinary approaches and innovative approaches, tools, models.

Below is a detailed description of the tasks involved with each community process.

1. **Identify Stakeholders.** Developing a comprehensive list of community leaders, (i.e. elected officials, staff, board and commissions, business and faith-based community leaders, social service providers and nonprofits, transportation agencies, and others) was critical to the project's success and was the foundation of all outreach activities.
2. **Preliminary Meetings.** Project staff met with the Planning Commission and active neighborhood Community Development Corporations (CDC) in a series of information-gathering and educational meetings to introduce the project, gather base information, and engage local leaders.
3. **Asset Mapping** was used to understand issues and problems, determine readiness for change, identify base knowledge of community leaders, and identify what was in place already. Asset mapping was conducted during community engagement meetings and workshops, through interviews and surveys, and through direct inspection of the community and of the plans, policies, programs and ordinances that currently drive placemaking and transportation decisions. Activities included:
 - inspection and inventory of existing transportation systems,
 - documentation of key "destinations" to be accessed (schools,



- shops, hospitals, entertainment, public libraries/city hall, etc), by whom, and how, to gain a clear picture of existing networks, gaps, and opportunities to create new multi-modal connections,
- a scan of how the community uses all modes of transportation, what they would do differently if they could, and barriers and constraints to actual intermodal use, and
 - review of plans and ordinances to identify gaps and opportunities to integrate placemaking and transportation into policies and implementation strategies.
4. **Community Kick-Off Event.** The project progressed with a workshop that introduced the project to the public, rallied participants around the integration of transportation and health as part of placemaking efforts, and engaged participants in further asset mapping and data gathering exercises.
 5. **Community Workshops.** Using information gleaned from previous activities, two focused workshops (placemaking and transportation) provided in-depth information, resources, and training; built community cohesiveness around the issue; and provided an integrated curriculum on the topic. These workshops provided both inspirations for change, as well as specific programs, practices, policies, and solutions that can be applied in the community. Workshops employed asset mapping and data collection activities to ensure community participation and collective learning.
 6. **A Charrette** anchored the project. Charrette activities drew upon what was discovered during community engagement and outreach, asset mapping, and the workshops to develop a set of alternatives for the community that would enhance its placemaking and accessibility. The charrette utilized the National Charrette Institute’s signature process that is a multi-day collaborative planning event that engages all affected parties to create and support a feasible plan (on a particular topic, geography, or area) that represents transformative community change. There are multiple feedback loops for stakeholders and the public intertwined with design studios to ensure that at the end of the charrette, a draft product (site plan, form-based code, sub-area plan, etc.) is presented.

All aspects of the project are documented in this final report that summarizes the process, lessons learned, outcomes, and descriptions of policy, program, plan and regulatory changes made that bring together transportation and placemaking. Bay City’s engagement during the project also formed the basis for a transferable guidebook based on the process that can be implemented independently by other communities.



PUBLIC PROCESS

Public engagement in this process, as in any planning process, was absolutely essential. A variety of methods were deployed to not only engage the public and key stakeholders, but to glean information from them that formed the foundation for the focus of the project and its recommendations. These included

- Asset mapping
- Meetings with key individuals
- Meetings with key stakeholder groups: staff, neighborhood groups, economic development personnel, etc.
- Focus groups with Community Development Corporations (CDCs), middle school children
- Community conversation/Kick-Off Event
- Workshops
- Charrette

Each activity included an exercise designed to gather information and data to inform the project.

Outreach was a joint effort between project staff and City staff. Typically, project managers sent out a stakeholder invitation to participate and city staff followed up with personal emails and phone calls to encourage attendance. While mass emails were the primary tool for outreach, media in the form of press releases, interviews, and articles were also used to invite the public to events and inform them of project progress and process. Approximately 300 residents and stakeholders were reached through engagement processes.

Asset Mapping

Asset mapping is a process used to help people and organizations identify and characterize the current and potential capacities of the community. Asset mapping also builds our knowledge and understanding of the resources and capacities available for community development problem solving. Working through a series of focus group discussions and public meetings, the project team worked with community stakeholders and citizens to identify and inventory community assets in Bay City. These assets include the skills, talents, and capabilities of people and organizations active in the community

Public engagement in this process, as in any planning process, was absolutely essential.

Assets include the skills, talents, and capabilities of people and organizations active in the community and the physical resources (including important structures, natural features and place characteristics) of the community. In total 3,992 assets were identified and mapped during the Above PAR Project.

and the physical resources (including important structures, natural features and place characteristics) of the community. In addition, a comprehensive list of businesses was purchased from InfoUSA. In total 3,992 assets were identified and mapped during the Above PAR Project. Bay City's asset mapping website is www.baycityabovepar.org/.

Summary of Stakeholder Issues

All of the events prior to the charrette were designed to gather community input, and that data was fed into the charrette process. These activities and events formed the basis for the project and the charrette.

Community Conversation

The first event, a Community Conversation/Kick-Off, was held on July 12, 2012, at the DoubleTree Hotel from 6:30-8:30PM. There were approximately 80 participants, and they were asked to answer and discuss a list of questions about community assets:

- What do we have? (What are our assets?)
- Why are they important?
- How are they connected to the community?
- How can we improve our assets and what assets don't we have?

Groups were formed to talk about a particular asset category. The groups and their summary of issues are below.

Business and Economics: Bay City uses the river as an entertainment venue, is a walkable community, and GM and schools are large employers. There is also a new YMCA. Areas for improvement include the downtown, Columbus St. façades and coordinated hours of operation, more utilization of the airport, more downtown beach/river access, more wayfinding, and increased public safety.

Cultural: There are many diverse, cultural events. Need more trolley use for events, a water taxi for use of the river as transportation, and more collaboration between business and community committees. The South end sign could use improvement.

Government: Participants enjoy good city services and that the County bridge authority could save infrastructure costs on maintaining bridges. Areas for improvement include the need to connect M-15 to I-75 and to update programming to reflect the changing demographics.

Institutional: Participants agree that Bay City has good public schools and values the connection to the Delta College Planetarium.

There is a strong physical and social fabric: Historic architecture, library and downtown – all resolved to help each other. Participants felt the community needs more social connection and more affordable senior housing.

Neighborhood and Service Organizations: Participants noted that Bay City enjoys the services of many good nonprofits and schools, but would like to see a local Red Cross back in the area.

Recreation and Natural Features: The Community Foundation/Kantzler Foundation has invested in parks and transportation. Parks are connected to the community through event hosting, fundraisers, and service clubs and are connected to the transportation system. Vets Park and the fairgrounds were noted as assets. Areas for improvement include enhanced signage/wayfinding, more facilities for visitors, restrooms, trash containers, and the capability to handle larger crowds. New ideas included an indoor water park, casino, connection for pedestrians to the other side of the river (bridge, water taxi), and rental equipment (boats, jet ski, houseboat). It was noted that more money and community buy-in and the ability to do things quicker are needed.

