BOOK 3

FOCUSED REDEVELOPMENT

MT. PLEASANT MASTER PLAN 2050

MT. PLEASANT 2050

UPDATED SEPTEMBER 22, 2025

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2020 Master Plan: McKenna; 2025 Plan Update: Progressive Companies

– SPECIAL THANKS –

The City of Mt. Pleasant offers a special thanks to all residents and participants who took time to provide feedback or attend the public meetings and events for the development of the Master Plan.

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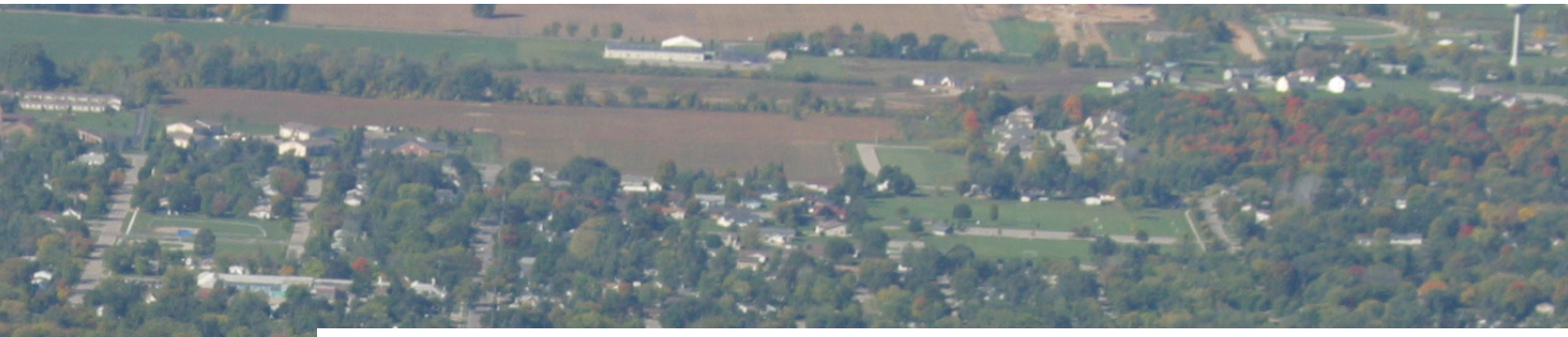
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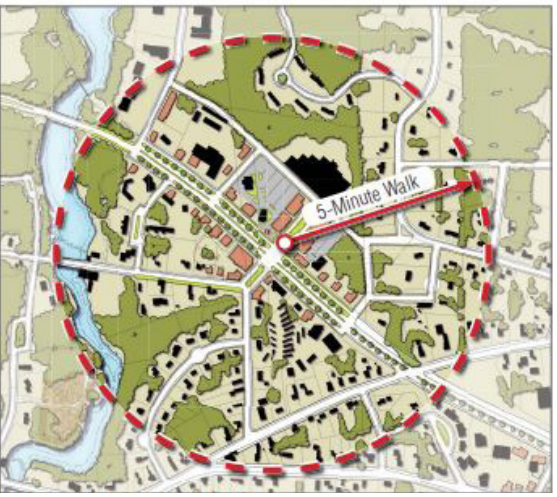




Introduction

Eight Square Miles

The City of Mt. Pleasant is eight square miles and the place hierarchy of the City is predominantly influenced by three districts: Central Michigan University, Downtown, and the Mission Street Corridor. These three locations provide the overarching structure for Citywide wayfinding, district identity, development, and neighborhood planning. Book 2 dealt with the mobility systems that influence people's ability to access the destinations throughout the City. Book 4 illustrates how the parks system is designed to weave throughout the City to provide all residents with access to recreation and natural beauty. This Book illustrates that the City is a network of places, some with Citywide influence, and some serving unique neighborhoods. Concept plans have been developed to illustrate preferred development patterns for realizing the vision of the 2050 Master Plan. Each of these plans can be used as a model for nodal development not illustrated herein, according to the Future Land Use Plan and Zoning Ordinance.



A Pedestrian Shed is a mixed-use district limited to a ¼ mile radius from its center to its edge, typically with neighborhood institutions located at its center and shopping along its edge (preferably shared between Pedestrian Sheds for retail viability). The concept of the Pedestrian Shed has been popular in the New Urbanism and can be originally traced to planner Clarence Perry's Neighborhood Unit concept, which he set forth in 1939.

Pedestrian Sheds

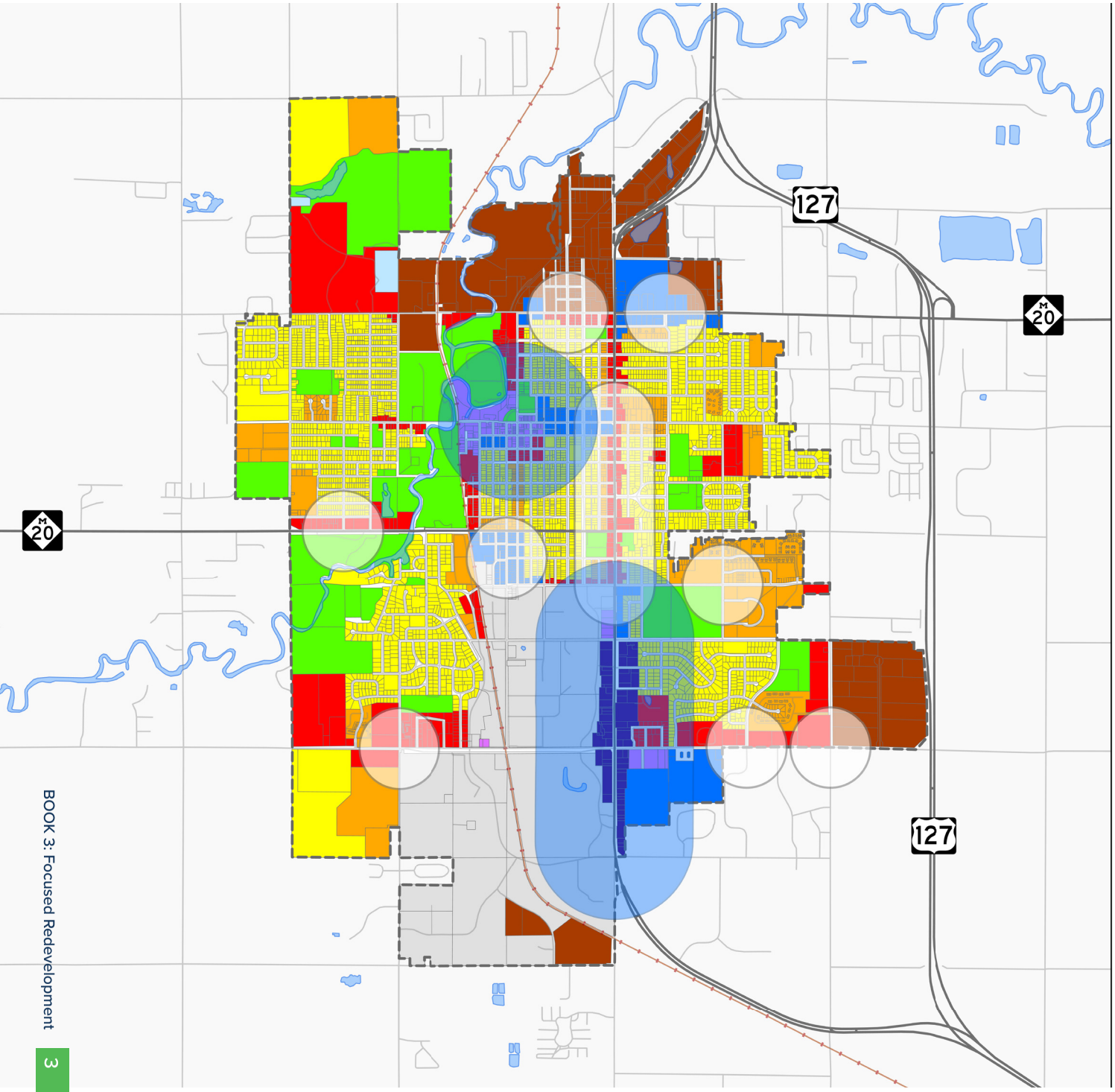
Many Central Michigan University students come from suburban areas and are paying a premium to "go away" to school (far from the commuter campuses back home), but due to lack of walkable housing choices, wind up living a commuter campus lifestyle in Mt. Pleasant. Students may want the opportunity to live in a walkable and bikeable neighborhood but find limited housing choices outside of apartment complexes.

