

Desktop Analysis Report of

Existing Neighborhood Plans and Master Plan of Policies: Cross-sectional Priorities and Themes

G7 Neighborhood Framework Plan
Phase 3 Deliverable, February 2020



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Introduction

All previous neighborhood plans are rich in detail, information, and ideas for how to improve the project area, both on a strategic and hands-on level, too rich to include everything here. The plans and the expertise they contain will be useful resources throughout the planning process, as we explore different design and policy solutions and dive into specific themes, challenges, and opportunities.

In the following, we will keep to highlighting what each plan contributed in particular – what we noticed, what influenced our thinking and perception, and how insights and recommendations could influence the planning process going forward.

Along with an analysis of each of the previous plans and visions, we will summarize cross-sectional priorities and themes and compare these to the inputs we got at the first community meeting in December 2019.

Considering what we learned from the plans and the community meeting, we present our early impression of the project area so far, along with some tentative recommendations. These will need to be further developed and tested in dialogue with the community, and some might be discarded as we gain more knowledge and inputs.





Previous Neighborhood Plans and Visions

In this section, we summarize and analyze the previous plans and visions that have been created through collaborative efforts by residents, local businesses, organizations, stakeholders, researchers, and nonprofits, as well as the Master Plan of Policies – what visions, ideas and strategies do they present, and how can these insights inform the future planning process?

The Time is Now: A New Vision for Greater Regent Park (2014)

This vision was created by a group of graduate students at the University of Michigan Urban Planning Department together with lifeBUILDERS – a faith-based nonprofit organization. It aims to turn around the negative development in Regent Park during recent years.

This vision has four goals:

- Develop Assets to build community cohesion and deter crime
- Address Blight to create a safe and maintained neighborhood
- Protect Investments to create a stable neighborhood with a healthy mix of owners and renters
- Engage Residents to unite the people of Greater Regent Park under a common vision of a safe neighborhood, committed to the future.

It further formulates strategies for how to achieve the four goals. The vision encourages implementing the most urgent strategies through a phasing process that covers two types of zones, Preserve and Transform. The most highly prioritized zone is Preserve, which includes the strongest areas of the neighborhood (in terms of occupancy, homeownership, and conditions) towards the north (see map). The most urgent strategies in the Preserve Zone are:

- Advocate for the demolition of vacant, open, and dangerous homes
- Address vacant lots to contain and eliminate blight and opportunities for crime
- Prevent tax and mortgage foreclosures to keep residents in their homes
- Rehabilitate homes to create attractive housing
- Form block clubs to create a network of residents that can address neighborhood problems.

The most urgent strategies in the Transform Zone are:

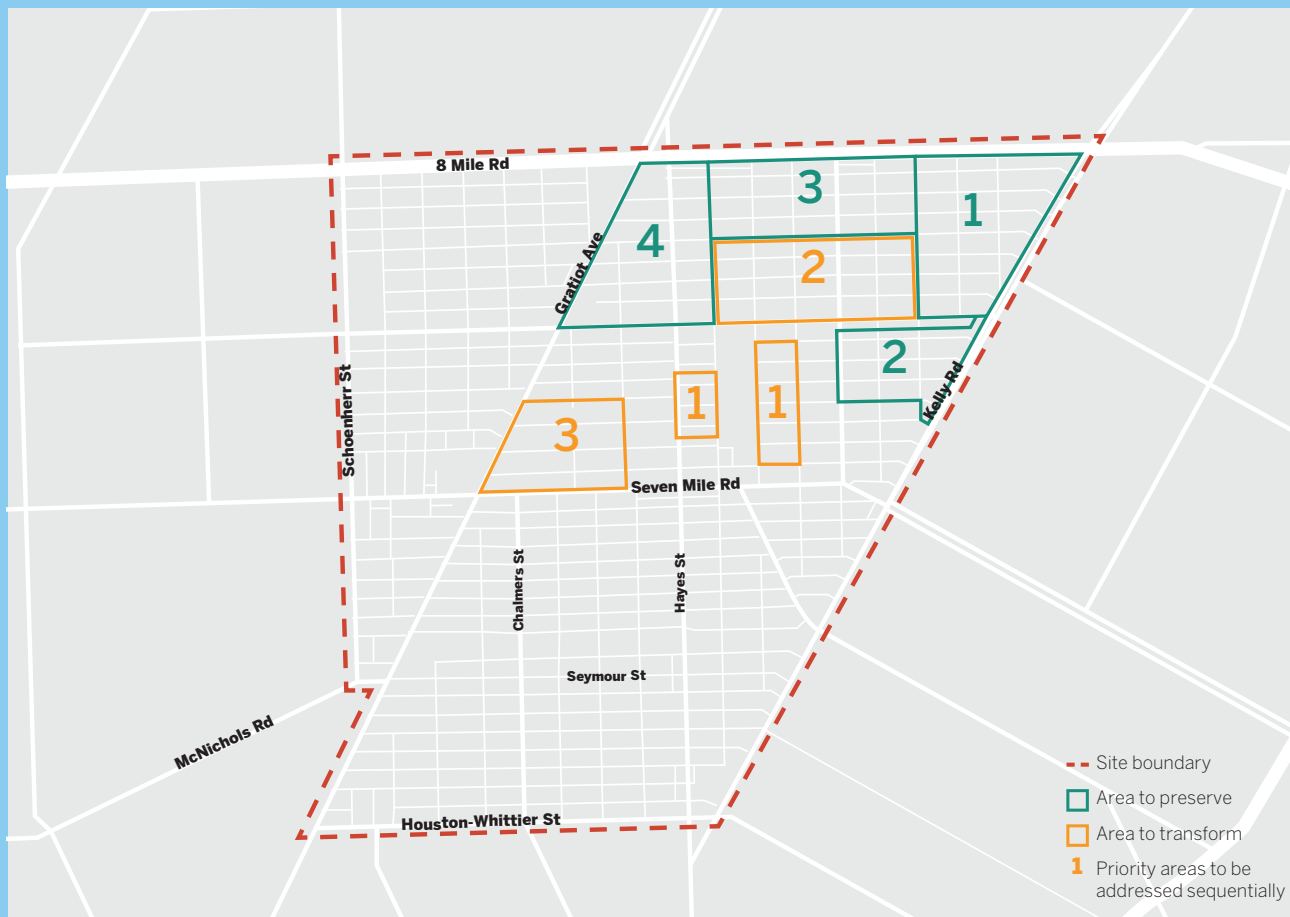
- Advocate for the demolition of vacant, open, and dangerous homes.
- Address vacant lots to eliminate blight and opportunities for crime.

The Time is Now

A New Vision for Greater Regent Park



What We Noticed



BUILD ON EXISTING ASSETS

The vision is very much structured around community assets and how to support and strengthen these. It identifies the businesses at Seven Mile Road and Gratiot Avenue as a commercial hub, the many religious organizations in the area, like St. Jude's Catholic Church, Resurrection Lutheran Church, and LifeBUILDERS, as important community builders, and the large number of stable housing blocks as the Greater Regent Park area's greatest asset.

Connecting and building on these local resources are presented as the key to a positive local development. Empowering the local community, and connecting residents with public, private, and nonprofit partners and resources will enable residents to transform their neighborhoods.

BUILD A STRONGER COMMUNITY

Resident engagement in the area is low. Fostering commitment to the future of the area among residents is crucial, e.g. by connecting residents with associations and institutions.

SECURING BASIC NEEDS IS KEY

Safe and affordable housing strengthen a neighborhood and will often be a prerequisite for residents to have the energy to invest themselves in the community. Thus, the vision highlights the importance of securing basic community needs in order to succeed with the overall development of the area. Helping renters to become owners, preventing tax and mortgage foreclosures, and holding landlords accountable are key strategies.

PROTECT EXISTING ASSETS

With its priority plan/phased approach, the vision underlines the importance of focusing efforts in order to protect existing assets. The Northern area with the most stable housing blocks is first priority, but the vision recommends further focusing efforts to most effectively improve the local quality of life. Among others, the vision recommends focusing efforts near areas used by youth, such as schools, near community assets such as parks and community centers, concentrating efforts on a small number of blocks, and targeting highly visible areas.

Osborn: A Neighborhood of Opportunity. Quality of Life Plan 2015-2020.