Restaurants and Retail: The restaurant/retail district is physically located in the downtown, but it lacks form and consistency for visitors, and needs more wayfinding and access to the water.

Transportation and Other Infrastructure: Transportation infrastructure is connected to the river, commerce occurs from the water, and the Rail Trail is good. Areas for improvement include more bike lanes and developed road systems, more bike racks. New amenities desired include a bike share program and a light rail hub.

Workshop #1: Place

All workshops consisted of a combination of education and engagement activities. The presentations contained information to elevate the understanding of project concepts (placemaking, non-motorized transportation, and form and redevelopment) and exercises and activities to engage the participants and provide local perspectives and valuable information and opinions that informed the entire process.

The first workshop was held on October 25, 2012, from 1:00-4:00PM at the State Theater. There were approximately 25 participants. At this first workshop, participants learned about Placemaking and conducted a walking audit to evaluate elements of Place along four routes through Bay City's downtown. A summary of their observations follows.

All workshops consisted of a combination of education and engagement activities.

1. What do you like best about this place?

- Courthouse, trees, architecture, clean, accessible, landscaped, pedestrian-friendly, signage
- It's not really working because it's mostly parking with a few businesses There is a definite corridor definition from the depot to the water; however it's a connector street connecting Water St, Saginaw St, and Washington Ave
- Isn't all parking lots. Mixed businesses (banks, retail). Doesn't look in disrepair yet but has the potential for it. Good frontage, historic buildings. Quiet enough to have conversation. Planned events
- Being near the river/walkway

2. How was this place formed (People, Policies, Programs)?

- It was formed to connect but has evolved to connect other streets
- DDA always has strong involvement, works with the City; many key players working together – events, snow removal. Planning Dept. preserves buildings. Planned events. DMBA/DDA. Lots of key players

3. List things that you would do to improve this place that could be done right away and that wouldn't cost a lot:

- More seating, curb cuts, pull weeds, landscaping, bike racks
- Movies on back of building during summer
- Make it ADA compliant by replacing sidewalks, intersections, and curb cuts. Remove weeds and add beautifying details (planters, benches)
- Work to make 5th Street warmer and more inviting
- Take a more consistent approach to street lighting styles
- Take a more consistent approach to façade painting styles
- Street resurfacing throughout
- Bike racks throughout
- More benches for seating throughout
- Touch up existing paint on public infrastructure (e.g., hydrants, lamp posts)
- Clean up second-floor storefronts
- Frontages aren't friendly, easily accessible public restrooms, create historic district to take advantage of grants, tax credits, public ownership and beautification, wayfinding signs. Parking

4. What changes would you make in the long term that would have the biggest impact?

- Form based code, have bus times run later, better signage, bike racks

- Resurfacing street, streetscaping (lighting, landscaping) require more landscaping on the two main parking blocks
- Middle managers/industries haven't reached out to the community, need to re-engage them, more services for residents

5. What local partnerships of local talent can you identify that could help implement some of your proposed improvements? Please be as specific as possible.

- Downtown Management Business Association (DMBA), Bay Area Community Foundation (beautification grant), citizen community service
- DMBA, Chamber, local young entrepreneurs so they can live downtown, lots of people, nonprofit boards
- Noted that buildings are old but well kept
- Take pictures of Tawas and other downtowns that you love and copy it for Bay City

Workshop #2: Connecting Place

The second workshop was held on November 29, 2012, from 1:00-4:00PM at the Delta College Planetarium. There were approximately 30 participants. At the second workshop, participants learned about Complete Streets, non-motorized transportation, and connecting Places. Participants were also encouraged to consider the impacts of the design on Jenny and Thomas have on the neighborhoods that they traverse. Participants evaluated two corridors: the Jenny and Thomas "gateway" into Bay City, and connecting Downtown to the new Uptown site. A summary of their analysis is on the next page.

Jenny and Thomas

Don't Like	Like	Wish List
No welcome point there yet	No pot holes	Benches
Walkability off bridge on east side... where can they go?	Easy to travel through	Flower boxes
Appearance of homes	Gateway road	Uniform lighting
# of blocks with only 1 tree	Artery through US10&I75	Mix & enhance uses
Overhead utilities		Row of evergreen shrubs (lower than trees)
An extension of the highway		Welcome point at Euclid – will have to work with Twp
Speed		Highest and best use=office? But no market
Lack of crosswalk markings even at lights		Elevated sidewalk on either side of bridge
Illegal signs		Cathedral of trees to drive through (mature, seasonal variance)
Illegal parking		Underground utilities (target areas/corridor and be opportunistic)
No uniform lighting		Crosswalk markings at Henry, Winona, Euclid
All residential (and mostly rentals)		2-3 lane reduction warning

Uptown/Downtown Wish List	
Crosswalk at Water and McKinley	
Off ramp off bridge	
North-South connection at Horack	
Trolley Service	
Increased frequency of bus stops on the Washington/Saginaw loop	
Bike share program	
Water taxi (duck boat tour)	
Improved sidewalk along Saginaw	
Defined Rivertrail (Horack, under bridge, at 4th)	
Redevelopment on Washington between Columbus and McKinley)	
-median or boulevard	
-angled parking that continues the continuity of downtown	
Primary intersection	
-20 story building	
-roundabout	
-1st floor retail, 2nd floor residential	
Sears/Horack	
-recreation	
-parking garage	
-plantings (also at Doubletree)	
-floral clock	
-marina	
-signage	
-potential commercial @ site	
-pedestrian skywalk or promenade on Water St. between the 2 one-ways	
Routes to Connect:	
• Washington-Saginaw	
• Riverwalk	

Objectives and Measures

Post-event surveys were conducted to evaluate whether the community engagement strategies were successful. Each event included a post-event survey that assessed topics such as training and speaker effectiveness, content, and quality; if participants indicated their voice was heard and participation was valuable; and if participants understood the concepts presented. While response rates were relatively low, those that did respond to post-event surveys felt that their voice was heard and valued the opportunities for input. Participants at all events appreciated the interaction with other community members and enjoyed brainstorming ideas on ways to improve their city. The overall process was valued by participants, particularly the charrette, where residents got to see their ideas take shape into actual concepts. Overall, those that participated in the entire process felt that it was a valuable process for the community and an effective one also.