As the zoning ordinance is implemented with design treatments that support urbanism, students will be encouraged to lead a walkable lifestyle in Mt. Pleasant. Mt. Pleasant 2050 envisions redevelopment of some existing districts within the City limits into walkable neighborhoods, or Pedestrian Sheds. In this model, students and others can reside closer to campus and within walking distance of employment and services, such as a dry cleaner, a barber shop, a coffee shop, or a small market, that meet every day needs.

The zoning needed to realize walkable neighborhoods is already in place in Mt. Pleasant. The City's zoning ordinance includes the mixed-use categories CD-4 General Urban and CD-5 Urban Center that each allow for the creation of new Pedestrian Sheds where they don't already exist. Furthermore, these categories encourage the construction of Missing-Middle Housing types, which are both affordable and conducive to walkable neighborhood development, such as duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, rowhouses, individual apartment buildings, bungalow courts, and mixed-use buildings that accommodate retail uses on the ground floor and residential above.

The vision for Mt. Pleasant can easily support the eleven (11) Pedestrian Sheds, which include the larger regional areas of downtown and Mission Street. Based on the location of the General Urban and Urban Center zones and the planned future land use, eight additional walkable neighborhood centers can be spread throughout the City. Given the size of individual neighborhood pedestrian sheds, with roughly ¼ mile radius from center, the size of the City, and the land planned and zoned for such development, these Pedestrian Shed areas should be prioritized for redevelopment that prioritizes walking and biking trips.

Eleven envisioned Pedestrian Sheds are illustrated as beige circles and overlaid upon a copy of the Mt. Pleasant Zoning Map on the following page.



Pedestrian Sheds

City of Mt. Pleasant, MI

LEGEND

- Quarter Mile Buffer
- Half Mile Buffer
- Residential
- Attached Residential
- Industrial
- Mixed Use Low
- Mixed Use Medium
- Mixed Use High
- Mixed Use Regional Corridor
- Parks/Public
- Campus
- Tribal Land

N

0 0.75 1.5 Miles

Data Source: Michigan Geographic Data Library, 2025. City of Mt. Pleasant, 2018. McKenna, 2018. Progressive Companies, 2024.

Mission Street

Mission in Motion - Introduction

In 2024, the City of Mt. Pleasant engaged the community and a consultant to create the Mission Street Improvement Plan. This plan implemented one of the objectives of the 2020 Master Plan by completing a detailed study of the Mission Street Corridor and recommending improvements to enhance pedestrian access and opportunities for investment. This section of the Master Plan summarizes results of the Mission Street Improvement Plan, which was the primary reason for the 2025 Master Plan Update. The Mission Street Improvement Plan, led by the City of Mt. Pleasant and a project Steering Committee, addresses long-standing challenges along the three-mile Mission Street Corridor, the primary north-south route connecting Central Michigan University and retail hubs to residential neighborhoods, schools, and the hospital. The Mission Street Full Technical Report is available with the Planning Department.

Although Mission Street has been the subject of discussion for decades, no significant changes have been made to its design or functionality. Past plans and studies, including MDOT's 2008 boulevard proposal, the 2012 non-motorized plan, and the 2020 Master Plan redesign, have informed this effort. The project team reviewed these past efforts and engaged stakeholders to develop a plan that balances safety, access, and redevelopment.

This plan envisions revitalizing Mission Street with roadway improvements, zoning updates, and strategic investments to reverse declining traffic volumes and rising commercial vacancies, creating a vibrant, thriving gateway into Mt. Pleasant. Developed in consultation with MDOT, the plan offers design solutions compatible with state standards, with detailed engineering to follow as land uses and traffic needs evolve.

Funding from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) Technical Assistance Match Grant provided critical support for the planning and design efforts for this plan. The Mission/Pickard DDA also contributed a 25% local match, demonstrating the community's commitment to creating a safer, more accessible, and investment-ready Mission Street.

Engagement Timeline

APRIL 2024

Walking Audit – Understanding of physical challenges to walking Mission Street

Steering Committee Meeting #1 – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Challenges in the Corridor

APRIL-MAY 2024

Community Survey #1 – 1,479 responses; Understanding of community's use and opinion of the corridor today, and vision for the future of Mission Street

JUNE 2024

State of the Corridor Presentation – Confirmation by the Steering Committee, Planning Commission, Mission/Pickard Downtown Development Authority, and City Commission of the current state of the corridor and the key themes to be addressed by the Improvement Plan

SEPTEMBER 2024

Steering Committee Meeting #2 – Review of Mission Street design options and redevelopment scenarios for key sites along the corridor

Community Events – Farmer's Market; Central Michigan University, and City Hall – Feedback on conceptual design solutions and redevelopment scenarios

OCTOBER 2024

Community Survey #2 – 499 responses; Feedback on conceptual design solutions and redevelopment scenarios

DECEMBER 2024

Steering Committee Meeting #3 – Review and approval of Mission Street Improvement Plan

JANUARY 2025

Mission in Motion – Incorporation into the 2025 Master Plan Update; approval received by the Mission/Pickard DDA

→ Future



Sidewalk interruption on Mission Street

State of the Corridor

During the first round of community engagement, focused on assessing the state of the Mission Street Corridor, the community's input was fairly consistent. There was a strong desire to have a corridor that is safer for all users, supports new investment, and reverses recent trends of decline. It was evident that the trend of reduced traffic volumes and the tendency of people to avoid Mission Street due to safety concerns needed to be reversed.

Community Survey #1

An online community survey was shared with the public during April and May of 2024. A total of 1,479 people responded to the survey, of whom 71% were Mt. Pleasant Residents. A summary of survey results is provided below, with full results in the Technical Report.

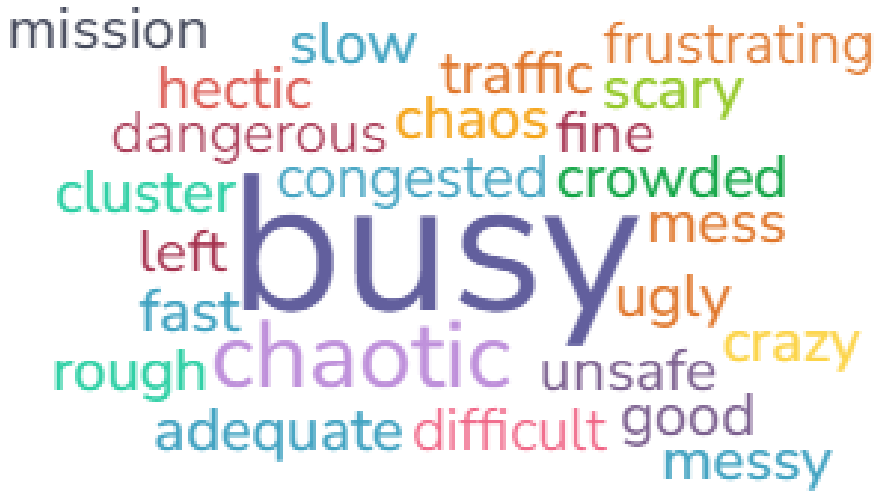
- 98% of people use a car on Mission Street. Of those, 22% also walk and 12% also use a bike or scooter.
- 21% and 22% of people respectively said they would like to walk or bike on Mission Street, but do not today. 61% of people said they prefer to only use their car.
- 49% of people are unsatisfied with the current state of Mission Street, compared to just 30% of people that are satisfied with its current state.

When asked to rate a series of potential improvements on a scale from "Very Important" to "Not Important" the improvements that were identified as most important were lighting and enhanced crosswalks.

The Community Vision

When asked to use one word to describe Mission Street today, the most common response was “Busy”. When asked to use one word to describe the desired future state of Mission Street, the most common response was “Safe”.

