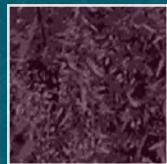


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Moving Forward in NorthTown

Revitalization Strategies for the Seven Mile Corridor
& Surrounding Neighborhoods



MOVING FORWARD IN NORTHTOWN

Revitalization Strategies for the Seven Mile
Corridor & Surrounding Neighborhoods

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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BUSINESSES

- Safari Gifts & Boutique
- S & J Meats
- B & S Collision Shop
- Sullaf Restaurant

COMMUNITY

- Grixdale Farms Neighborhood Association
- GrowTown Urban Farming Initiative
- Residents of Penrose Village
- Residents of Grixdale Farms

EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation
- Central Detroit Christian Community Development Corporation
- Detroit Land Bank Authority
- Michigan Community Resources
- City of Detroit Planning & Development Department
- Detroit Economic Growth Corporation
- Build Institute
- TechTown
- Fair Food Network
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Arab American and Chaldean Council (ACC) is a social-service organization that has provided services to Middle Eastern populations in Southeast Michigan since 1979. In 1995, ACC also committed itself to the Seven Mile Project, focused on the neighborhoods surrounding its campus on Seven Mile Road (the Seven Mile Corridor) in north central Detroit. Currently, they provide social services to residents of those neighborhoods and act as a partner with Penrose Village, an affordable housing community just north of Seven Mile Road.

ACC asked our team of eight University of Michigan urban planning graduate students to help them identify a path forward for their organization's efforts to facilitate meaningful neighborhood revitalization within their community. We will refer to this area as NorthTown throughout the report, an area that includes the State Fair and Grixdale Farms neighborhoods. ACC seeks growth through targeted economic and residential development. Before development of any kind is possible, however, certain steps are necessary to stabilize the surrounding neighborhoods and create an attractive environment for investment. This report outlines steps that ACC and others can take to create that environment and lay a strong foundation for future outcomes. These outcomes could include dense, multi-family housing and a diverse mix of retail destinations along the Seven Mile Corridor, surrounded by stable and healthy neighborhoods.

Our recommendations build upon assets that already exist within the NorthTown community, including two neighborhood organizations (Penrose Village and Grixdale Farms); close proximity to major developments (State Fairgrounds, Woodward, Livernois); and several long-time business and property owners along the corridor

who have expressed a commitment to the area and a desire to remain in that location.

FINDINGS

Our main findings are outlined briefly below. They are discussed in more detail later in the report in Chapter Two.

Finding 1: Stakeholders within NorthTown could amplify the impact of their work through better collaboration.

The limited collaboration and connection between different stakeholder groups and community leaders is a significant barrier to redevelopment within the NorthTown community and on the Seven Mile Corridor. While individual neighborhood entities, such as Penrose Village, have facilitated specific initiatives in the past, these initiatives have often been isolated projects that only benefit targeted areas. Moreover, multiple business owners mentioned a lack of strong relationships and communication along the Seven Mile Corridor as a challenge.

Finding 2: NorthTown has significant opportunities for additional placemaking.

The Vacant Property Toolbox, developed for neighborhoods by Michigan Community Resources, suggests that in neighborhoods struggling with high vacancy rates, it is important for residents to be able to articulate why they live there and why it could be a desirable location for others.¹ One way to develop this narrative is through the act of placemaking. Placemaking provides the people who will be living near and using public spaces the opportunity to come together around a common design and purpose for those spaces and then implement it.²

Within NorthTown currently, significant opportunities exist for both creating new spaces and improving existing spaces in a way that could have an important impact, specifically through the creation of additional open green space and initiatives along the Seven Mile Corridor.

Finding 3: The physical environment presents a barrier to development and safety.

High levels of blight and vacancy within the residential neighborhoods to both the north and south of the Seven Mile Corridor have the potential to decrease property values, discourage outside investment, and attract crime. In the State Fair neighborhood, close to 20 percent of structures are considered to be in extremely poor condition, and many areas are marked by a large number of vacant lots.³ South of Seven Mile, in Grixdale Farms, approximately 15 percent of structures have been identified as unsalvageable, but the percentage of vacant lots is much lower than it is to the north.⁴ Similarly, the Seven Mile Corridor contains several sections with contiguous vacant properties and structures that are not being maintained, which will discourage both business owners and customers.

Finding 4: Property owners have varying levels of accountability.