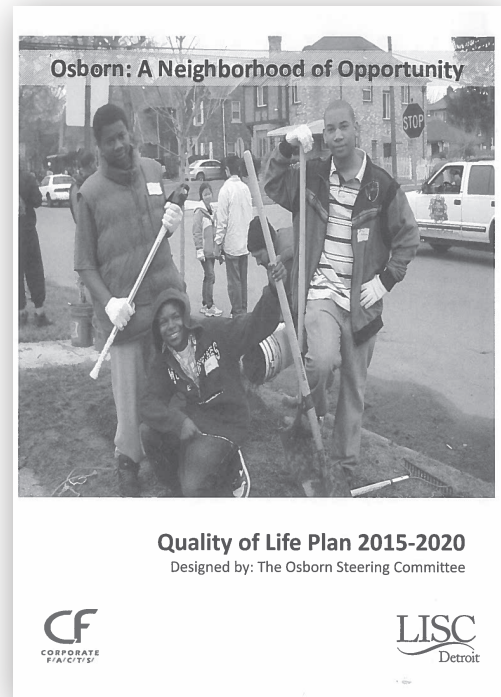
Community-based organizations formed the Osborn Steering Committee and created the Quality of Life Plan for the community of Osborn. Although the area has strong community organizations and neighborhood associations, it is also challenged by blight and crime. The neighborhood Mohican Regent is part of the project area.

The plan aims to improve the local quality of life by focusing on four themes, with an emphasis on physical improvements:

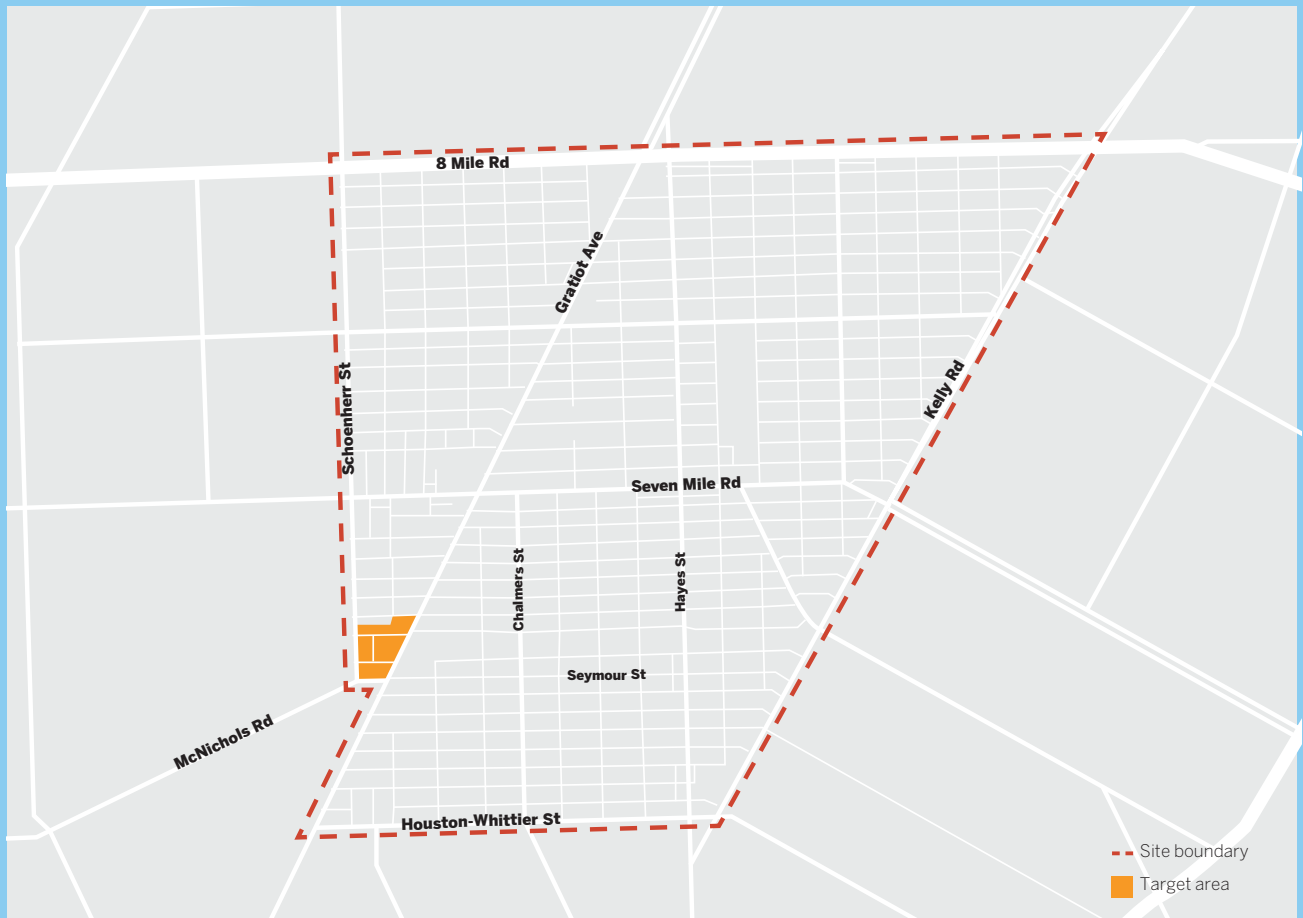
- Physical Improvement: Focusing on rehabilitating properties and educating people to do so.
- Family Stability: Focusing on employment, homelessness, and seniors.
- Crime and Safety: Increase law enforcement, empowering community through education and providing tools and resources to decrease criminal activity.
- Beautification and Creative Place-making: Beautifying open green spaces along corridors.

Based on demographic and housing data, industry best practice research, resident feedback, existing plans, community networks, and current strategies in the area, the Steering Committee selected the 8 Special Streets and Live in Osborn area as target areas. It is within these target areas that the Quality of Life Plan's strategies are piloted.

Only the Live in Osborn area overlaps with the G7 project area. This target area has significant levels of vacancy and low homeownership rates (14 owner-occupied properties out of 83 parcels). Based on these statistics, the Quality of Life Plan suggests that the most realistic and productive strategy for this neighborhood may be to improve multi-family opportunities and single-family rental stock.



What We Noticed



SOCIAL 'WRAP-AROUND' STRATEGIES

The plan underlines that so-called wrap-around strategies are integral to the success of housing and commercial development. Wrap-around strategies are efforts to increase family stability, decrease crime, and empower residents to address blight removal and neighborhood beautification.

FOCUS EFFORTS IN SELECT AREAS

The Osborn Quality of Life Plan has created a physical improvement plan and selected two target areas where to implement the plan. They base their decision on best practice research revealing that physical improvements are most effective when implemented in a 12-15 block area. Piloting strategies in target areas will make efforts more effective, while also allowing the community to test and learn from efforts, before replicating them throughout the neighborhood.

Restore NED (Northeast Detroit) Community Vision (2017)

The Restore NED Community Vision contains both a vision and set of recommendations for the development of Northeast Detroit, resulting from a comprehensive participatory planning process. Created by local residents and stakeholders in collaboration with CDAD and RESTORE NED (a collaboration of three nonprofit organizations, two block clubs and one business association), acting as a local convener.