Mission Street Today



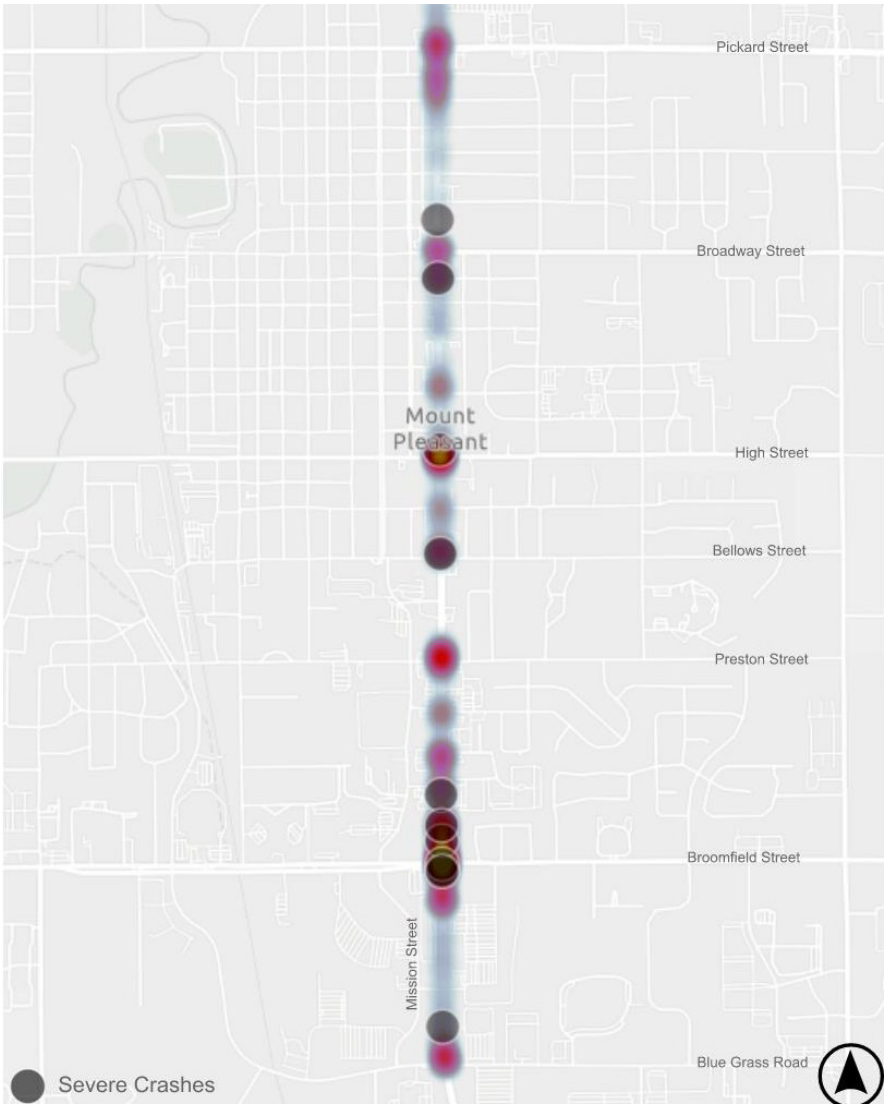
Future Vision for Mission Street



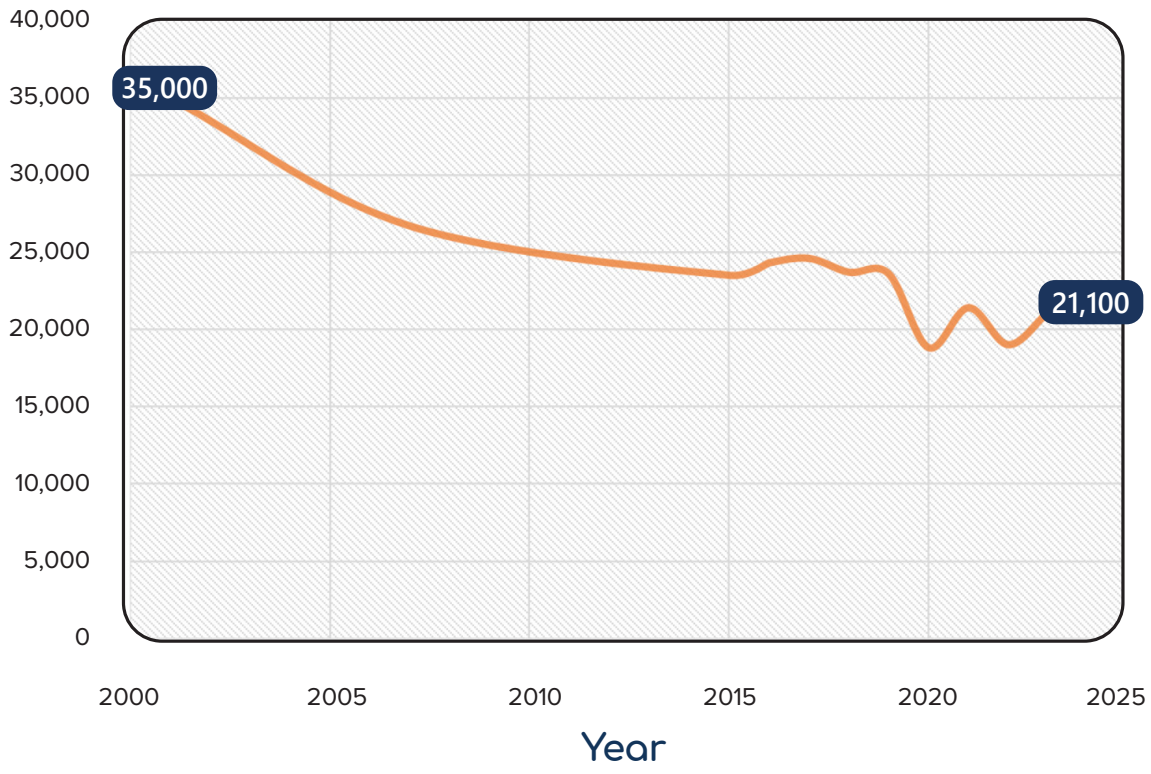
Corridor Crashes

Between 2019 and 2023, 997 crashes occurred along the Mission Street corridor between Corporate Drive and Blue Grass Road. Of these, 127 crashes resulted in an injury to one or more persons involved, with 11 crashes resulting in a severe, or incapacitating, injury. In addition, a fatality occurred along the corridor in January 2024 when a driver struck a pedestrian attempting to cross Mission Street between Broomfield Street and Stadium Drive. The pedestrian was approximately 600 feet, or about a three-minute walk, away from the nearest controlled and marked crossing location when they were struck.

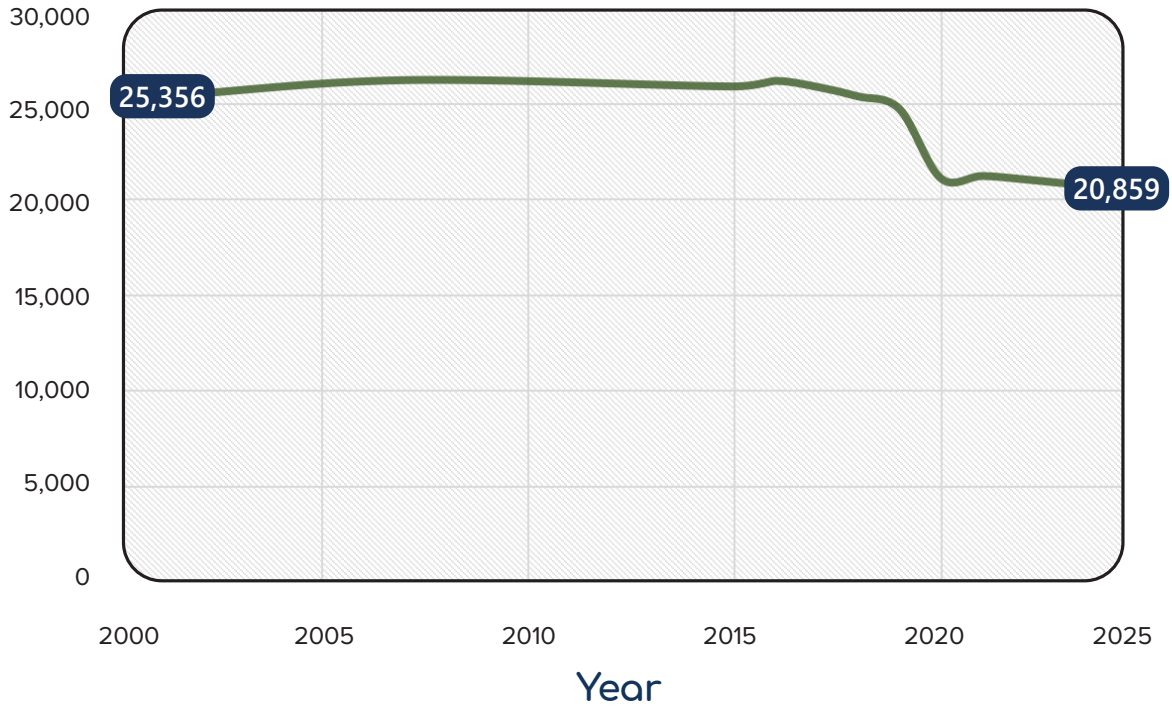
The frequency of adverse safety outcomes along Mission Street provides concrete evidence to support the community consensus that the corridor does not function as well as it should. The 'busy' and 'chaotic' nature of the existing corridor not only contributes to the occurrence of severe and fatal traffic crashes, but also disincentivizes community members from frequenting local businesses and shops along Mission Street. The data shared on page 9 displays that the reduction in the Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) does not coincide with population reduction, indicating that people are avoiding Mission for other reasons. Design interventions recommended along the corridor are not only intended to alleviate historical safety concerns, but also to reverse the downward trend of traffic and activity along Mission Street and provide a greater economic benefit to the Mount Pleasant community.



Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT)



Population of Mount Pleasant, MI





Mission Street Community Engagement Event

Project Themes

Following a comprehensive review of corridor characteristics, engagement efforts including community surveys, walk audits, and meetings with key stakeholders, project themes were developed to organize development of conceptual designs. These themes were then presented to the Steering Committee, City Commission, Planning Commission, and the Mission/Pickard Downtown Development Authority for their approval prior to moving forward with design.

1. **Increase Activity by Improving Safety and Efficiency:** Mission Street can become a vibrant, active corridor through improvements that increase traffic flow safety and efficiency and welcome all uses of the roadway.
2. **Improve Connections Between Important Destinations:** Ensure that people cannot just travel on Mission Street, but through and across the corridor to access businesses, educational institutions, parks, and residential communities.
3. **MDOT Collaboration:** Continued collaboration with MDOT is critical. To support innovative designs, MDOT requires clear communication of design intent and the Mt. Pleasant community's vision for the corridor.
4. **Balance Aspirations with Constraints:** Development of spaces around Mission Street must balance aspirations for placemaking and enhancements to quality of life with the corridor's existing character and history.
5. **Redevelopment Opportunities:** Redevelopment opportunities exist and there is strong desire to see new investment.
6. **Taking a Phased Approach:** Redevelopment will happen in phases, and the City has tools in place to support phased redevelopment.

Implementation Strategies

Implementing all recommended improvements at once is unrealistic. Change requires time, testing, and collaboration among community leaders, property owners, and residents. While some actions, like driveway reductions or zoning amendments, can be incremental, others, like the proposed Blue Grass Road roundabout, require significant planning. This section outlines strategies for phased implementation based on funding and community priorities.

1. Prioritize Roadway Redesign Locations: Focus initial redesigns on the Broomfield-to-Preston segment, where crashes are most frequent. Expand successful treatments to other areas as funding or development arises. The technical report provides more detail on potential design options.

2. Evaluate and Communicate Impacts of Designs to Users and Businesses: Consult businesses and landowners during final design to address concerns. Use temporary installations or demonstration projects to help the community experience proposed changes.

3. Align Scheduling and Resources with MDOT: Coordinate with MDOT's planned maintenance projects to integrate improvements and leverage funding resources.

4. Set Annual Goals: Collaborate with MDOT to identify feasible short-term goals, including:

- Align improvements with maintenance projects.
- Secure matching funds from grants and local sources.
- Prioritize access management by reducing hazardous driveways while maintaining access.

5. Maintain Commercial Vehicle Access: Balance delivery truck needs with improvements like center medians. Final designs must consider vehicle movements to minimize disruptions.

6. Maintain Emergency Vehicle Access: Incorporate features like mountable curbs and medians to maintain emergency access following roadway redesign.



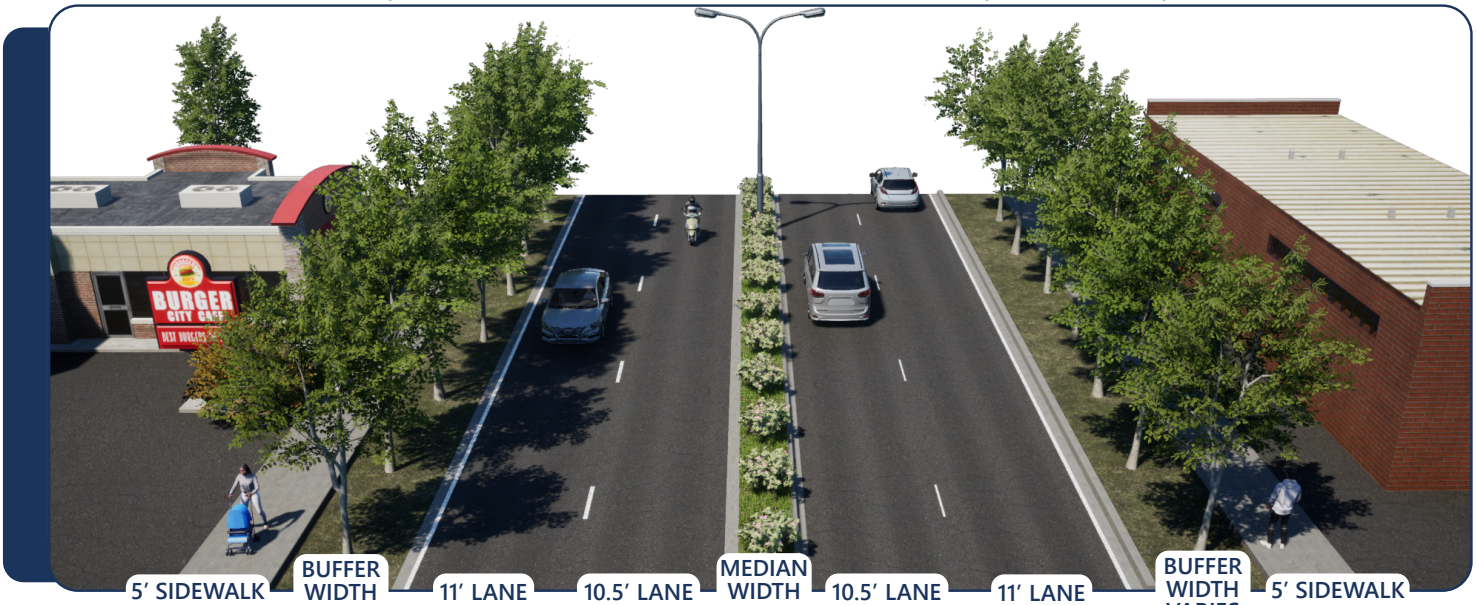
Example of Temporary Median Installation

Design Solutions

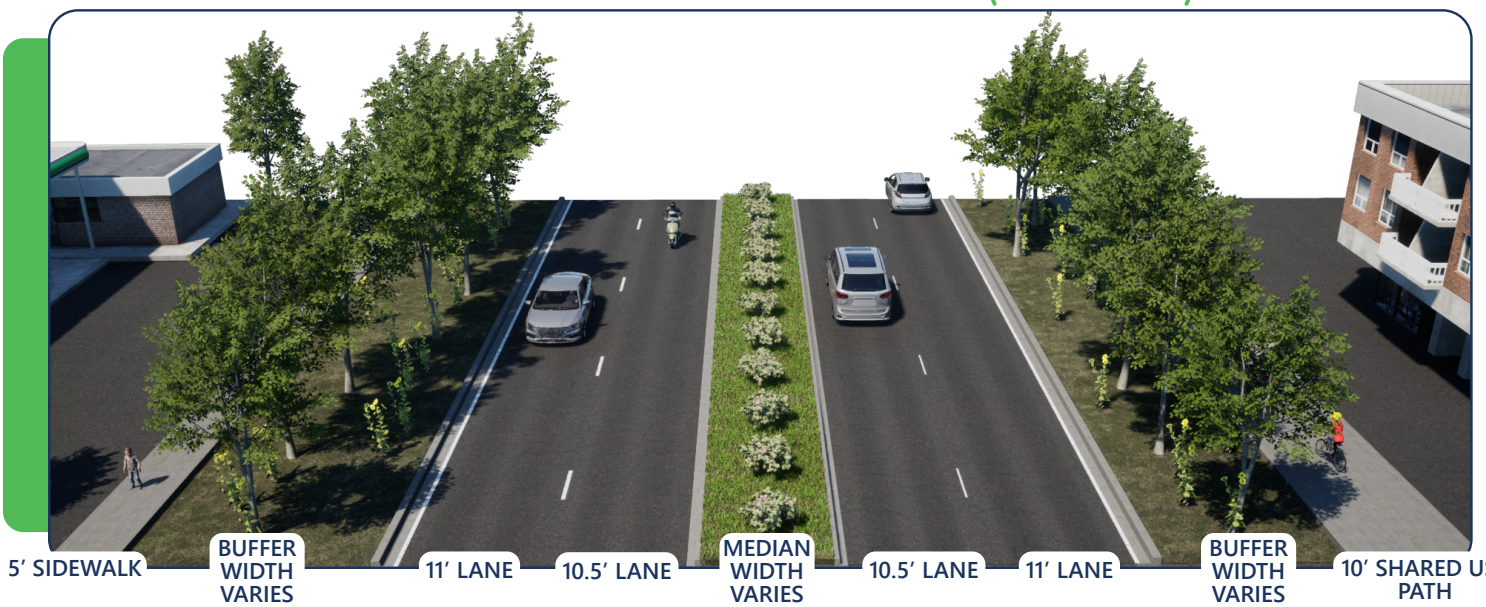
SOLUTION	RATIONALE	BENEFITS	CHALLENGES
CENTER MEDIANS	Reduce crashes by up to 23% and provide refuge islands	Fewer conflict points; pedestrian refuge; aesthetic improvements	Requires U-turn adjustments and property coordination
CROSS ACCESS	Smoothens and streamlines traffic flow	Fewer vehicle-pedestrian conflicts by consolidating driveways	Property access modifications require coordination
BLUE GRASS ROUNDABOUT	Gateway to the City, safer, smoother traffic flow than signal	Fewer severe crashes, improved traffic flow	Challenging for pedestrians/ bicyclists and visually impaired
PEDESTRIAN CROSSING TREATMENTS	Aligns crossings with refuge islands, reducing crashes	Safer and more comfortable crossings	Crossing multiple lanes without a signal is dangerous
SHARED-USE PATH	Serves all users, including cyclists and pedestrians	Reduces pedestrian-vehicle conflicts; improved access for non-motorized users	Utility relocation and pathway funding/maintenance challenges
LEFT TURN CALMING	Reduces pedestrian conflicts with turning vehicles	Slower turning speeds	Could be difficult to align turn lanes
IMPROVED LIGHTING	Enhances visibility for all users	Better visibility and safety	Coordination with utilities and implementation costs
LANDSCAPING IN MEDIANS/ BUFFER SPACES	Improves aesthetics and slows traffic	Better aesthetics, stormwater management, and reduced speeds	MDOT required offset distances from roadway; funding for long-term maintenance
SIGNAL MODIFICATIONS	Reduces pedestrian-vehicle conflict at signals	Safer crossings at intersections	Increases delays for through traffic
REDUCED LANE WIDTH	Promotes slower speeds while maintaining safety	Traffic calming at minimal cost	Curb relocation may be needed during reconstruction