Question	Score (5=highest score, unless noted)			
	Community Conversation (n=13)	Workshop #1: Place (n=14)	Workshop #2: Access (n=18)	Workshop #3 Form/Charrette (n=10)
Overall rating of the workshop		3.7	3.9	4.0
Was it worth your time?	100% Yes	4.0	3.9	4.5
Was your voice heard?	100% Yes	4.4	4.0	4.2
Quality of the information presented		4.1	3.9	3.7
Presenters' ability to communicate the material in a meaningful way		4.4	4.2	4.2
Presenters pace at which the material was presented		4.0	3.9	
Presenters level of information presented (introductory=1 vs. advanced=3)		1.7	2.0	
Were exercises helpful in furthering your understanding of the topics presented?		3.6	3.9	
Participants gained knowledge, insights, or ideas for their involvement in Bay City		3.9	3.9	



THE CHARRETTE

The project culminated with a three-day charrette held from January 29-31, 2013, at the Pere Marquette Rail Depot. This charrette utilized the National Charrette Institute’s signature process. A charrette is a multi-day collaborative planning event that engages local officials, state and regional agencies, business owners, local stakeholder groups (including youth), and interested citizens to create and support a feasible and transformative plan for a specific issue or area of the community. For the Bay City Above PAR project, the charrette focused on developing a vision and recommendations for the following areas and interests:

- A. Downtown Bay City
 - Sense-of-Place
 - Infill and Density
 - Buildings and Façades
 - Access to the Waterfront
 - Parking
- B. Transportation Corridors
 - Jenny and Thomas (including the “gateway experience”)
 - McKinley Avenue Roundabout
 - Washington Avenue
- C. Connecting Downtown with the planned Uptown Development

Participation was representative of the stakeholders within the study area. There were approximately 20 participants at Workshop #3 on the first night of the charrette. There were not more than 10 participants at each stakeholder meeting, with participation dwindling as the charrette progressed. About 30 participated at the Open House to

Bay City Charrette Schedule

	Day One	Day Two	Day Three
	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
8:00 a.m.	Studio Set Up	Charrette Team Meeting	Charrette Team Meeting
9:00		Stakeholder Meeting (Neighborhood Associations)	Stakeholder Meeting (Neighborhood Associations)
10:00	Charrette Team Meeting	Stakeholder Meeting(s) (Realtors/Developers)	Stakeholder Meeting(s) (Realtors/Developers)
11:00	Stakeholder Meeting (Downtown Merchants)	Stakeholder Meeting (Downtown Merchants)	Stakeholder Meeting (Downtown Merchants)
12:00 p.m.	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:00	Stakeholder Meeting (Municipal Officials/Staff)	Stakeholder Meeting (Municipal Officials/Staff)	Stakeholder Meeting (Municipal Officials/Staff)
2:00	Stakeholder Meeting(s) (Realtors/Developers & Youth-offsite)	Alt. Concept Development (open to the public)	Alternative Concept Development (open to public)
3:00	Stakeholder Meeting (Neighborhood Associations)		Alternative Concept Development & Production and Final Meeting Prep (closed to public)
4:00	1/2 hour of flex time		
5:00	Dinner	Dinner	
6:00	Public Meeting Prep	Open House (and alternative design development)	
7:00	Interactive Public Meeting		Final Public Meeting
8:00		Charrette Team Meeting and Next Day Prep (illustrations, power-point, etc.)	Charrette Team Meeting - Discuss Next Steps
9:00	Charrette Team Meeting and Next Day Prep (illustrations, power-point, etc.)		
10:00			Pack and Depart
11:00			

Charrette is a multi-day collaborative planning event that engages all affected parties to create and support a feasible plan (on a particular topic, geography, or area) that represents transformative community change. There are multiple feedback loops for stakeholders and the public intertwined with design studios that results in a draft product (site plan, form-based code, sub-area plan, etc.) and is presented at the end of the charrette.



see the progress the team had made and the same attended the final presentation. While feedback was minimal, participants would like to

- see a follow-up email in a few months detailing how the City plans to use the information.
- see a progression of finished drawings: from basic changes up to the advanced final versions that were presented.

Charrette - Day One

On the first day of the charrette, project team members conducted a final walk-through and visual audit of specific areas and elements within the downtown (i.e., the waterfront, Wenonah Park), Jenny and Thomas, and the areas between downtown and the planned Uptown development. The purpose of this walk-through and audit was to solidify the context and constraints of the specific study areas and test potential design concepts. A preliminary walk-through and audit of these same areas was conducted earlier in the project.



Charrette team members then facilitated a series of meetings with different community stakeholder groups (including a meeting with representatives from the Michigan Department of Transportation). The purpose of these meetings was to more clearly understand and articulate the key issues, constraints and vision of the study areas. Based on the feedback that was received, the charrette team began to formulate different concepts, evaluate potential recommendations, and illustrate design options.



Later that evening, the charrette team hosted the third and final public workshop of the *Above PAR* project. The workshop provided an opportunity for citizens to learn about the charrette process and the basic principles of form-based zoning (e.g., block density, building form, the public realm, etc.). Following a brief presentation, participants were then led through a formal visioning exercise. Working in small groups of six to seven people, participants were asked to identify and map:

- Five positive aspects of the downtown,
- Five negative aspects of the downtown,
- Three new businesses they would like to see in the downtown, and
- Four ideas of what the downtown should look like in 20 years.



Charrette - Day Two

On the second day of the charrette, team members facilitated additional meetings with the community stakeholder groups. Charrette team members also met with middle school students from the Bay City Academy. The purpose of these meetings was to review and solicit comments and suggestions on the draft concepts and design solutions developed by the charrette team the previous day. Based on these additional comments and suggestions, the charrette team continued to refine concepts, explore additional options, and formalize illustrations and recommendations.



Later that evening, the preliminary concepts, recommendations, and illustrations were presented at a public open-house. The open-house provided an opportunity for those stakeholders who were unable to participate in the earlier meetings and interested citizens to provide additional comments and suggestions.



Charrette - Day Three

Based on the comments and suggestions received at the open house and additional feedback throughout the day, the charrette team began to refine and develop the final set of concepts, illustrations and recommendations for the community. The final materials were then presented to the community at a public meeting in the historic State Theater.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations - Downtown Bay City

Center Avenue and Wenonah Park

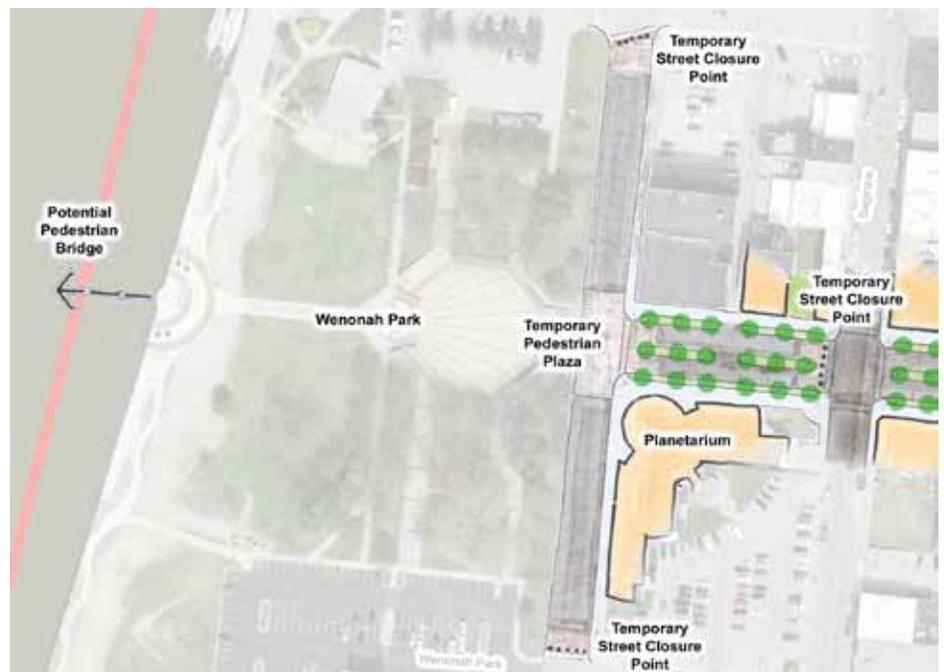
Nestled between Center Avenue (and the core of downtown) and the Saginaw River lies Wenonah Park. Home to a number of large festivals and events each year, Wenonah Park is the most well-known and used park in the city. Several charrette participants noted that during larger community celebrations, Water Street is closed to allow for more festival activities and pedestrian movement.