The two neighborhoods that make up NorthTown (State Fair and Grixdale Farms) illustrate distinct patterns of residential property ownership with governmental entities serving as the largest property owners in the area. The local, county, and state governments own almost 30 percent of the total parcels in NorthTown in roughly similar proportions north and south of Seven Mile Road.⁵ North of Seven Mile Road, the largest property owners are institutional entities that own significant amounts of property. South

of Seven Mile, on the other hand, the majority of the property owners are private individuals who just own a few properties. On the corridor, the majority of ownership is concentrated in just a few institutional and private owners.

Finding 5: The Seven Mile Retail Corridor lacks retail and dining destinations.

Overall, the Seven Mile Corridor lacks a vibrant mix of retail destinations and is characterized by a high density of auto-related businesses, in particular a gas station, a rental car business, two auto centers and three car dealerships. The high concentration of automotive repair and maintenance services along Seven Mile Road alongside a lack of "destination" businesses presents a key challenge for attracting both customers and additional retail tenants.

CASE STUDY: GRANDMONT ROSEDALE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

We also developed a case study of the Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation (GRDC) and its innovative work within the Grandmont Rosedale Community. Within this section, we highlight a series of lessons from GRDC's work that ACC can use to inform its own strategies for revitalization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations focus on steps that ACC can take within the next three to five years to lay a strong foundation for new investment and development in the neighborhood in the future. They address three specific areas: community engagement, neighborhood stabilization, and economic development of the Seven Mile Corridor. We outline the recommendations below, but they are found in more detail in Chapter 4.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Recommendation 1: Engage and develop formal collaborative relationships with residents and institutions in NorthTown.

We recommend that ACC participates in an intentional and long-term community engagement process that brings together residents and other stakeholders in the Northtown area to build consensus around a set of priorities and to develop the networks necessary to address those priorities. While efforts exist to organize in specific neighborhoods, ACC has the unique ability to act as a bridge between different parts of the community and to bring groups together. After an initial period of relationship-building, we recommend that ACC build a formal Blight Task Force with other major stakeholders in NorthTown, including Penrose Village and the Grixdale Farms Neighborhood Association. This task force can work together to direct neighborhood stabilization efforts, including blight reduction tactics.

NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION

Recommendation 2: Deploy targeted blight reduction tactics.

The neighborhoods both north and south of Seven Mile are challenged by vacant lots that are not maintained and dilapidated housing that has fallen into disrepair. In order to address these challenges, we recommend that ACC and the new Blight Task Force focus on a few specific tactics to combat blight, which include 1) boarding vacant structures that are in disrepair and 2) cleaning empty lots that are not being maintained.

Recommendation 3: Connect the neighborhoods with open green spaces.

In addition to focusing on cleaning up blighted properties within the neighborhood, ACC and the Blight Task Force should also consider options that develop public spaces

throughout the community and improve connections between areas of focus within it. These can be done by using vacant lots to create park space; making improvements on Charleston Street to provide more of an entrance to the Seven Mile Corridor; and developing a linear path along Charleston Street that creates recreational opportunities and connects recommended areas of focus.

Recommendation 4: Engage local agencies and organizations to facilitate better land management practices.

As discussed in the findings section, several public land authorities and other institutions hold significant amounts of land in NorthTown. This presents an opportunity for partnerships with these and other organizations to create a land management program within the neighborhood to influence future land uses. If done well, a land management program operated in conjunction with major neighborhood stakeholders could eventually lead to more attractive development opportunities for the private sector in the future.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Recommendation 5: Build capacity along the Seven Mile business corridor.

We recommend that ACC support the creation of a business association to develop relationships on the corridor and facilitate coordinated commercial development efforts. This effort will create a dedicated mechanism for communication and collaboration between business owners and help them to come together around a common vision for the community.

Recommendation 6: Target businesses in food production and distribution.

Businesses that provide services and products for the local community while also drawing visitors from outside

can provide a more robust stream of foot traffic than just convenience retailers that solely serve the immediate neighborhoods. We recommend that a business association along the Seven Mile Corridor target local and regional retailers and businesses involved in food production, packing, storage, and distribution, a strategy that builds on existing assets in the neighborhood.

Recommendation 7: Create a more active corridor.

In order to more effectively attract and retain business along the Seven Mile Corridor, we recommend that ACC and the business community consider specific actions to improve the aesthetics of the corridor and create an environment that is attractive to new business owners and customers alike. Several simple steps can be taken immediately to achieve this, including sidewalk and façade improvements.