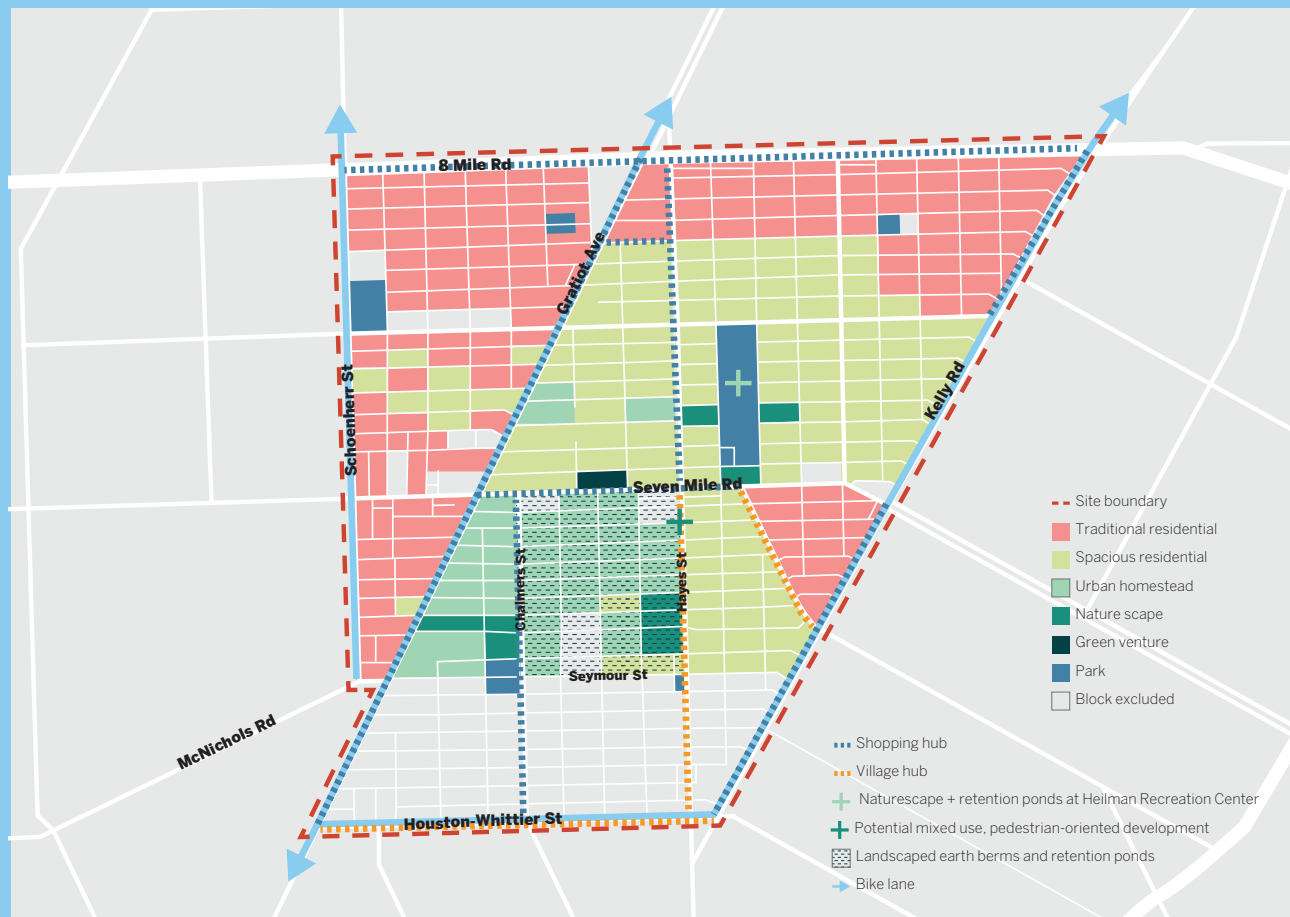
The vision includes land use plans and maps for residential areas and commercial corridors, and a Resident Action Plan, called the NED RAP, describing seven main focus areas:

1. Actions to keep areas that are currently densely populated stable and strong
2. Actions to ensure that areas with less vacancy remain residential but transformed into areas with larger lots, allowing for multiple uses
3. Actions to transform areas with the highest vacancy into productive open space with land uses such as urban farming, alternative energy generation and manicured recreational spaces
4. Actions to reconfigure commercial corridors to ensure that there are areas with vibrant shopping and services while others are designed as safe travelling thoroughfares to more active areas. Other commercial corridors will act as areas to buffer residential areas from industry and truck traffic
5. Actions to improve safety and security in the district
6. Actions to increase employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in the district
7. Actions to increase collaboration across the district through district-wide engagement

The vision's coverage area is divided into 8 zones. Of these, zone 2 (8 Mile Road to Seymour/6 Mile and Gratiot to Kelly Road) and zone 5 (8 Mile Road to 6 Mile (McNichols) and Hoover to Gratiot) overlap with the G7 project area.



What We Noticed



RESTORE NED LAND USE PLAN

The Community Vision contains two maps of the entire planning area; one with current conditions, and one with future directions. The maps indicate that a large part of the G7 project area – the middle and southern part – should be transformed into 'Spacious Residential' areas. This land use typology describes the following way in CDAD's Strategic Framework Neighborhood Typology: "[...] these sectors are low density with many vacant lots, unoccupied buildings and homes. One block may include a few homes or low-density apartment buildings. [...] homes will feature very large side lots and back yards. Even though the population is less dense, residents organize to prevent crime, maintain vacant lots, create community gardens and improve the parking lot or playground around the local

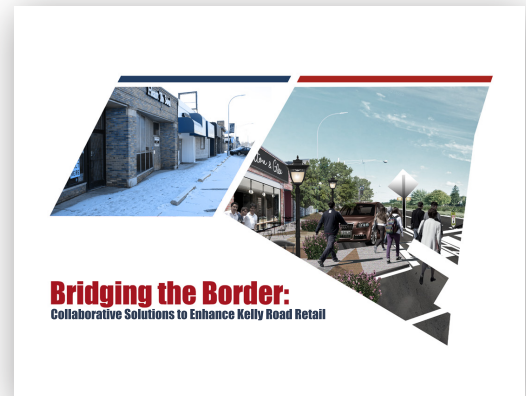
school. Residents are provided a multiplicity of needed social services to help them gain employment, improve their basic skills, resolve family challenges, and gain access to better quality shopping at the Shopping Hubs. This unique category suggests that these neighborhoods will evolve over time into a "Naturescape" or "Urban Homestead" sector. Residents are provided information and support to help them make choices on which other neighborhoods to move to, when appropriate." In other words, stabilizing these spacious residential areas does not only entail dealing with blighted structures – it also calls for strategies for how to change these areas into less urban and more natural areas with time.

Bridging the Border: Collaborative Solutions to Enhance Kelly Road Retail (2018)

The report is created by a team of eight graduate students from the University of Michigan Urban and Regional Planning Program on the initiative of the City of Harper Woods and LifeBUILDERS, a nonprofit organization in Greater Regent Park. It identifies strategies to enhance retail and economic vitality along Kelly Road, a former vibrant retail and residential corridor suffering from disinvestment as a result of years of population and income decline.

The analysis and recommendations are divided into three main topic areas:

- Retail and Economic Development (by targeting specific businesses, developing a new and distinct brand for the corridor, organizing collaborations between businesses, promoting entrepreneurial growth and economic opportunity)
- Built Environment and Transportation (improving streetscape, medians, and public spaces)
- Neighborhoods and Quality of Life (by initiating cross-jurisdictional housing strategies, community-building events, connecting residents to existing resources, and enhancing the safety infrastructure)



What We Noticed

RESTAURANTS, COFFEE SHOPS, FARM STANDS, AND POP-UP TENTS

The report proposes some interesting approaches to dealing with lack of retail selection on Kelly Road. The team recommends targeting family-oriented restaurants, community-based coffee shops, and temporary farm stands. They highlight that coffee shops and restaurants with outdoor seating can also meet the demand for more community spaces. They also suggest exploring the possibility of client-led community coffee shops that can act as vital community meeting places, meeting two key needs in the community. The team mentions Narrow Way Café and Detroit Sip as two examples in the Detroit area. Local nonprofit organizations such as LifeBUILDERS could partner with the Ford Resource and Engagement Center in Heilmann Park to work with entrepreneurs to develop such coffee shops.

In terms of strategy, the team recommends using pop-up tents/shops to test different business ideas in vacant commercial spaces as a short-term strategy. For a medium-term strategy (3-5 years), they suggest attracting restaurant businesses to utilize existing infrastructure, specifically at the former Royal Grill Diner (19840 Kelly Road) and Milt's Gourmet Bar-b-que (19143 Kelly Road). These are destinations that residents have fond memories of, and since these vacant spaces may likely already contain kitchen infrastructure, they will be more affordable for prospective business owners to start using. For a long-term strategy, the team recommends developing strategies to attract more and a wider selection of businesses to the area.

HOLISTIC APPROACH

The team observes that securing affordable housing is an important aspect of creating stable neighborhoods and thereby building the foundation for healthy neighborhood businesses and shops.

Understanding how efforts may affect and sustain other project area goals is a key foundation for determining how to prioritize initiatives, and create an effective phase plan.

CONCENTRATE SERVICES AND COMMUNITY SPACES IN THE SAME AREA

The team observes that residents generally express dissatisfaction with the lack of public spaces, greenery, and attractive places to spend time for adults and children along Kelly Road and in the project area in general. They propose that new pocket parks, developed by community groups, along Kelly Road could support commercial activity. Considering the relative low population density, it is important to consider how community meeting places should be placed in order to create synergy rather than dispersal.

RESOURCEFUL NEIGHBORING AREAS

The project area has stable and resourceful neighboring areas. This should be seen as an asset. However, the team's research reveals that the neighboring Harper Woods area's residents have negative opinions of the project area – particularly in terms of safety and crime. To benefit from and succeed with collaborative initiatives that span the project area boundaries, it is important to create good co-operative relations with surrounding neighborhoods.

FOCUS EFFORTS

The group observes that many business owners are struggling with several common challenges, such as littering and blight. Rather than dealing with issues individually or waiting for funds to deal with all issues at once, businesses should work together to select appropriate, low-cost responses that they can set in motion immediately.

This approach could be applied to the project area neighborhoods as well, where targeting low-hanging fruit could have a huge effect on neighborhood appearance, optimism, and pride.