Recommendations

The charrette team suggests that removable bollards at Mechelan Drive, Sixth Street, and Saginaw Street could be used to temporarily close Water Street and the first block of Center Avenue to vehicle traffic, creating even more space for special events and pedestrian movement. In fact, when closed, the first block of Center Avenue would make an ideal location for the farmers market.

Portions of Water Street—in front of Wenonah Park, at either end of Water Street and near the Center Avenue and Saginaw Street intersection—could incorporate decorative pavers to permanently denote the potential change in use of the streets.



Center Avenue

Center Avenue is the primary east/west street in downtown Bay City. The west side of Center Avenue (west of Washington Avenue) features an active and healthy mix of retail establishments, offices and restaurants. Wide sidewalks, attractive storefronts, outdoor seating, its proximity to Wenonah Park and the Planetarium all work to create a public realm that is welcoming to pedestrians and supports social interaction. Angled parking creates a nice buffer between the sidewalk and the street.

The east side of Center Avenue (east of Washington) is dominated by office buildings (mostly vacant), parking lots, and a fairly inactive greenspace in front of and across the street from the public library. As a result, this side of Center Avenue has very little pedestrian activity and just a handful of retail establishments. Due to the length of the block, the angled parking actually seems overwhelming to pedestrians and limits activity on the greenspace in front of the library.

Center Avenue West



Center Avenue East



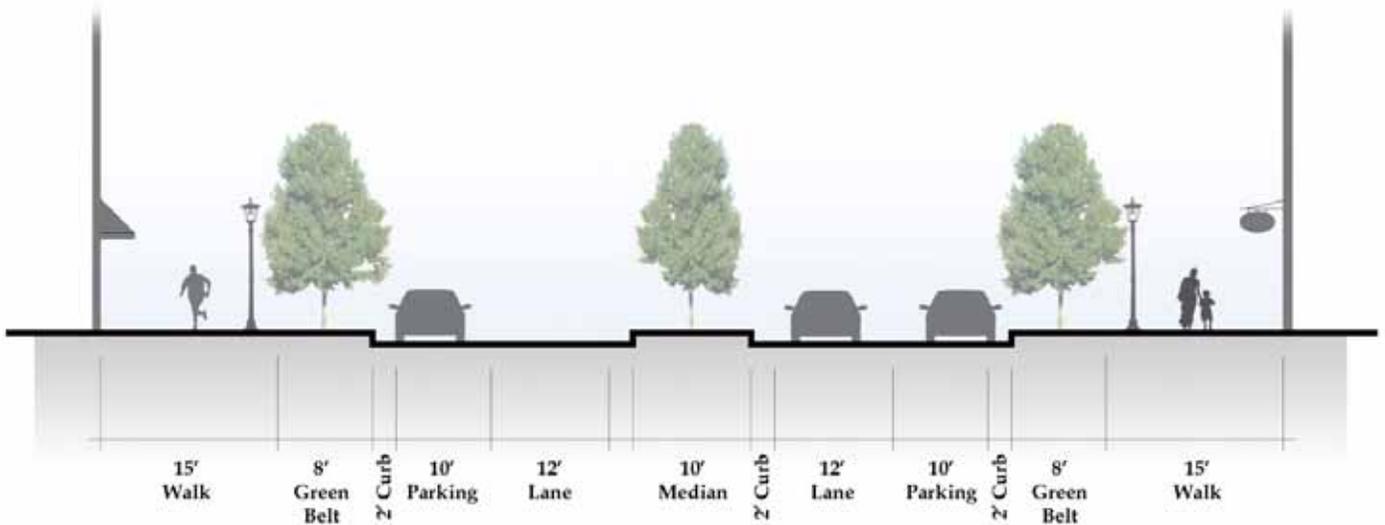
Recommendations

After completing a basic analysis of the surrounding traffic signals, the capacity of the roadway, and the surrounding land use, the charrette team believes Center Avenue could be reconfigured into a two-lane (one lane in each direction) street, with a 10-foot median and parallel parking. Although parallel parking would reduce the amount of on-street parking spaces, it would still create a buffer to the street, and the additional space would allow for a greenbelt on either side of the street. The greenbelt would allow for more tree canopy along the street.