Proposed Cross Sections

Corporate Drive to Preston Street (~80' ROW)



Preston Street to Blue Grass Road (~120' ROW)



Proposed Improvements



Center Medians

Center medians improve safety for all road users by limiting left-turn movements and providing safe refuge for those crossing. Implementing a center median has been proven to reduce all vehicle crashes by up to 45% and reduce severe and fatal crashes by up to 35%.

U-Turns

U-turns would be allowed at uncontrolled intersections;



Pedestrian Refuge Islands

Pedestrian refuge islands provide pedestrians and bicyclists with a safe space to wait within the roadway, while allowing crossers to evaluate only one direction of traffic at a time. Refuge islands have been proven to reduce pedestrian crashes by up to 35%.



Left Turn Calming

Left turn calming treatments promote slower and sharper left turn movements, minimizing conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians. Implementation has been proven to improve yield rates and reduce crashes.

Remove Right Turn Lane

Remove the existing right-turn lane from Preston Street to southbound Mission Street to provide space for bicycle lanes or striped shoulders. Propose adding signage to direct bicyclists to and from Campus Drive as the desired north-south bicycle route between Preston Street and Bellows Street.

Olympic Drive

PROPOSED NEIGHBORHOOD GREENWAY

High Street

Gaylord Street

Bellows Street

Preston Street

CROSS SECTION SEGMENT: Corporate Drive to Preston Street (~80' ROW)

Proposed Improvements

Drive

Appian Way



Mid-Block Crossing Treatments

Implement mid-block crossing treatments at Fairfield Drive to facilitate pedestrian crossings between Central Michigan University and housing developments to the east.



Mountable Curb and Median

Mountable curb, flush with the roadway, can be implemented along the center median to allow turnaround movements for emergency vehicles. Locations may be adjusted following coordination with emergency response staff.



Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacons

Rapid rectangular flashing beacons (RRFBs) can be installed at marked and signed pedestrian crosswalks to increase driver awareness. RRFBs have been proven to reduce pedestrian crashes by up to 50%.



Shared-Use Path

Provide a 10' shared-use path along the west side of Mission Street between Preston Street and Blue Grass Road; dedicated space for --motorized users, including pedestrians and bicyclists. Path width allows for separation between faster users, such as bicyclists or those using scooters or other devices, and slower users such as pedestrians and those with mobility impairments.

Remove Right Turn Lane

Remove existing right turn lane from southbound Mission Street to Broomfield Street. This shortens this distance for pedestrians to cross and slows traffic through the intersection.

Preston Street

Broomfield Street

CROSS SECTION SEGMENT: Preston Street to Blue Grass Road (~120' ROW)

Policy Solutions

Amend the Master Plan: A new future land use designation of "Regional Mixed Use Corridor" should be established that aligns with the proposed new zoning district.

Create a new CD-6 zoning district: This new zoning designation should apply to the Mission Street Corridor and balance goals for placemaking and pedestrian accessibility with the area's heavy commercial nature.

Create new "Commercial Corridor" Thoroughfare Standards: A new thoroughfare standard should be created in the city's zoning code that is consistent with the cross-section designs proposed by the Mission Street Improvement Project.

Place greater emphasis on North Mission Street: Emphasizing redevelopment opportunities, corridor enhancements, and opportunities to enhance connections along this portion of the corridor in the City's master plan has the potential to enhance quality of life for adjacent neighborhoods and create opportunities for local businesses.

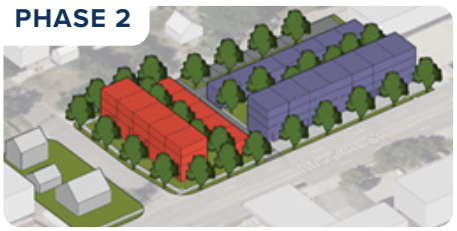
Amend the CD-4 District to provide greater redevelopment potential: The CD-4 district provides reasonable regulations for development, but there are minor amendments that would enhance opportunities for redevelopment consistent with community character.

Identify and develop priority redevelopment sites: Encourage phased redevelopment on parcels with strong potential to illustrate opportunities for the creation of high-quality places. Two sites identified during the Mission Street Improvement Plan process are under-utilized space at the Central Commons Mall and vacant parcels to the North and South of the intersection of Cherry Street and Mission Street.

Expand programs to encourage reinvestment by property owners: The Mission/Pickard DDA has established matching grant programs to encourage commercial property owners in the corridor to enhance their building facades and close unnecessary driveways. These programs should continue to be promoted and expanded wherever possible.

Zoning Approvals: Evaluate zoning requirements for landscaping, parking lot standards, and access management to create incentives/requirements for building owners to bring improvements into compliance with the code upon redevelopment.









Pickard Street

Neighborhood Node Example

The area immediately to the north and east of the intersection of West Pickard Avenue and North Main Street was identified, at the outset of this planning process, as a location warranting a new, focused vision. Existing there is an interconnected network of streets that lends itself to a walkable, mixed-use center with buildings and trees lining street frontages. Upon further consideration, however, the stakeholders agreed that the area, in its current state, serves a critical function within the City as a small-scale industrial hub. It was furthermore agreed that it could continue to accommodate entrepreneurs, living and working in a dynamic creative environment.