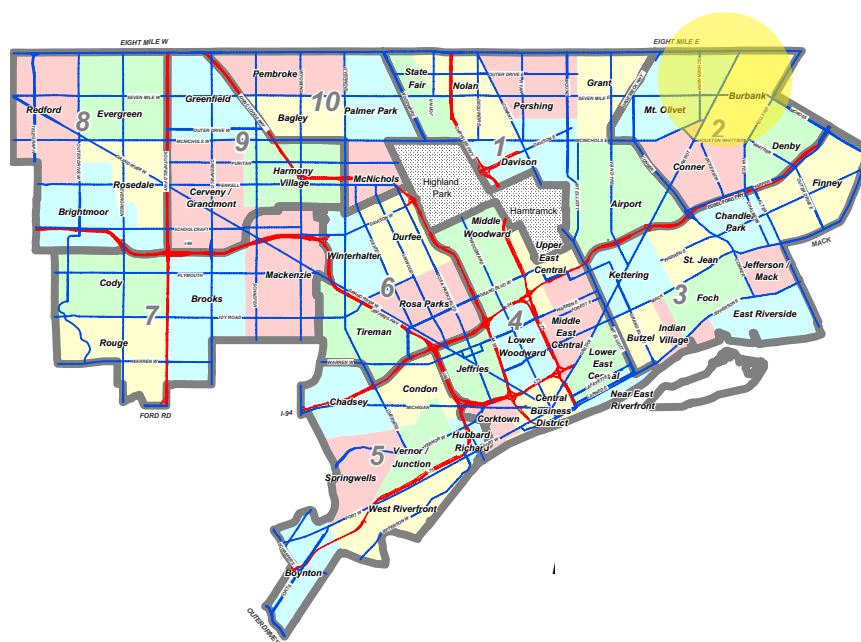
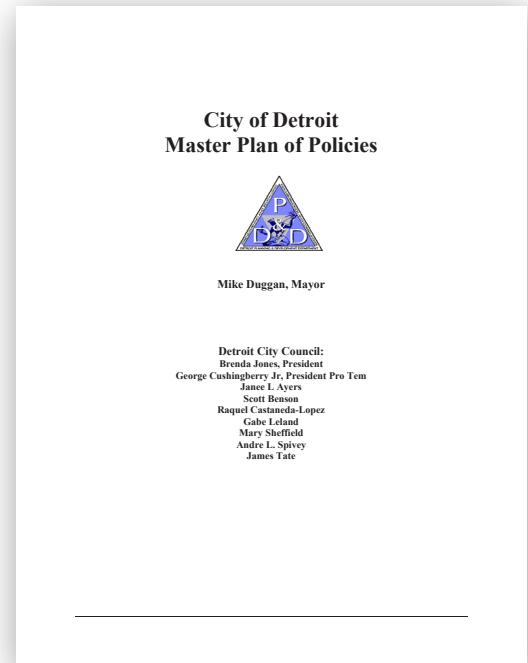
City of Detroit Master Plan of Policies (2009)

The Master Plan of Policies (MPP) sets the overall framework for the social, economic and physical development and conservation of the city. The policies are organized into 17 elements or themes and set development goals for each element. The elements are: Arts and Culture, City Design, Community Organizations, Economy, Education and Libraries, Environment and Energy, Health and Social Services, History, Legacies and Preservation, Industrial Centers, Infrastructure, Intergovernmental Relations, Neighborhoods and Housing, Parks, Recreation and Open Space, Public Safety, Retail and Local Services, Transportation and Mobility, and Zoning Concepts.

The MPP divides the city into 10 Neighborhood Clusters and sets development goals for each cluster/area.

The project area is part of Cluster 2 which is comprised of the neighborhoods Burbank, Conner, Denby, and Mt. Olivet. Only Burbank and Mt. Olivet overlaps with the project area.

Burbank covers the part of the project area East of Gratiot, and Mt. Olivet covers the rest (west of Gratiot).



What We Noticed



OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN

The MPP points out that the recreational amenities in the area do not match the number of children. The MMP describes better opportunities for play and sports around the Heilmann Recreation Center, improved access to recreation and open space outside the area, and general upgrade of parks and playfields as goals.

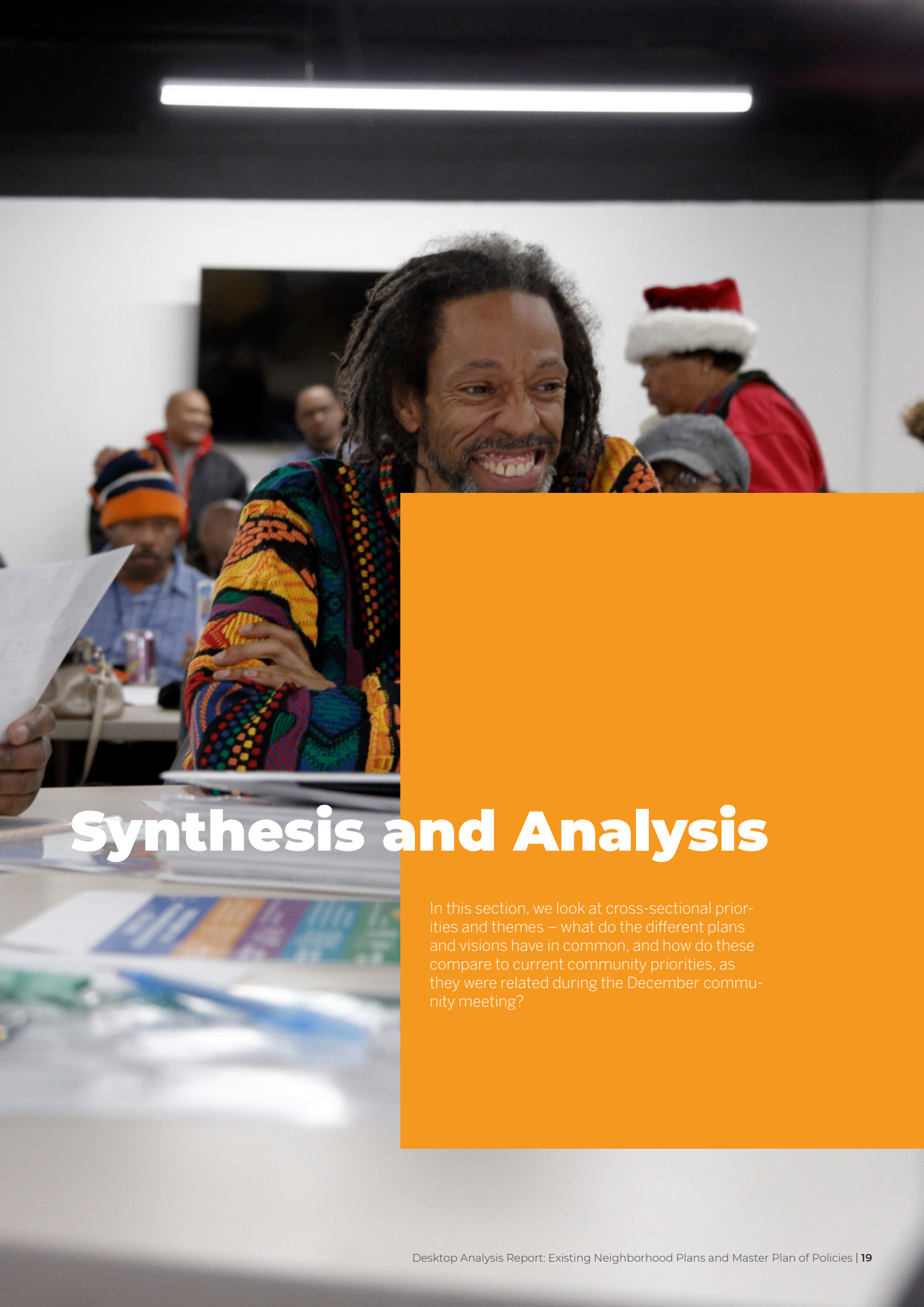
PROTECT AND BUILD FROM ASSETS

The MPP proposes focusing rehabilitation and infill housing at the intersection along the streets surrounding the intersection between Chalmers and Spring Garden, where a church is located. While other strategies than infill housing may be more viable today due to changes in population and landscape since 2009, the proposal nonetheless suggests that the MPP support the idea that protecting community meeting places and assets is first priority.

INFILL HOUSING

The MPP has a more optimistic view on local population development in terms of rehabilitation and development of infill housing. It proposes rehabilitation and infill housing development south of Seven Mile East of Gratiot, as well as in the area West of Gratiot between Seven Mile and State Fair. Compared to the RESTORE NED Community Vision 2017, which maps the area South of Seven Mile, East of Gratiot, as primarily 'spacious residential' and 'urban homestead' zones, this discrepancy suggests that the MPP's recommendations should be seen in the light of the past 11 years' demographic and landscape development.