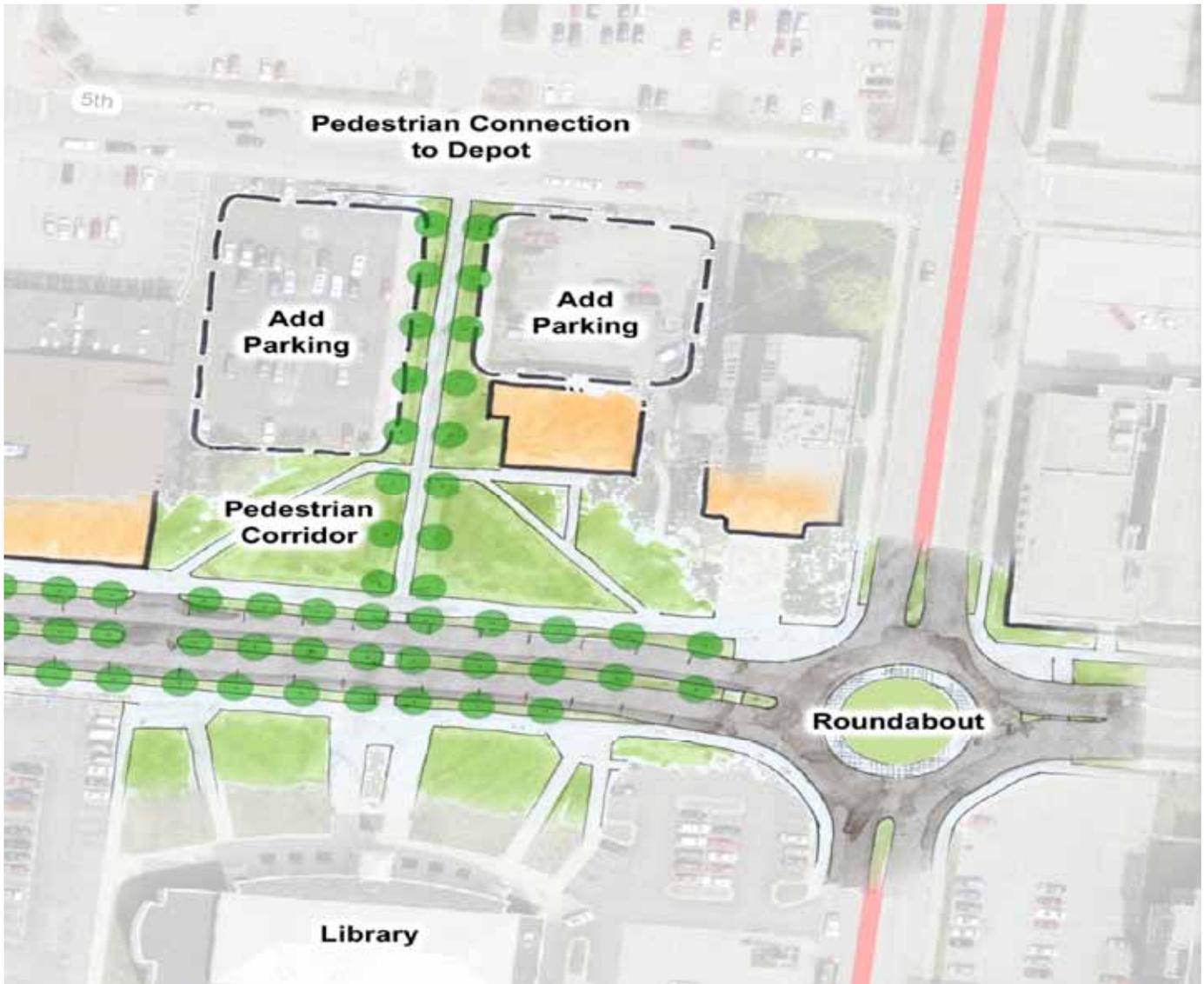
Current View

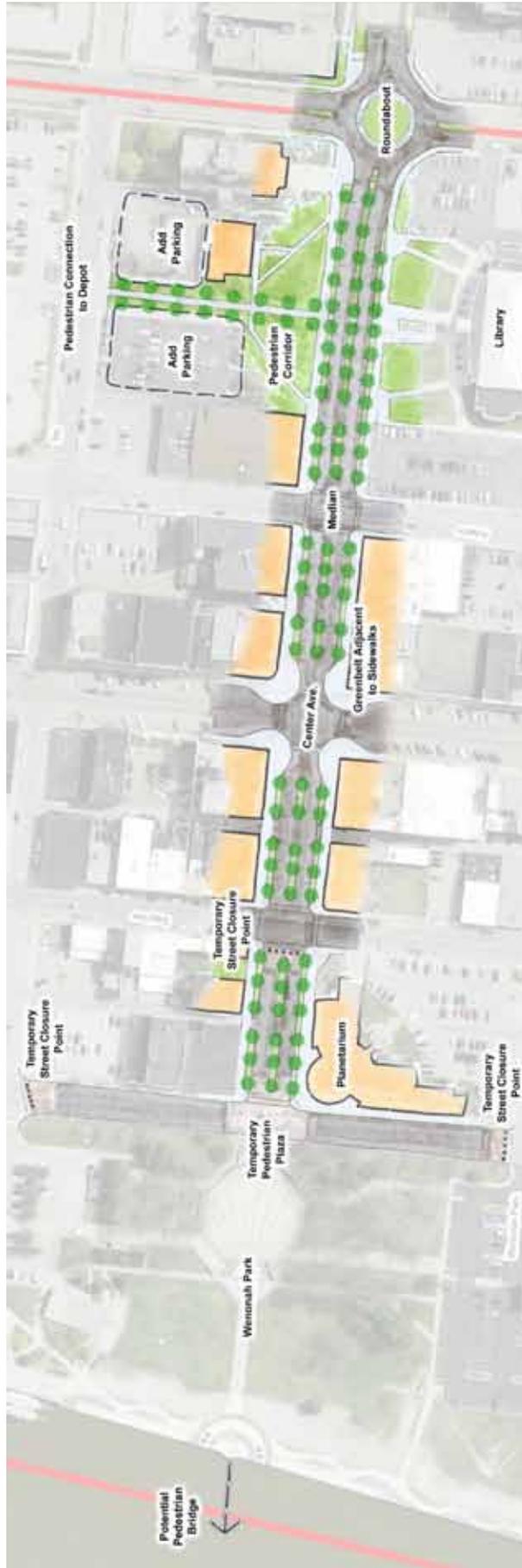


Proposed View



On the west side of Center Avenue, the charrette team suggests the traffic signal at the Madison Avenue intersection could be replaced with a one-lane roundabout. The charrette team also suggests that parking on Jefferson Street could be removed to create a pedestrian way—connecting the library to the existing pedestrian connections at the historic Depot. Parking spaces in front of the library and a raised crosswalk would connect the pedestrian way to the library grounds. There are several parking lots adjacent to Jefferson Street and Fifth Street to accommodate the loss of these parking spaces.





Infill and Density

Like many historic downtowns in Michigan, Bay City has slowly replaced many of the buildings on the side and back of their primary downtown blocks with large surface parking lots. In many instances, the parking lots are over-sized and disproportionate to parking demand on the lot on a day-to-day basis. The charrette team estimated that of the 102 acres within the immediate downtown area, roughly 42 acres are devoted to surface parking lots. Combined with the 60 acres of vacant property, roughly 44% of the downtown area is either vacant or surface parking lot.

**Historic Downtown Bay City -
Notice the lack of surface parking lots**



Areas Devoted to Parking and Vacant lots



While it's convenient for local merchants and customers to park nearby, this land use pattern creates an inconsistent and disjointed urban form. As a result, businesses on streets facing parking lots have either closed or struggle to maintain occupancy. In addition, this type of urban form limits opportunities for infill development, discourages pedestrian activity, and provides a visual and physical barrier to retail establishments on nearby blocks.

Recommendations

The charrette team recommends mixed-use redevelopment for these surface parking lots. Condominiums or stand-alone commercial buildings would also dramatically change the character of the interior blocks of the downtown and increase the number of people living downtown. In an effort to retain accessible parking for downtown businesses, parking decks, or interior parking lots could be incorporated into new redevelopment projects.

The following illustrations from the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute demonstrate the key differences between development geared toward the automobile and development geared toward the pedestrian. While Figure A (development geared toward the automobile) is not an exact representation of downtown Bay City, it does highlight some of the key issues associated areas with similar land use patterns. Figure B illustrates the type of redevelopment project most suitable for surface parking lots in downtown Bay City.