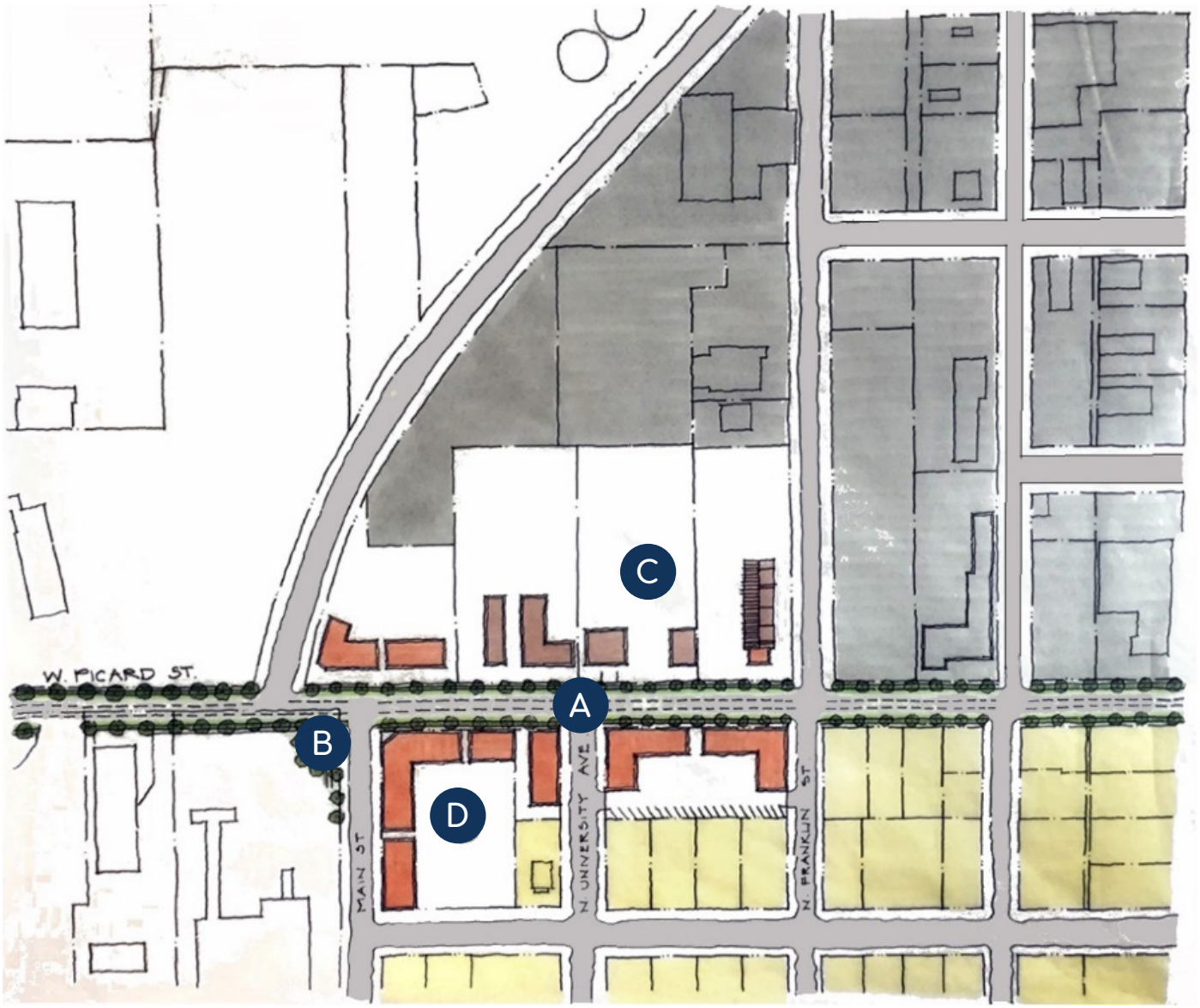


ILLUSTRATION KEY

- A Improve aesthetics and safety on Pickard with landscaping and reconfiguration of the cross-section
- B Improve the gateway feature to downtown at Main Street
- C Recognize what is working in the existing industrial district and continue to support entrepreneurship and creation of new job opportunities in this district
- D Add neighborhood supportive uses at Main and Pickard as a transition to downtown and the residential neighborhood to the south

PICKARD STREET SITE ANALYSIS

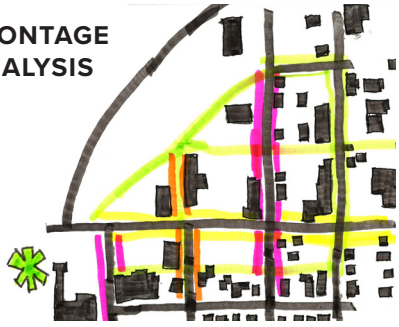
FIGURE GROUND



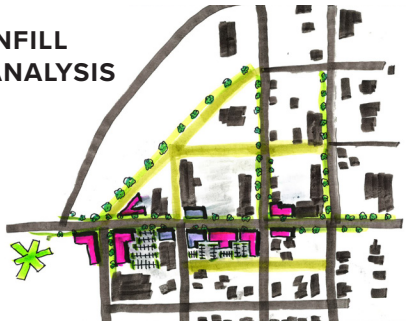
BLOCK ANALYSIS



FRONTAGE ANALYSIS



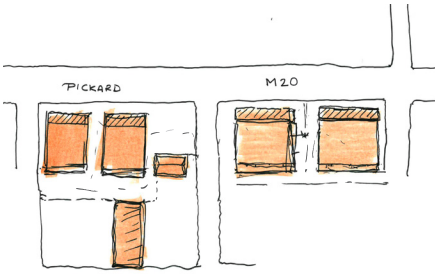
INFILL ANALYSIS



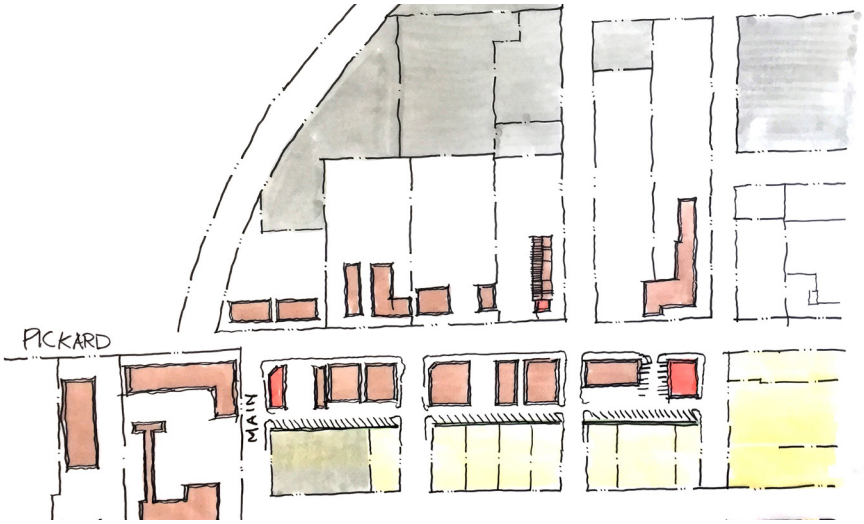
Residents of this area could conduct business in a wide variety of start-up enterprises, from recording and dance studios to construction, automotive, metalwork, and high-tech industries. The enforcement of residential and commercial building codes and safety regulations, and the addition of new measures to secure various outdoor hazardous activities, would be necessary to achieve this vision. However, the addition of use and/or building form regulations here might prove to be prohibitive in this capacity.

Therefore, the vision for this area has been instead confined to the frontages of West Pickard Avenue and North Main Street with a three-fold objective:

1. Provide convenient services to entrepreneurs, customers, and residents within the immediate area;
2. Line West Pickard Avenue and North Main Street with continuous building frontages, to screen parking and small-scale industrial activities taking place within these sites; and
3. Provide a gateway to downtown Mt. Pleasant.







Charrette illustrations for Pickard Street



Downtown

Town Center Vision Plan

The downtown Mt. Pleasant block defined by Mosher Street, North Main Street, and West Broadway Street (and its immediate surroundings) was the topic that received the most attention during the initial public engagement process during the development of the 2020 Master Plan. The main goals for the redesign of the existing Town Center parking lot and open space were followed as the City secured State and Federal funding to complete the project in 2024. However, the public had also expressed a desire to strengthen connections between Downtown, City Hall, and Island Park, therefore the drawing on the following page presents an option for extending Oak Street and creating a new vehicular entrance to Island Park from Broadway.