Synthesis and Analysis

In this section, we look at cross-sectional priorities and themes – what do the different plans and visions have in common, and how do these compare to current community priorities, as they were related during the December community meeting?

Comparing Previous Plans and Current Community Priorities

Looking at the summary of inputs from Community Meeting 1 on the next page, it is clear that current community concerns very much match the recommendations formulated in the previous neighborhood plans and visions.

Neighborhood Stabilization

Looking at the community's inputs, the overall concern is addressing blight and crime or creating beautiful and safe neighborhoods.

Parks & Greenways

In this category, it is clear to see from the community input that the community lacks places to meet, play, and be active – especially recreative needs of children are of high concern.

Mixed-Use and Multi-family Redevelopment

The main concern within this category is not increasing the local population, but rather attending to the needs of the residents already living in the project area.

Streetscapes and Retail corridors

The lack of local shopping opportunities is a challenge for residents. This experience is supported by the Detroit Retail Opportunity Study from 2018, concluding that the Osborn study area (focusing on the commercial corridor along Gratiot between Saratoga Avenue and Bringard Drive) is underserved in all retail categories, and that the corridor is the most highly trafficked and car-centric of all commercial corridors studies (and consequently not easily reached by foot, bike, and bus).

Summary of Current Community Priorities

Neighborhood Stabilization

- Remove blight
Homes and lots: Rehab 1st priority, demolition 2nd
- Address vacant lots
Repurpose
- Fix streets and sidewalks
Repair (streetlights, potholes, drainage, water and sewer, markings/signage) and improve (walkability, paths, safe routes to school)
- Clean up and increase attractiveness
Increase canopy cover, maintain trees, clear weeds and unkept vegetation, increase sweeping, remove abandoned cars, clean up trash, and reduce dumping
- Address crime, and improve safety
Animal control, speed bumps, lighting, stronger police presence

Parks & Greenways

- Strengthen Recreation Centers
Provide services such as programming, literacy, health
- Improve opportunities and facilities for play and family activity
Playgrounds for kids and youths, and pocket parks, family events
- Strengthen libraries
Full service with extended hours
- Create more neighborhood gardens
- Create Greenway connections to the rest of the city
- Address storm water issues
- Use Mowing Stipends

Mixed-Use and Multi-family Redevelopment

- Ensure affordability
- Provide senior housing
- Involve the public in any re-development
- Ensure that gentrification will not displace residents
- Consider Burbank School for mixed-use

Streetscapes and Retail Corridors

- Gratiot: Complete Street, improve walkability, economic corridor/destination, bikes (although contested)
- Houston-Whittier & Kelly: Redevelop Guardian Angels/ Civic Theater Area
- Re-purpose Seven Mile Corridor
- Improve neighborhood retail
Convenient, extended hours, grocery stores, small businesses (retail and commercial)
- Business restrictions (eg. liquor and marijuana)
- Involve business owners in the community
- Improve mobility
Transportation (shuttles, transit)

Also

- Create job and business opportunities, and provide job training
- Realize visions and plans (City should follow up on plans and support local actors achieve planning goals)
- Involve public in neighborhood development - also in terms of job creation and use of local contractors and businesses in the development process
- Credit repair

University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability, Graduate Studio (2019/2020)

As part of their master's project, Vacant Land Adaptation Strategies in Detroit's G7 Neighborhoods, a group of University of Michigan graduate students have been conducting research in the project area in partnership with the City of Detroit. The team's ongoing research and findings will inform the planning process, as it has informed our understanding of local needs and perspectives so far.

The team has conducted a survey in the neighborhood, asking the 35 respondents about their preferences in land use.

The data has been processed in different ways to reveal the nuances of the respondents' preferences. The team has looked at mean rankings, and rankings when looking at respondents' top 1, 3, and 5 choices respectively.

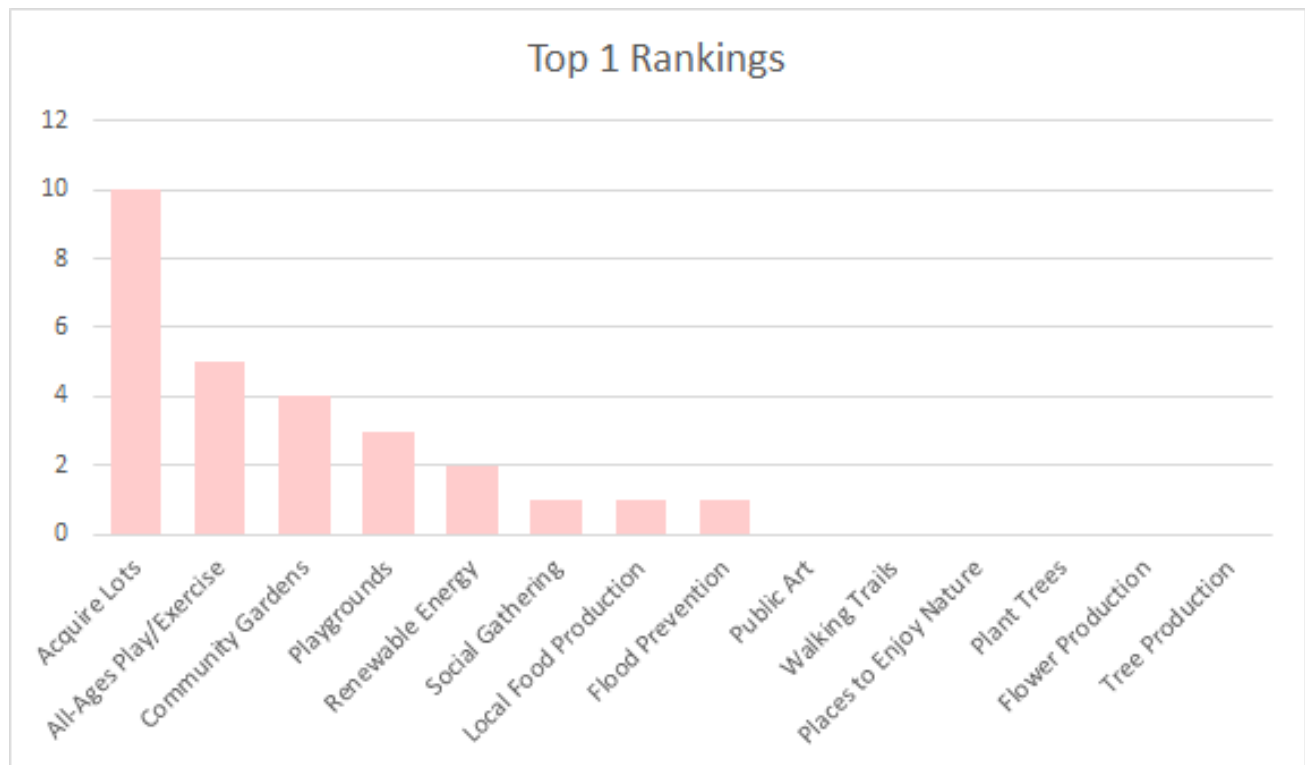
Irrespective of whether one looks at the top 1, 3, or 5 choice rankings, the same 4 types of land use recur:

- Acquire Lots
- All-ages Play/Exercise
- Community Gardens
- Playgrounds

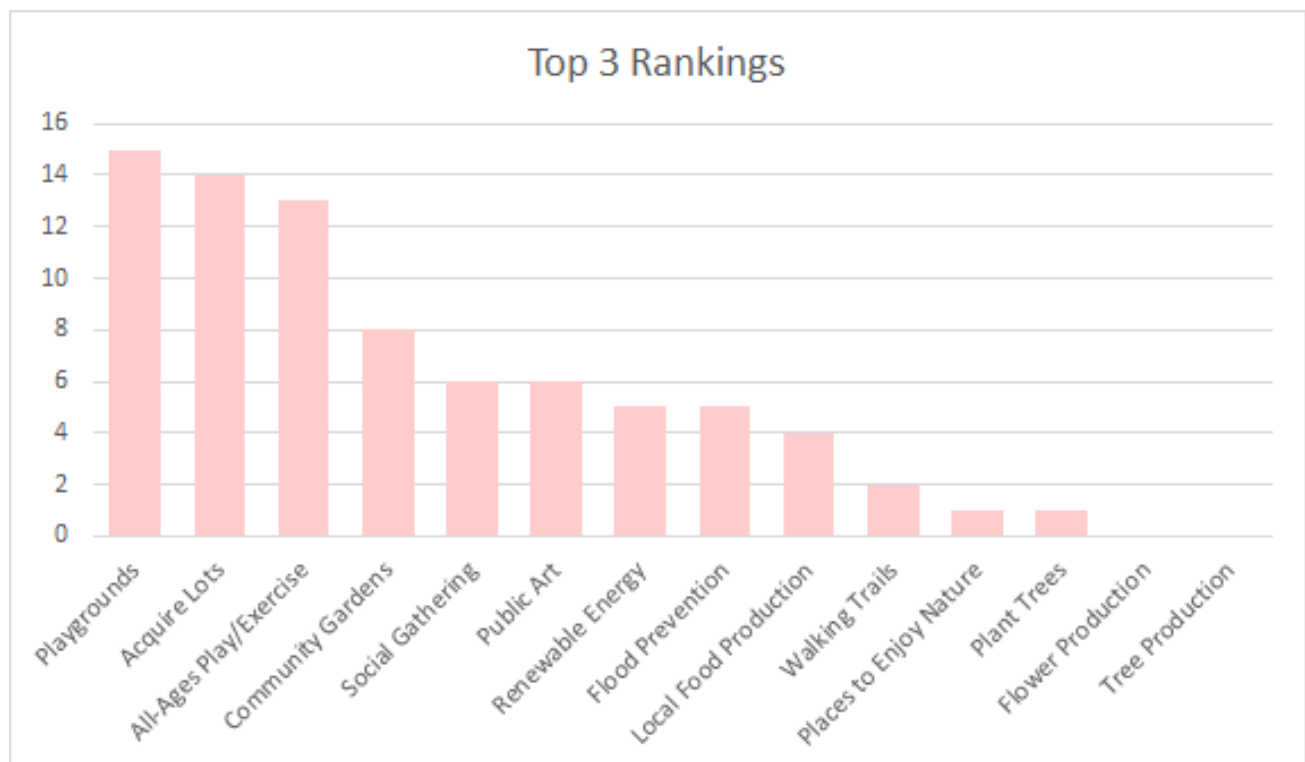
These findings suggest two important priorities in terms of future land use:

- Dealing with blight and vacancy, and thereby improving the overall appearance and atmosphere of the project area
- Creating attractive outdoor spaces, where the whole community can meet, thrive, play, and move.

OF RESPONDENTS RANKING EACH LAND USE AS TOP 1 CHOICE



OF RESPONDENTS RANKING EACH LAND USE IN TOP 3 CHOICES



Peterson, S., Rauss, A. Shen, Y. and Yin, C. (2020). Vacant Land Adaptation Strategies in Detroit's G7 Neighborhoods (Master's project in preparation). University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA

OVERVIEW

Cross-Sectional Priorities and Themes



PRIORITIZE AND
DIFFERENTIATE



CREATE BEAUTIFUL PLACES TO
MEET, MOVE AND PLAY



PROTECT INVESTMENTS AND
DEVELOP ASSETS



BUILD A SAFE NEIGHBORHOOD



ADDRESS BLIGHT
AND VACANCY



CREATE SHOPS AND JOBS



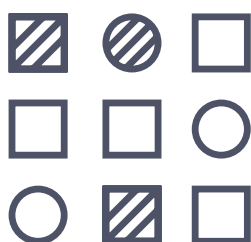
SUPPORT SOCIAL STABILITY



EMPOWER AND
INVOLVE COMMUNITY

Cross-Sectional Priorities and Themes

Although the previous neighborhood plans and visions have different approaches, they have a lot in common; they largely identify the same key issues, and present both overlapping and complementary approaches to dealing with these issues.



PRIORITIZE AND DIFFERENTIATE

While some neighborhoods are still fairly intact in terms of occupancy and maintenance of properties, others are marked by high vacancy rates and blight. Other areas contain valuable community assets, such as schools and parks. Differences between areas within the project site require an overall strategy that can differentiate and prioritize between areas, so that strengths and values are preserved and developed. Especially the Northern residential area, the Heilmann Park and the surrounding area, along with parks and schools in general are seen as places to stabilize, preserve, and develop. Among others, the plans and visions contain the following ideas and recommendations for how to approach the issue:

- Create different zones that set the overall framework for how to develop the different areas over time
- Prioritize between zones, actions, and investments, so that resources will be used where they matter most
- Prioritize Preserve zones over Transform zones

CREATE BEAUTIFUL PLACES TO MEET, MOVE AND PLAY

There is a strong wish to (re)build a community that residents can be proud of, and where they have places to go and meet. It is important that future land uses help beautify and build pride in the neighborhood and improve the social fabric. There is a need of so-called 'third spaces' (places to go apart from home and work) in the area. The recreational needs of children are highlighted in several plans, as well as at the community meeting in December, and the needs of children and youths should be of high priority in the project going forward. However, there is a need for further investigation into the community's needs and wants, considering that there are already several parks in the project area. Thus, it should be investigated why these do not currently meet community needs. Among others, the plans and visions contain the following ideas and recommendations for how to approach the issue:

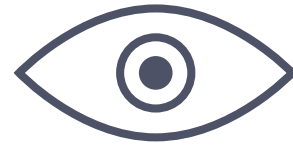
- Strengthen Heilmann Recreation Center and Bringard-Boulder Park
- Improve parks and amenities for play and sports
- Improve bus stops and routes to school
- Create community gardens
- Create community events in the area
- Implement placemaking actions, such as public art



PROTECT INVESTMENTS AND DEVELOP ASSETS

Securing the neighborhoods and areas that are still relatively intact in terms of occupancy is a priority across all plans and visions, and several highlight it as the top priority. In other words, efforts to improve the overall area should begin by focusing on assets. That means considering how we can stabilize and improve relatively intact areas, and how we can build from other community assets, such as Heilmann Recreation Center, schools, churches, and business nodes? Among others, the plans and visions contain the following ideas and recommendations for how to approach the issue:

- Provide owners with tools and support to maintain and repair their homes
- Refer residents to financial counseling services
- Facilitate minor and major home repairs
- Encourage renters to become homeowners by promoting homeownership training and supporting rent-to-own and key-to-own homeownership programs
- Strengthen Heilmann Recreation Center and Bringard-Boulder Park
- Improve routes to schools, e.g. by reducing blight and increasing security and safety



BUILD A SAFE NEIGHBORHOOD

Security and safety – understood as actual security (crime rates, etc.) and the feeling of being safe – are also big issues. Especially dealing with crime (drugs, robbery, squatting) is a big priority, but improving the feeling of safety is also a priority that runs through all plans and visions – explicitly or implicitly. Cleaning up the neighborhood, fixing streetlights, and creating more and better places to meet in the public space are all strategies that will affect the experience of the area as a safe place to live and visit. Among others, the plans and visions contain the following ideas and recommendations for how to approach the issue:

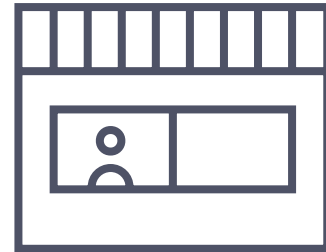
- Involve residents in radio patrols and beat-meetings
- Provide community residents with resources, support, and tools to decrease criminal activity
- Implement design choices that discourage crime
- Address vacancy to eliminate opportunities for crime
- Increase presence of law enforcement
- Trim trees and maintain clear sight lines



ADDRESS BLIGHT AND VACANCY

Blight and vacancy is the biggest issue across all plans and visions. The issue is both structural, i.e. the mismatch between city population and number of available lots and houses, and local, i.e. lack of maintenance, and illegal dumping. Among others, the plans and visions contain the following ideas and recommendations for how to approach the issue:

- Demolish, rehabilitate or board-up vacant structures
- Repair streets (surface, signage) and side-walks
- Organize neighborhood clean-ups/'improvement blitzes'
- Form partnerships to enforce codes
- Provide residents with information on side lot transfers and available home repair programs
- Meet with private owners of vacant properties to help them address rehabilitation obstacles
- Connect landlords to rental repair programs or financing to adequately maintain properties
- Ensure that every vacant lot has a plan, e.g. by creating green spaces through parcel connections and native plantings
- Transform areas with high vacancy into alternative land uses (manicured green, spaces, trails, urban agriculture, renewable energy generation, soil remediation, etc.)