Figure A



Figure B



A Word About Parking

During the charrette, several citizens expressed concern that eliminating nearby parking lots will discourage people from visiting downtown. While this concern may have some merit, it is important to consider that the perception of convenience is most likely tied to the different context in which the shopper is familiar with, and not in reality. For example, if a family parks relatively near the main entrance of the Bay City Mall, walks from one end of the mall to the other, and then walks back to their car, they would have walked about .9 miles. That same distance equals four full blocks in downtown Bay City.

**Distance Circulating
the Bay City Mall**



**Same Distance Circulating
Downtown Bay City**



A Word About Parking Garages

Parking garages can be instrumental to the overall success of downtown Bay City. Decks provide parking for both shoppers and employees and can blend well into the surrounding urban form. According to urban retail consultant Robert Gibbs, "Parking garages should be located adjacent to or within a block of the prime shopping destination."¹ When examining the potential for a parking garage in downtown Bay City, the charrette team considered three potential locations (noted in red). The first is the location of the current parking deck at the Double Tree Hotel. The other sites are surface parking lots on Saginaw Street and Washington Avenue.



¹Gibbs, Robert. *Principles of Urban Retail Planning and Development* John Wiley & Sons, Inc. (2012)

Form

The mass, height, façade and architectural features of blocks and buildings in many parts of the downtown create a fairly consistent urban form (see *Picture A.* below). However, there are a handful of blocks in which the historic building patterns have not been followed by more recent developments. These blocks tend to feature buildings with drastically different setbacks, heights and roof lines, window size and placement, and architectural detail (see *Picture B.* below). As a result, people feel uncomfortable walking in portions of the downtown and retail opportunities are compromised.

Picture A.



Picture B.



Recommendations

The charrette team recommends that city officials work with downtown merchants to develop specific design guidelines for the downtown area. The pictures below illustrate how design guidelines could influence the character and form of redevelopment along Center Avenue.

Current View



Potential View



Form Meets Retail

The form of city blocks, the size and quality of the public realm, and the architectural elements of buildings all contribute to the pedestrian-friendly atmosphere, sense-of-place and retail viability of the downtown. In addition, the character and pattern of storefronts and façades contribute to creating a sustainable and thriving retail environment for the downtown. The following section highlights some best practices for the design of storefronts, as noted by Robert Gibbs in his new book, *Principles of Urban Planning and Development*.² For each design element, we have included pictures of places in downtown Bay City that are working and not working in support of a sustainable retail environment.

Awnings

- Define the first-level storefront
- Reinforce brand
- Brings attention to the business



Best Practices

- Awning materials should be constructed from canvas, cloth, steel or glass but should reflect the overall character of the business brand. Awnings constructed of plastic and internally illuminated should not be permitted.
- Color should be limited to two colors.
- Lettering should be limited to 8 inches in height and only allowed on the front flap rather than on the top-sloped awning.
- Awnings should complement the character of the building and should not cover architectural elements.
- Awnings should be no more than 6 to 8 feet deep and have a pitch of no more than 25 degrees.

Working



Not Working



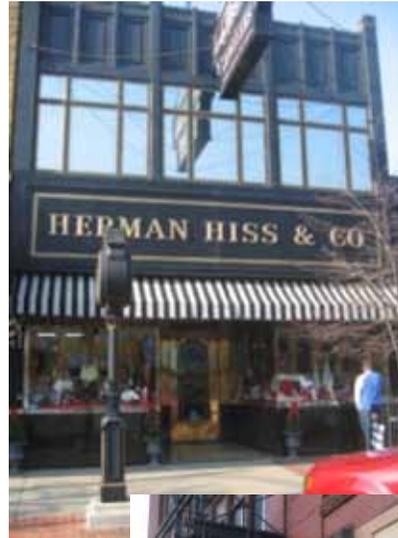
²Gibbs, Robert. *Principles of Urban Retail Planning and Development* John Wiley & Sons, Inc. (2012)

Windows and Doors

- Help advertise goods
- Reinforce building form
- Add interest for pedestrians
- Draw people in
- Sense of safety

Best Practices

- At least 60% of first-level storefronts facing the primary sidewalk should be transparent glass.
- Keep displays simple. Don't overcrowd.
- Keep the back of the display window open to allow the store's interior to be visible.
- Primary doors should face the sidewalk.
- Doors facing the street should be recessed whenever practical.



Working



Not Working

Signs

- Signs should be well-designed
- Signs should be properly scaled
- Signs should support continuity but encourage individuality

Best Practices

- Signs should be limited to 1 square-foot of signage for each linear foot of storefront.
- Lettering should be no higher than 10 inches.
- Internally illuminated signs should be prohibited.
- Design and materials should reflect the character of the building.

Working



Not Working



Waterfront Access

The new pathway along Wenonah Park is a great addition to the downtown. On just about any given day you can see people walking, running, or even fishing along the pathway. In addition, future plans call for the extension of the pathway down-river to the planned Uptown development. However, heading up-river, the pathway ends abruptly at Mechelan Drive, where riverfront property is privately-owned. Walkers and runners must use sidewalks along Water Street to eventually connect back to the pathway at First Street. The only public access to the riverfront is at the Third and Fourth Street road endings.



Recommendations

The charrette team suggests the city explore ways to connect the pathway along the river. This effort will require the city to include easements from several private property owners and build new and possible additional boardwalks.



Recommendations - Transportation Corridors

Please note that the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has jurisdiction over Jenny and Thomas and McKinley and 7th Streets and portions of Madison Street and South Washington Avenue. While MDOT was part of the charrette process and provided valuable input, MDOT did not have sufficient time for a full technical review and analysis of the alternatives presented. MDOT will be a valuable partner in future consideration and final approval of any changes to these roads.

Jenny and Thomas

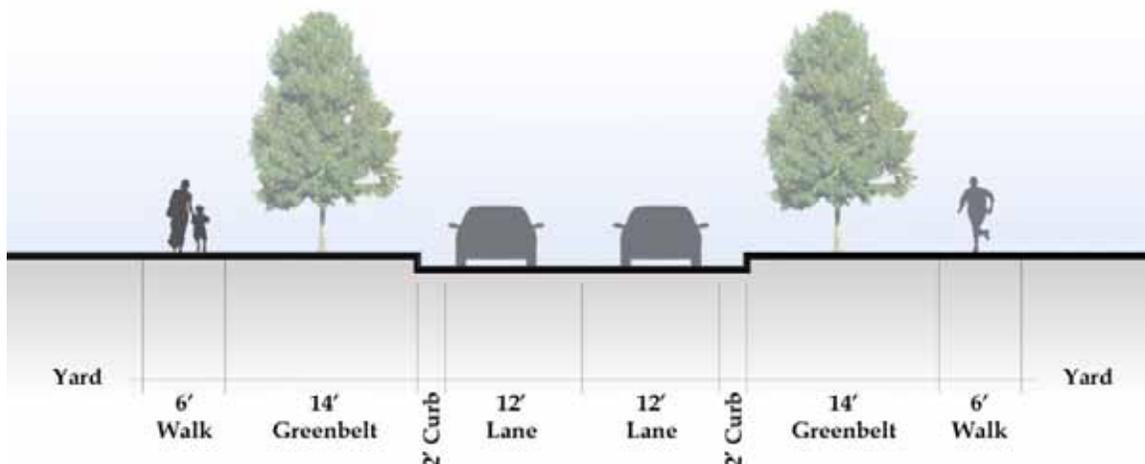
Jenny and Thomas Streets constitute the I-75 Business Route and are the primary exit and entryway into the Bay City community and the downtown. Each street in this one-way pair has three lanes of traffic and although the speed limit is 35 miles-per-hour, traffic moves at a fairly high rate of speed. The two streets effectively bisect the Midland Street Neighborhood. Although there are sidewalks on either side of the street, it is not very pedestrian-friendly. Additionally, there are no crosswalks along long stretches of the corridor. Homes along the corridor are in varying degrees of repair.