ILLUSTRATION KEY

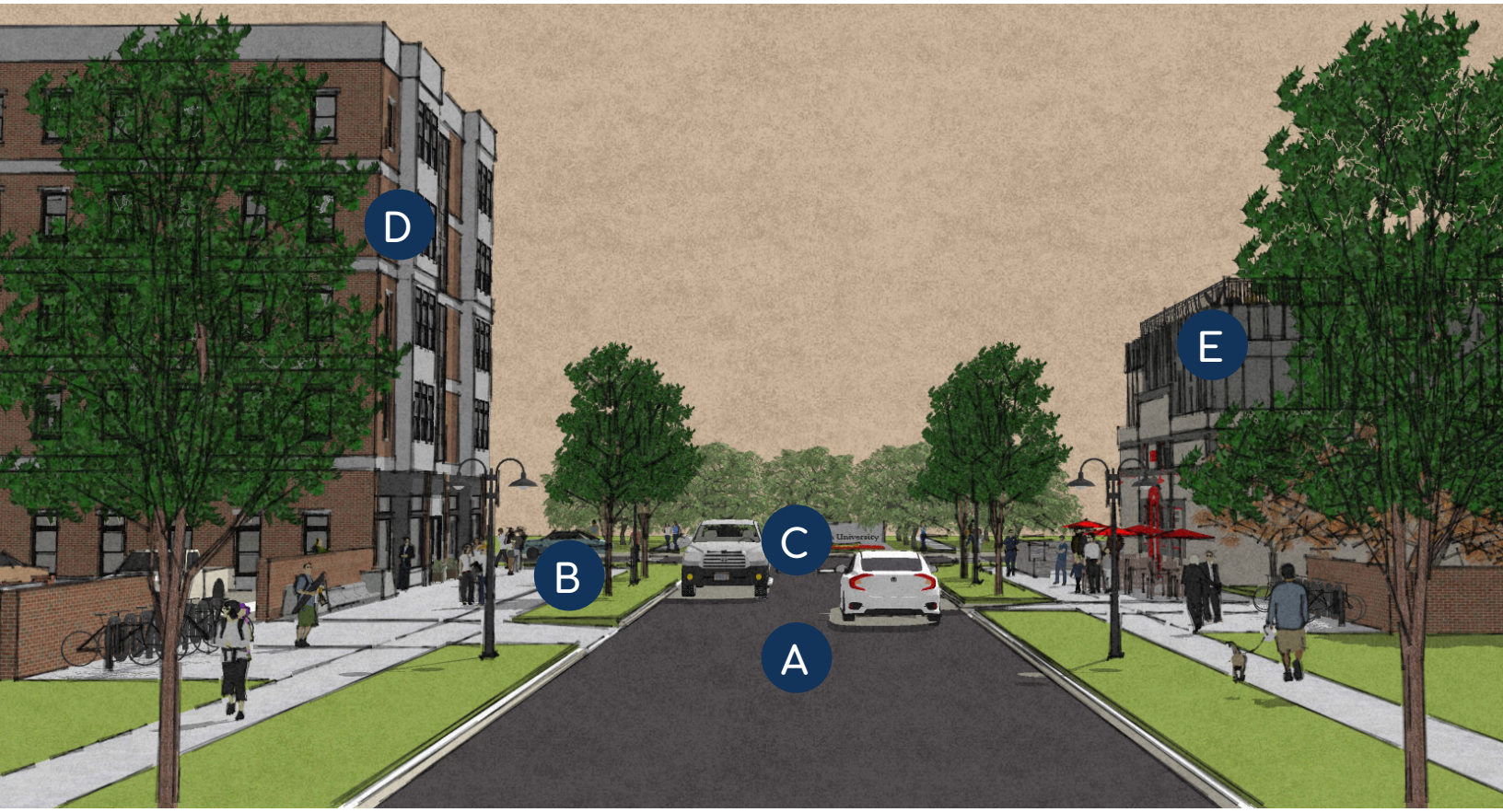
- A Existing Town Center Public Space
- B Existing Flexible Event Space
- C Existing curb-less design for Universal Accessibility
- D Existing Public Restroom
- E Strengthen the connection between Town Center and Existing River Walk
- F Create access between Downtown and Island Park such as through an extension of South Oak Street
- G Keep the existing pedestrian bridge



Town and Gown

The University Avenue Connection

South University Avenue historically served as the primary physical connection between downtown Mt. Pleasant and Central Michigan University's main campus to its south. Additionally, the University's administration building, Warriner Hall, terminates the South University Avenue vista on the south. The 2020 Master Plan flagged the need of a kind of terminus for South University looking north toward Downtown, such as traffic circle with a monument or art piece. In 2021 the city added a traffic island at such intersection to meet this goal and city staff manufactured a large Adirondack yellow chair the year after, which now sits in the middle of the island and attracts tourism. However, while the north connection has been strengthen, South University Avenue still lacks a stronger connection where it ends at East Bellows Street.



Accordingly, this intersection at South University Avenue and East Bellows Street presents an opportunity to strengthen dialogue between downtown Mt. Pleasant and CMU campus. Hence,the two sites that abut such intersection are envisioned as priority redevelopment sites, which could help achieve the future land use goal of a middle-intensity, mixed-use area that is walkable and pedestrian friendly.

ILLUSTRATION KEY

- A South University Avenue
- B East Bellows Street
- C Existing CMU signage
- D Conceptual Mixed-Use Development
- E Conceptual Existing Building Retrofit



Economic Development Action Plan

City of Mt. Pleasant, Michigan

As a component of the six best practice strategies required for state certification as a Redevelopment Ready Community, this update to the City's 2008 Economic Development Action Plan includes a brief description of the City's history; demographic information; regional context; relationship to other plans and studies; and finally, priority economic development-related goals and strategies for achieving them.

Introduction

MT. PLEASANT'S REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND GOVERNMENTAL CONTEXT

Mt. Pleasant is located near the center of Isabella County in the middle of Michigan's Lower Peninsula, and serves as the County Seat. The Chippewa River runs through the community, which also sits at the crossroads of US-127 and M-20. The City is home to Central Michigan University (CMU) and consists of traditional neighborhoods, student residential areas, and an historic downtown. The City and Isabella County governments enjoy a strong and supportive relationship across a broad spectrum of areas, including projects which contribute to and strengthen the tax base of all jurisdictions.

The communities of Midland, Big Rapids, Clare, Ithaca, Alma, and St. Johns are all within 40 miles of Mt. Pleasant, which is within two and a half hours' driving time from all major Michigan market areas, including Detroit, Traverse City, Grand Rapids, Saginaw, and Lansing. Other major metropolitan areas such as Chicago, Cleveland, and Indianapolis are within 350 miles. Important regional partners include the 14 county Eastern Michigan Council of Governments (EMCOG) and Middle Michigan Development Corporation (MMDC), which is the only two-county economic development organization in the state, covering Isabella and Clare counties. In addition, the City works closely with the Charter Township of Union on a number of jointly beneficial initiatives. The Township boundaries completely surround the City and as a result, a close working relationship helps to avoid duplication of effort in many instances by both units of government.

The key demographics specific to the City of Mt. Pleasant are provided in Book 5 of this Plan.

Opportunities, Strategies, and Challenges

The City of Mt. Pleasant adopted its last Economic Development Action Plan in April, 2008. At that time, Michigan, along with the rest of the country, was entering what later became known as The Great Recession. In response, the City adopted a strategy of investing, rather than cutting, its way out of the downturn in the economy and based its plan on being more proactive to the needs of business. In addition the City Commission subsequently set aside approximately $1.3 million in an Economic Development Fund (now the Economic Initiative Fund) for the purpose of investing in projects that bring an economic return to the City. The 2008 Economic Development Action Plan contained eight areas of focus:

- A short term focus on economic development efforts along the Mission Street commercial corridor;
- Becoming opportunistic across the City regarding economic development;
- Communicating that the City is open for business in regard to good development projects;
- Being flexible and nimble to address economic development opportunities;
- Encouraging redevelopment and rehabilitation of existing sites served by existing infrastructure;
- Continuing to support the City's role as the region's commerce and population center;
- Increasing the tax base with new positive growth and redevelopment;
- Enhancing the City's image as a good place to live and work.

While much has changed in the intervening years, Mt. Pleasant has fared better than many communities its size. However, it still faces challenges in a number of areas. These include attracting investment in new development; attracting new and retaining existing retailers; encouraging affordable housing options, including addressing the market for "Missing Middle" housing types; reducing the number of rental housing units in favor of increasing owner-occupied housing types; and other challenges that will be addressed in the Opportunities and Strategies below.

Mt. Pleasant's 2050 Master Plan has resulted in a community-wide effort to help shape and define the vision and direction of future development, including the City's economic development efforts. The Economic Development Action Plan, as an incorporated component of the Master Plan, reflects the revised economic development priorities identified by community stakeholders during the planning process.

Building on the 2008 Economic Development Action Plan, this 2019 Economic Development plan identifies three broad areas of Opportunity as outlined below. Each Opportunity includes a number of Strategies to further its accomplishment. Following this discussion, local and regional plans are identified which are related to and support the identified Opportunities and their related Strategies. Finally, a matrix outlines responsibilities for implementing the Strategies outlined in this plan.

Following the identification of Opportunities and Strategies, the plan includes a number of Challenges faced by Mt. Pleasant, as identified by stakeholders and staff. Many of these are addressed by the Strategies identified in the sections below. Most of the identified Challenges do not lend themselves to quick fixes and therefore require a longer-term commitment to the strategies identified to address them.