CREATE SHOPS AND JOBS

Both previous plans and the community meeting highlight the lack of shopping options in the area as a problem. Not only is the low amount of businesses in the area a practical challenge, but the absence of a vibrant shopping area also robs the community of an important node and meeting place. The plans and residents suggest different target areas – both Gratiot, Seven Mile, Kelly Road, and intersections between these are proposed. However, the importance of focusing efforts is also underlined by several. Among others, the plans and visions contain the following ideas and recommendations for how to approach the issue:

- Reconfigure commercial corridors to ensure that there are areas with vibrant shopping and services
- Reconfigure previous commercial corridors not eligible for commercial (re)development as safe travelling thoroughfares to more active areas, or as areas to buffer residential areas from industry and truck traffic
- Target specific types of businesses, example family restaurants, cafés and farm stands
- Use pop-up tents as a way to test different types of businesses
- Concentrate services and community spaces in the same area
- Organize collaborations between businesses
- Promote entrepreneurial growth and economic opportunity



SUPPORT SOCIAL STABILITY

As many of the previous plans underline, having a stable and secure home life is often a pre-requisite for getting involved in neighborhood improvement efforts. Addressing social issues, such as unemployment, poor or unsecure housing conditions, or debt is an integral part of stabilizing and beautifying the neighborhood. Among others, the plans and visions contain the following ideas and recommendations for how to approach the issue:

- Increase employment, income and job preparedness for residents
- Increase wellness for seniors
- Address homelessness and squatting
- Increase employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in the district
- Prevent tax and mortgage foreclosures
- Appeal residential property tax assessments
- Encourage renters to become homeowners by promoting homeownership training and supporting rent-to-own and key-to-own homeownership programs

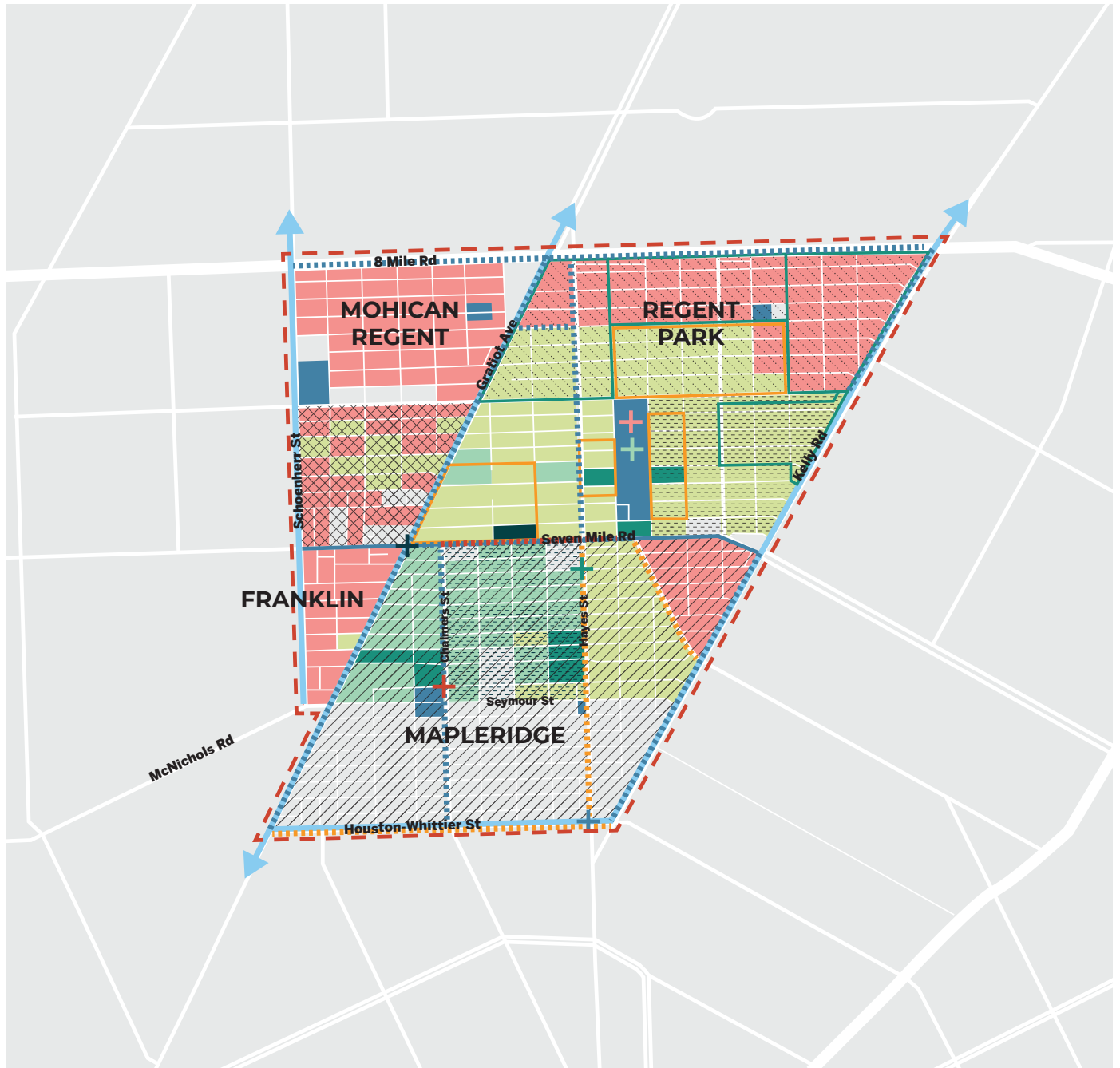


EMPOWER AND INVOLVE COMMUNITY

All the previous neighborhood plans and visions recommend involving the local community in the development of the area – generally, the plans and visions consider an engaged, active, and well-organized community as a basis for a positive neighborhood development. Among others, the plans and visions contain the following ideas and recommendations for how to approach the issue:

- Form block clubs to create a network of residents that can address neighborhood problems
- Establish a neighborhood-wide resource for organizations by developing a comprehensive web and social media strategy, organizing neighborhood-based committees, and developing and mobilizing student-driven community organizations
- Meet with community organizations and residents groups outside the area to learn from their experience
- Collaborate with neighboring areas

MAPPING OF SITE SPECIFIC DOCUMENT RECOMMENDATIONS (COMBINED)



- Site boundary
- Traditional residential
- Spacious residential
- Urban homestead
- Nature scape
- Green venture
- Park
- Block excluded
- Naturescape + retention ponds at Heilman Recreation Center
- Expanding and rehabilitate Heilman Recreation Center
- Landscaped earth berms and retention ponds
- Bike lane
- Shopping hub
- Village hub
- Commercial node along 7 Mile
- Support continued redevelopment and retail at 7 Mile/Gratiot st.
- Potential mixed use, pedestrian-oriented development
- Village hub at Eastwood/Hayes
- Area to preserve
- Area to transform
- Policy interventions (MPP)
- Physical improvements along 7 Mile
- Encourage rehabilitation and infill housing development



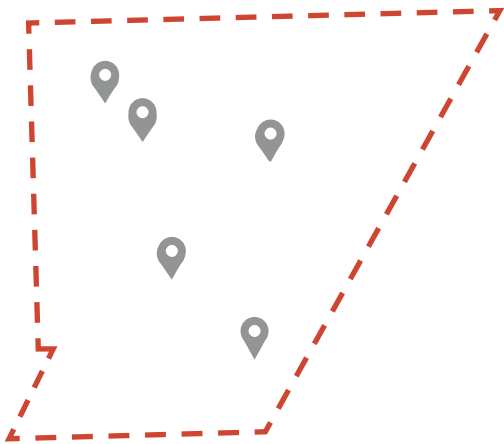


Early Impressions and Recommendations

In this section, we present our impression of what key issues the planning process should address, along with some early recommendations. These will be further developed and tested at the next community meeting in spring 2020.

Early Impressions and Recommendations

Based on inputs from the planning process's first community meeting and the plans and visions already created for the project area, we have gained an experience of the area and formed some early recommendations for the development of the area.



NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION

START FROM THINGS THAT ALREADY WORK

We believe that looking for the things that already work or have potential and supporting and developing these will have a big effect. Whether immaterial qualities – an engaged community, local history or stories, traditions, and everyday life habits – or physical assets – parks, schools, buildings, well-maintained neighborhoods, trees and plantings – they can help us identify where efforts will have the biggest impact, and where we can build upon existing resources. At this moment, we see community resources, existing meeting places such as the Heilmann Recreation Center, schools, churches, and existing nature on site as central community assets.



PARKS & GREENWAYS

STORM WATER MANAGING LANDSCAPE

Management of storm water has been highlighted as a local issue. Given the extent of vacant land in the area, there is ample space to create attractive landscapes in different scales that can handle stormwater while also serving as an attractive, low-maintenance areas for recreation. Vacant parcels and/or entire blocks could be utilized as educational preserves, and adjacent stormwater could be converted or redirected towards these areas as a means of retention and detention.