Throughout the Above PAR planning project and again at the charrette, Jenny and Thomas were frequently cited as “streets that need to be fixed.” After additional discussions with local officials and stakeholder groups, it was discovered that the two streets have been the subject of community ire and discussion for some time. In general, residents believe the two streets are an unattractive gateway into the community. Most cited the lack of maintenance and disrepair of homes along the corridor as the primary reason for concern.

Recommendation

After completing a basic analysis of the surrounding street patterns and land use, the capacity of the roadway, and the potential traffic impact of 500 new jobs at the Uptown development the charrette team believes the two roadways could benefit from a road diet, reducing traffic to two lanes. Working with the Michigan Department of Transportation, the charrette team concluded that 500 anticipated jobs would increase the volume of the streets but that it would still be within capacity. The road diet would work to reduce speeds and provide for a 14-foot vegetative buffer between the roadway and sidewalk. Future considerations also may include placing a bike lane on the street.



McKinley Avenue Roundabout

During the charrette process, the charrette team and the Michigan Department of Transportation examined how additional improvements along Seventh Street and McKinley (see page --) and the proposed roundabout at Center Avenue and Madison might help expedite traffic moving east through the city on M-25. After completing a basic analysis of the surrounding street patterns and the capacity of the roadway, the charrette team proposes a second roundabout could be placed at the intersection of McKinley Avenue and Madison Avenue.



Washington Avenue - South

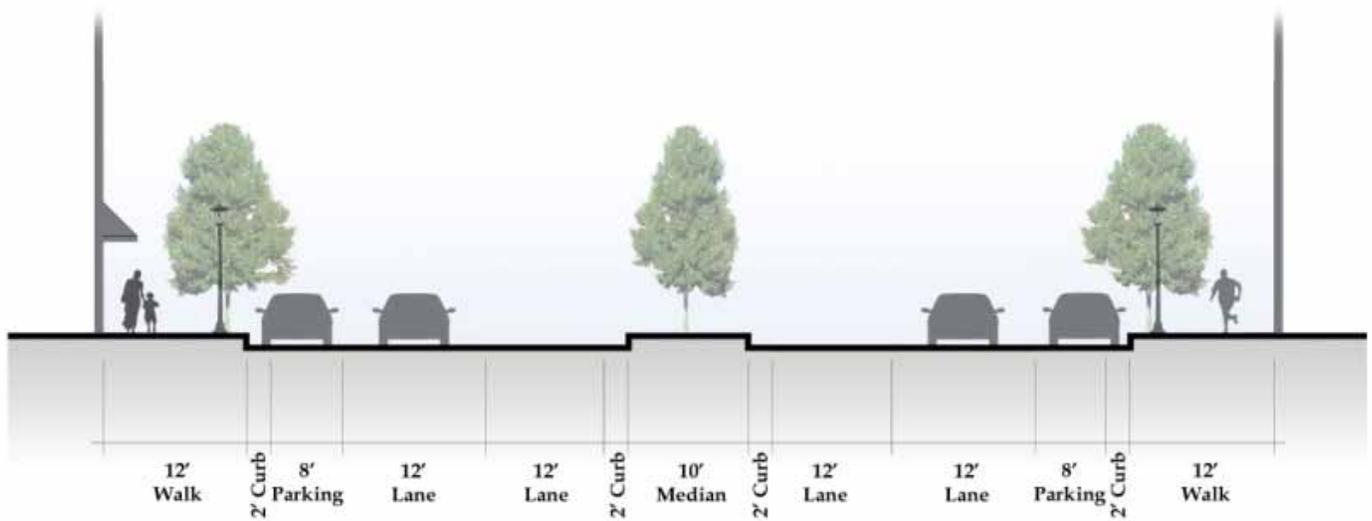
Washington Avenue is the primary north/south street into Bay City and the downtown after crossing the bridge. The north end of Washington (north of 6th Street) features slow speeds, angled parking, two traffic lanes, and surrounding building form that creates a very appealing and pedestrian-friendly atmosphere.

Washington (south of 6th Street) has a dramatically different feeling. This area of the street features four lanes of traffic with a continual left-turn lane and parallel parking. The surrounding building context is somewhat more suburban, with large buildings set back from the street and drive-through restaurant surface parking lots. Despite the row of parallel parking, the street does not have a very pedestrian-friendly atmosphere. At the same time there are a handful of buildings (YMCA, City Hall museum) that typically support pedestrian activity.



Recommendation

The charrette team suggests that the street could be reconfigured to include a median. The median would work to slow down traffic, provide for addition landscaping and safe refuge when crossing at key intersections.



Connecting Downtown with the planned Uptown Development

Located just south of downtown, and along the Saginaw River, the Uptown development will dramatically change the landscape and economic future of Bay City for years to come. This mixed-use development will include office buildings, residential living facilities, a hotel and conference center, retail shops and a marina. The 43-acre former industrial site was once the home of the Brownhoist Crane Factory, which built cranes for the construction of the Panama Canal.

Now under construction, the first phase of the development will include a 104,000 square-foot building that will be occupied by Dow Corning. In addition, the first phase will include new office buildings for McLaren Healthcare and Chemical Bank, new condominiums, and a handful of retail shops. The development will also include a pathway along the river that will connect to downtown and Wenonah Park. It is anticipated that future developments will bring more than 500 new employees into Bay City.



One of the biggest concerns expressed by local officials and charrette participants is how the new Uptown development will fit in and connect with downtown. The Uptown development and downtown are currently bisected by Seventh and McKinley Streets. Part of the I-75 Business Route, these two streets feature three lanes of busy one-way traffic. Businesses within the three blocks between Seventh and McKinley and the three blocks between McKinley and Ninth Street are mostly vacant or are struggling to remain occupied. In addition, there are several often empty surface parking lots scattered around these six blocks. These existing conditions make the six-block area one of the least pedestrian-friendly areas within the city. In addition, it does not provide for an attractive or welcoming gateway into the downtown.