OPPORTUNITY: EMPHASIZE AND ENCOURAGE REDEVELOPMENT AND REHABILITATION OF EXISTING SPACES AND STRUCTURES

Strategies:

» Continue to invest in capital infrastructure projects:
  - Mission Street connector streets
  - Commercial district alley maintenance
  - Downtown parking lots
  - Broadway Street reconstruction west of Main
  - Streetscape improvements

» Focus efforts to reduce the vacant and under-utilized properties downtown

» Invest in downtown:
  - Façade improvement assistance including façade rendering grants and no-interest improvement loans
  - Fire safety program to encourage investment in more upper-story residential units
  - Address downtown infrastructure issues
  - Promote the use of Redevelopment Liquor Licenses where appropriate

» Recognize the importance of CMU to the economy of Mt. Pleasant and continue to explore opportunities to work together on challenges and opportunities for both:
  - Engage with faculty, staff, and students to increase the awareness of opportunities to participate in community activities and invest in the success of the community:
  - Emphasize student engagement in the 2030 U. S. Census in order to include the student population in Mt. Pleasant's Census count

» Recognize challenges facing the retail sector and explore resources to assist business owners with addressing these challenges:
  - Partner with property owners to cost share with infrastructure costs, parking, etc.
  - Work with developers to explore available alternatives which help control development costs in order to keep lease rates competitive for the Mt. Pleasant market

» Prioritize infill over greenfield development opportunities and address potential barriers that might exist

» Promote the City's identified Priority Development sites on a national, state, and local level in conjunction with Middle Michigan Development Corporation (MMDC)

» Implement the Mission Street Corridor study, as addressed in the Master Plan, which will guide future design considerations that prioritize the corridor's importance as a business corridor and not just a transportation corridor

» Engage all stakeholders when planning development strategies

» Continue to offer assistance when appropriate to close gaps in project financing, including the use of Brownfield TIF for qualified projects

» Promote walkability and bikeability in new project designs

» >Promote the changing demographics in Mt Pleasant, which is attracting more long-term residents, especially within the "family-formation" age group (30-45 year olds).

OPPORTUNITY: FOCUS EFFORTS TO PROMOTE JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND ATTRACT AND RETAIN TALENT

Strategies:

» Partner with the CMU Research Corporation (CMU-RC) to promote entrepreneurship opportunities

» Partner with MMDC and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) on commercial and manufacturing retention calls

- Focus efforts to assist existing businesses with expansion plans or to retain them in the City

» Partner with MMDC to promote the City's industrial parks to site selectors and developers to encourage development in the parks

» Encourage development projects that contribute to a diversified housing stock

» Work with MMDC and MichiganWorks! staff to attract and train qualified candidates for available positions

- Use available programs to help employers with their existing staff training needs
- Identify the types of businesses that would be the best fit for the community and would have market support; target these opportunities for attraction strategies

» Pursue opportunities for additional beautification efforts which enhance quality of life experiences in the community

- Events in the parks
- Encourage public transportation options
- Pursue opportunities to activate public spaces

» Promote the opportunities available for continuing education

- CMU
- Mid-Michigan College
- High school vocational education
- Advanced certificate training institutions
- Trade schools
- Job fairs
- Provide student internship opportunities

» Engage with service groups

» Promote community attributes important to those seeking employment opportunities

- Mt. Pleasant as a safe community
- Quality school system
- Recreational opportunities
- Cultural diversity
- Lifelong learning opportunities

» Highlight the advantages of the City opting-in to allow medical marihuana opportunities under state and local laws and licensing requirements

OPPORTUNITY: MARKET AND PROMOTE THE CITY AS A REGIONAL COMMERCE CENTER

Strategies:

» Partner with the Public Relations Coordinator to communicate the City's story
  - Use the City's social media accounts to promote the City to internal and external stakeholders and visitors
  - Implement an area branding strategy with partner stakeholder participation that will identify Mt. Pleasant's unique characteristics and set the community apart from others
  - Explore other opportunities to engage the public to make them more aware of the community and what the City has to offer

» Encourage staff involvement in state and regional boards and organizations to "tell our story" to others

» City staff will promote the City when engagement opportunities present themselves
  - Includes residents and non-residents alike

CHALLENGES: FACING MT. PLEASANT

» The retail sector is changing, including competition from online sales, and changing consumer spending habits and preferences. This creates a challenge to retain existing establishments or attract new retail tenants as properties are built or become vacant, especially in auto-oriented "big box" or "strip retail" developments.

» The CMU student population is present in the community for only 9 months of the year, placing a strain on businesses that rely on this market segment to remain open for the full year.

» Graduating CMU students are a potential untapped resource; efforts should be made to provide appropriate job opportunities and a supportive entrepreneurial environment to retain them in the community.

» Annual fluctuations in on-campus CMU student enrollment affect planning for sales and inventory estimates for area businesses.
  - Closely monitor student enrollment numbers to assess impacts on the local economy

» Adequate, consistent marketing efforts of Mt. Pleasant in general, and downtown specifically, are lacking

» There is a disconnect between MDOT's objectives and the City's and businesses' vision for the Mission Street Corridor
  - MDOT views Mission primarily as a transportation corridor
  - City/business community views Mission as a business corridor which greatly impacts the taxable value of the City

» Adequate parking downtown is perceived to be a problem.

» Mt. Pleasant contains a high number of renter-occupied housing units targeted to students and not enough housing options to young professionals, families and seniors
  - Rental rates in Mt. Pleasant are high compared to other communities. Isabella County shows a 28.3% increase in average multiple-family rent from 2023 to 2024, the highest documented in the State where Counties saw rent increases of 1-3% over the same analysis period. *(Chen, Lerman, and Rabinowitz, How Much Are Rents Going Up?, The Wsahington Post, August 1, 2024)*
  - Desire to increase the number of owner-occupied housing units
  - Desire for more diversified and affordable housing choices
  - Desire to convert student housing to senior housing and workforce housing
  - There is a demonstrated unmet demand for "Missing Middle" or "professional-oriented" housing

» Differential which exists between the City and township tax rates (the township is substantially lower)

Consistency with Local and Regional Plans

It is important to be sensitive to the goals and objectives of other local and regional plans in order to avoid duplicating activities and to coordinate efforts. There are a number of such documents related to this Economic Development Action Plan which are summarized below.

REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)

The regional CEDS document is designed to provide baseline information, development strategies, and projects for stakeholders throughout the 14 county federally designated economic development region. Requirements of the CEDS document are proscribed by the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration. The current plan was adopted in 2016.

RELATED ELEMENTS:

- Grow the regional economy through business retention, recruitment, and marketing efforts that support long-term economic resiliency and sustainability
- Leverage the Region's institutions of higher education, major corporations, medical complexes, and innovation assets
- Create a strong pipeline of talent to support the region's current and future employers
- Make strategic infrastructure investments that improve the Region's economic competitiveness and resiliency
- Strengthen the quality of place and reduce the vulnerabilities to create an attractive environment for existing and future residents

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

By its Charter, the City is required to prepare a five year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) each year. Projects must appear in the CIP in order to be budgeted for in the current and subsequent years. To be included in the CIP, a project must have a useful life of at least ten years, and cost in excess of $5,000. Information from the strategies and priorities in the approved Master Plan, the City Commission-approved vision statement, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the TIFA districts' development plans, and input from various other Boards and Commissions is used to create the CIP.

RELATED ELEMENTS:

- Downtown Improvement Program
- Downtown streetscape replacements
- Downtown alley reconstruction and parking lot renovations
- Airport equipment upgrades and ramp & runway 9/27 rehabilitation
- Chippewa River Bank Protection Program
- Mid-Michigan/GKB pathway connections
- Existing park facilities improvements
- Playground equipment & universal access
- Water Treatment Plant upgrades

CITY COMMISSION GOALS

Each year the City Commission and management staff hold a retreat to discuss upcoming goals for the coming year, as well as to review, reaffirm, and/or modify previously identified goals. The below goals are those most recently identified by the City Commission related to economic development strategies.

RELATED ELEMENTS:

- Stable funding from a diverse tax base
- Where shopping, dining, and entertainment options thrive
- Economic opportunities for businesses offering competitive wages are readily available
- Well maintained, livable, and desirable neighborhoods
- Focus on downtown success and growth by increasing the number of people living and visiting downtown
- Offer diversified owner-occupied housing options

DEPARTMENTAL STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

As part of the annual budget process, each City department must prepare a document detailing their major goals, over and above the normal expectations of the job, for the coming year. Each goal must detail implementation strategies, partners necessary for accomplishing the goal, stakeholders which need to be consulted, and expected completion dates. Progress on each goal is reported on twice during the year. Above are representative economic development-related goals from across several City departments.

RELATED ELEMENTS:

- Update the Economic Development Action Plan on a regular basis
- Expand the City's tax base and increase the number of residents downtown
- Maximize infill development opportunities
- Continue to disseminate the results of the Target Market Analysis for housing to developers
- Analyze the cost/benefits of downtown events
- Create and fund a downtown fire safety program to allow more conversions of upper story spaces to residential units
- Maintain certification as a Redevelopment Ready Community

MT. PLEASANT 2050

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