Storm water managing landscaping could also be implemented as attractive green street bulb outs/curb extensions that slow traffic. Street basins receive runoff from along the curbs and gutters and detains the water. These curb extensions have the added benefit of reducing the distance pedestrians must cross, resulting in traffic calming and improved pedestrian safety.



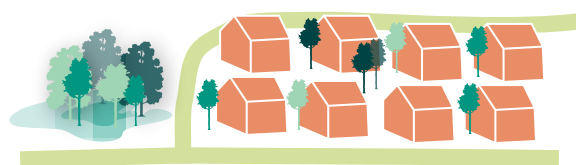
MIX-USE & RETAIL CORRIDORS

CONCENTRATE COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

To meet the need for community meeting places and more services in the area, we recommend concentrating efforts and facilities in just one or two locations. By co-locating food retail, co-working, job training, daycare, community space, and intentional open space (community garden, recreation space, etc.), we can create synergy and critical mass to support different services. Such a “community hub” should be placed near existing social assets (churches, existing popular restaurants, etc.).

We recommend designing a prototype for the community hub by looking for successful social spaces in the existing community (community gardens, parks, etc.).

In addition to building up a case for programming from the feedback gleaned during community engagement, we also recommend working backwards from potential funding sources and their priorities to help inform the program mix of a community hub.



PARKS & GREENWAYS + STREETScape

PARCEL BUNDLING & STREET REMODELLING

Defined by its grid structure, there is a sense of absence of hierarchy in the area. Combined with the lack of defined districts, edges to organize the structure of the area, hierarchy in paths and landmarks to navigate by, the result is a non-legible homogenous area with a poor sense of community.

It is necessary to break the area down to smaller bits, creating smaller and more well-defined neighborhoods/communities. This can be done by repurposing or remodelling roads, thereby redefining the structure of the area.

Combined with parcel bundling, street remodeling could support the creation of better options for soft road users to move through the area, pocket parks, greenways, farmsteads, community gardens, and larger natural areas.

‘Neighborhooding’ the area – creating neighborhoods by structural changes and closing off roads – could create a stronger sense of place in the area and provide a framework for neighborhood development.



PARKS & GREENWAYS

ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY LAND STEWARDSHIP AND CONNECTIVITY

The project area lacks public spaces and places to meet, play, and be active. Several areas could be converted into small pocket parks and community gardens, maintained and operated by local organizations and/or residents. These would increase health and improve the natural environment by being sources for physical activities, such as gardening and playing, or passive activity such as reading a book while on a bench, or collectively sitting with neighbors.

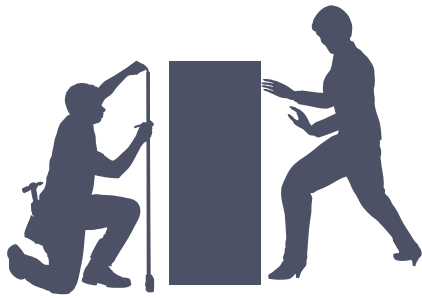
By identifying locations for a series of smaller vest pocket parks that link through the residential cores, these could provide alternative mid-block connections to larger community parks, facilities, and assets. Aiming to link open community spaces will improve the social fabric of the area and support attractive and safe routes through the area.



STREETSCAPE

RECREATE TREE CANOPY

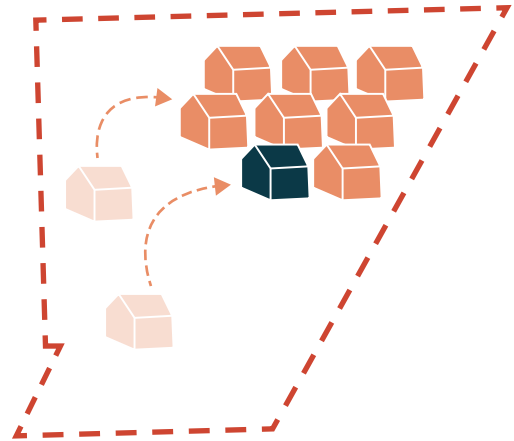
Trees add a host of different qualities to a neighborhood – dimension, atmosphere, rainwater management, shade, and identity, among others. We recommend recreating tree canopy of “old”, using multiple species of urban tolerant trees that take into account diversity, leaf type, sight line impact, urban success, and damage to street and sidewalk pavements.



NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION

EMPOWER THE COMMUNITY

Many residents have a long history with the neighborhood, and they care deeply about its current condition and future. Organizing, involving and supporting the community will create a more resilient community that is able to act against local challenges, and meeting community needs and possibilities in design and policy recommendations will increase their relevance and future success. Empowering and organizing the community will rely on multiple related efforts and strategies, e.g. by providing the community with financial counseling and knowledge of available programs and resources, identifying local community leaders, both individuals and organizations, and by forming block clubs and organizing community events.



STRATEGY

CREATE A FLEXIBLE PLAN

Some of the less stable areas within the site will likely experience further population loss. It is important that the Neighborhood Framework Plan will allow for land use change over time. The plan should consider different scenarios and provide recommendations for how to gradually transform and incorporate lots into an overall land use plan as new lots become available.



PARKS + GREENWAYS + STREETSCAPE MOBILITY FOR ALL

Based on the need for easier access to local services and nodes, the need to improve particularly routes to schools, activate and find new uses for vacant land, and increase the overall attractiveness of the project area, we recommend making mobility for all a priority and guiding principle for how to work with especially land use, greenways, and streetscape. Focusing on public transportation, walkability and opportunities to bike safely in and out of the area will increase the local quality of life, not least for the children transporting themselves to school or activities. Efforts could include:

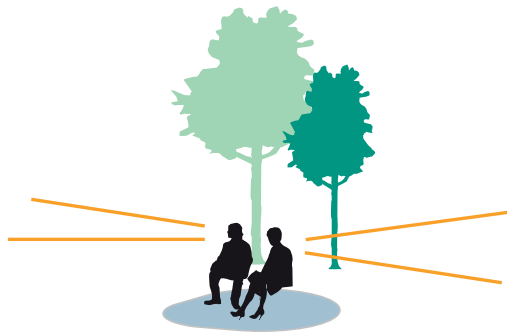
- Identifying locations within the community to provide resources for City initiatives of multi-modal options, such as Mo-Go station, to bridge connection gaps.
- Providing bicycle connections to surrounding areas of both city and suburbs. Potential bike lane additions could also incorporate traffic calming components for vehicular and pedestrian movements.
- Providing improvements at transit connection nodes, specifically Seven Mile and Gratiot intersection. Improvements to include bus shelters and related amenities (e.g. trash receptacles, bike racks, lighting, etc.)
- Establishing well lit and durable bus shelters at each stop as means to promote safe, reliable service. These could include a green roof component or solar and be implemented by the service provider.



STREETSCAPE CALM TRAFFIC AND INCREASE SAFETY

In extension of recommended efforts to improve conditions for soft road users, improving security and safety, and generally improving the quality of life in the area, we recommend calming traffic and implementing safety measures along streets. Recommended measures include:

- Assessing street lighting levels in targeted areas around schools, parks and playgrounds and increasing levels along specified Safe Routes to Schools.
- Classifying and reinforcing street hierarchy by developing consistent treatment options permitting uses such as tertiary streets having on-street parking on both sides, crosswalks and stop bars clearly demarcated, consistency in curbs and right-of-way treatments.
- Providing design options for passive traffic calming and control based on a review of crash data, possibly including changing yield signs to stop signs, striping some streets, speed humps, chicanes, or choke points based on urban street NACTO guidelines.



NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION

EYES ON THE STREET

Security and safety are big issues in the project area. Safety should be a guiding principle for all design choices, both in terms of visibility and in terms of ensuring eyes on the streets. This could be done by programming local public spaces according to nearby institutions or target groups. It could also be done by creating meeting places in different scales placed strategically in the neighborhood – from the walkable retail node, the Heilmann Memorial Park and neighborhood plazas to miniature meeting places like bus stops, waste receptacles, water posts, benches, parking lots, community gardens etc. The more places people can "bump into" each other and see a familiar face, the better.

Next Steps

The Desktop Analysis Report, and the research that supports it, will provide a basis for further investigations into existing conditions and community needs and priorities.

Several of the previous plans and planning studies' recommendations provide valuable and relevant input that should be tested against and adjusted according to current neighborhood conditions.

Some of the needs highlighted by the community – both in previous plans and at this process' first community meeting – need to be further investigated and elaborated. Specifying which tools and resources are relevant for the community to address crime, blight, etc. is necessary, as is an investigation into, for example, the mismatch between existing recreational opportunities and community needs.

In addition, recommendations summarized in the Desktop Analysis Report need to be investigated in relation to available SNF and other city programs, initiatives and policies to identify viable ways forward.