Recommendations

Option One

Option One would focus redevelopment efforts within the three blocks between Seventh Street and McKinley Street and just south of McKinley Street, adjacent to the river. In this option, one-way traffic would remain on Seventh and McKinley but the traffic lanes would be reduced from three to two. Saginaw Street would be closed off to vehicles and feature a pedestrian promenade. The promenade could include a trolley line that would connect people from downtown to the Uptown development. The promenade would connect to a large greenspace that would be part of a new Visitors Center and mixed development. The promenade would also connect across Washington Avenue to a mixed-use development that would feature office and retail establishments on the first floor and a parking deck on upper levels.

The area south of McKinley could feature a new Maritime Center, mixed-use developments, and a new public marina with adjoining restaurants. The marina could be the new home of the Bay City Boat Line. The pathway would connect the Uptown development to the marina and then downtown Bay City. The charrette team also envisions a new transit center for this area.



Option Two

Option Two would also focus redevelopment efforts within the five blocks between Seventh Street and McKinley Street and just south of McKinley Street, adjacent to the river. In this option, one-way traffic would merge into a new two-way boulevard that would extend east to Madison Avenue. In this scenario, Saginaw Street would be closed to vehicles. This area would still feature a Visitors Center but focus redevelopment efforts in a traditional block pattern along the new boulevard.

The area south of McKinley would continue to feature a new Maritime Center, mixed-use developments, a new public marina, and a new transit center.





IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The desire for implementation strategies was one concern that participants echoed throughout the project. Residents didn't just want to talk about their dreams for their City; they wanted to make them a reality. The following pages briefly describe several state programs and funding tools that may be utilized to implement some of the recommendations and strategies. For the purpose of this document, these tools are organized by the state agency in which the program or tool originates. A more thorough description of each program and tool and contact information can be found on each agency's website.

MEDC Tools

Brownfield Redevelopment Authority – A city may create a Brownfield Redevelopment Authority to focus redevelopment in specific blighted areas, typically in the downtown. Selected from a predetermined list of eligible properties, the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority determines which financial tools or incentives could be used to help redevelop the specific redevelopment site in question. A recommendation for redevelopment is then sent to the governing body of the municipality which either approves or denies the plan. The Brownfield Redevelopment Authority can use TIF (tax increment financing) to fund specific redevelopment projects.

Business Improvement District/Principal Shopping District/Business Improvement Zone – A city may create a Business Improvement District (BID) or Principal Shopping District (PSD) to promote and stimulate economic development in specific areas within the community. A BID or PSD can employ a number of funding mechanisms to help address redevelopment by collecting revenues, levying a special assessment, and issuing bonds. BID's and PSD's can also promote and pay for cultural and economic activities and engage in other economic development activities.

Commercial Redevelopment Act allows a city to abate property taxes generated from new investment in commercial property for a period of up to 12 years.

Commercial Rehabilitation Act allows a city to abate property taxes generated from new investment for a period of up to 10 years. The commercial property is qualified if it includes a building or group of contiguous buildings of commercial property that is 15 years or older. The building or group of buildings' primary purpose must be to operate a commercial business enterprise or a multi-family residential use.

Community Development Block Grant (Program Community Development Initiatives) – MEDC administers the economic and community development portions of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Within that program, MEDC administers specific grants including:

- Blight Elimination Grants
- Facade Improvement Grants

- Downtown Infrastructure Grants
- Signature Building Acquisition Grants

Core Communities – Initiated to spur private redevelopment in urban areas, cities can seek the Core Communities designation, which provides access to three economic development tools, including: Brownfield Redevelopment Incentive, Neighborhood Enterprise Zones, and Obsolete Rehabilitation Exceptions.

Corridor Improvement Authority – Similar to a Downtown Development Authority, a city may establish a Corridor Improvement Authority to help fund and direct improvements in commercial corridors outside the primary downtown area. Once created, the Corridor Improvement Authority may hire a director, establish a TIF plan, levy special assessments, and issue revenue bonds.

Local Development Financing Act allows a city to utilize TIF dollars to fund public infrastructure improvements that help to promote economic growth and job creation.

Michigan Community Revitalization Program is designed to promote community revitalization that accelerates private investment in areas of historically declining values; contribute to Michigan’s reinvention; foster redevelopment of functionally obsolete or historic properties; reduce blight; and protect natural resources through grants, loans, or other tools.

Personal Property Tax Relief in Distresses Communities Act allows distressed communities to abate property taxes on new investments made by eligible businesses.

MDOT Tools

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is a competitive grant program that funds the development of non-motorized pathways, streetscapes, and historic preservation of transportation facilities that enhance Michigan’s intermodal transportation system and provide safe alternative transportation options.

Economic Development Fund provides financial assistance to local transportation projects that improve the network of highway services, improve accessibility to target industries, support private initiatives that retain jobs, and encourage economic development efforts that improve the health and safety of residents. There is a 20 percent local match requirement.

Safe Routes to School – The National Safe Routes to School Program dedicates funding to every state to help with infrastructure improvements and non-infrastructure activities to encourage and enable students to walk and bike to school. Funding may be used to develop and construct new bike-lanes, pathways and sidewalks. No local match is required for this program. However, infrastructure projects must be constructed within a 2-mile radius of an elementary or middle school.

DNR Tools

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) provides funding assistance for local outdoor and recreation needs, including trail development and acquisition. This assistance is directed at creating and improving outdoor recreational opportunities and providing protection to valuable natural resources. For the last several years, the MNRTF Board has listed “trails and greenways” as one of its top funding

priorities. Grants range from \$15,000 to \$500,000 with a required minimum local match of 25 percent. Last year, over \$23 million in grants were awarded to local jurisdictions.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provide grants to local units of government to acquire and develop land for outdoor recreation. A minimum 50 percent match on either acquisition or development projects is required from local governments. The DNR makes recommendations to the National Park Service, which grants final approval. Grant amounts range from \$30,000 to \$100,000.

Recreation Passport Grant Program provides grants to local units of governments to develop public recreation facilities. Although the program is focused on renovating and improving existing parks, it does fund the development of new parks. Grants range from \$7,500 to \$45,000 with a required minimum local match of 25 percent.

The following table outlines the key recommendations and items of interest for the Bay City Community. In an effort to assist in implementation, each item was given a responsibility label (see legend), identifying the agent most likely to carry out the directive. In many instances, multiple agents will be working to implement the recommendations and items of interest.

Recommendation & Items of Interest	Responsibility
Wenonah Park	PC, CC
Center Ave. Plaza	PC, CC
Center Ave. Street	PC, CC
Center Ave. Roundabout	PC, CC, SA
Infill and Density	PC, CC
Form (form and retail)	PC, CC
Waterfront Access (Pathway)	PC, CC, OLG
Jenny and Thomas	PC, CC, SA
McKinley Ave. Roundabout	PC, CC, SA
Washington Ave (South)	PC, CC, SA
Connecting Uptown to Downtown	PC,CC, SA, LBC

Responsibility Legend

- (PC) Planning Commission
- (CC) City Council
- (SA) State Agency (e.g., MDOT)
- (NGO) Non Gov. Organization
- (SD) School District
- (LBC) Local Business Community
- (OLG) Other Local Group