ENDNOTES

¹ *Vacant Properties Toolbox*, (Detroit: Michigan Community Resources, 2013), http://www.thevpcdetroit.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/20130424_DVPCToolbox_SecondEd_v8_LowRes.pdf. 13.

² "Placemaking Chicago," Accessed on December 10, 2015. <http://www.placemakingchicago.com/about/>

³ "Motor City Mapping," Motor City Mapping, accessed November 2, 2015. <https://motorcitymapping.org/#!#overview&s=detroit&f=all>.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

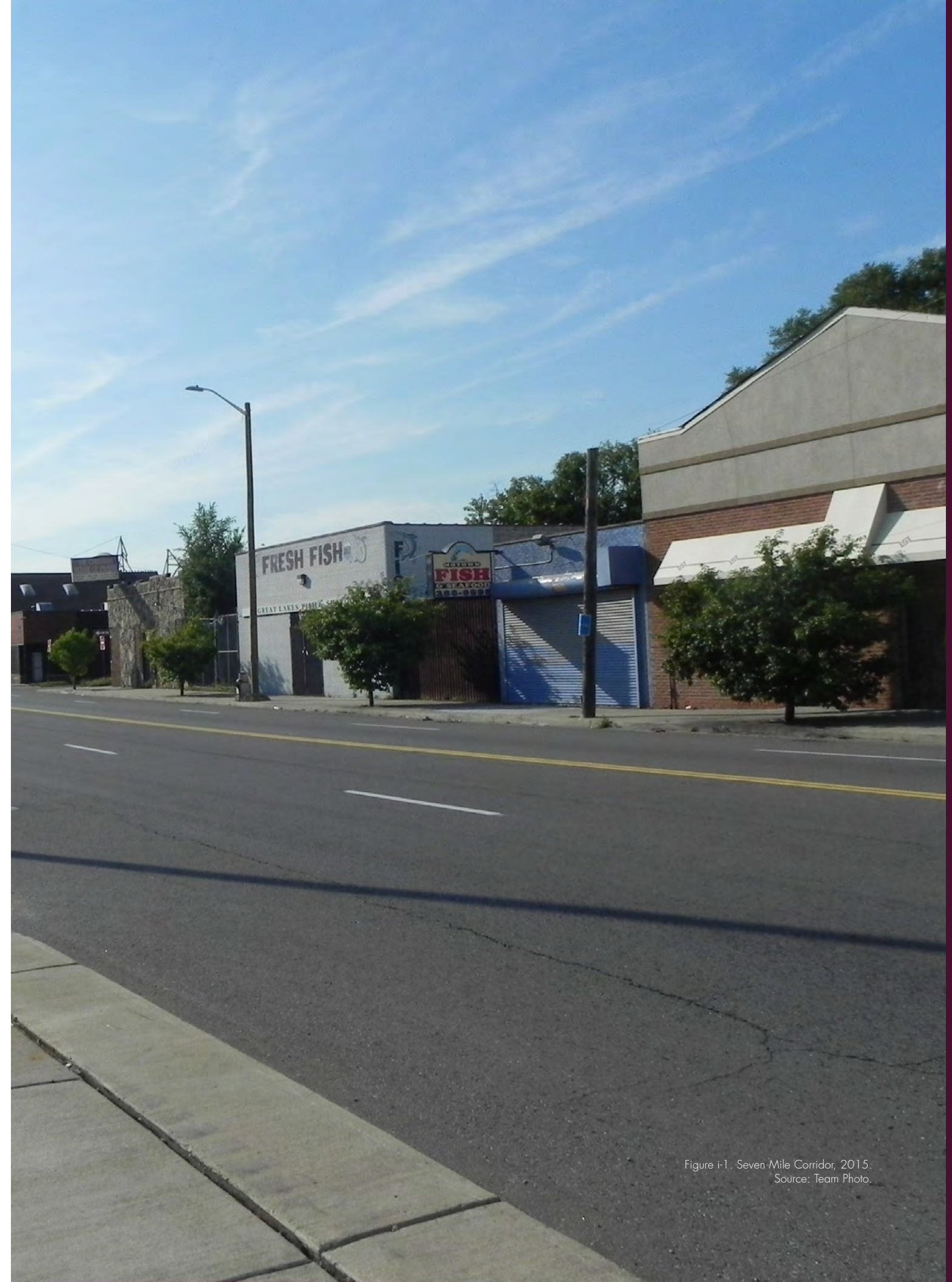


Figure i-1. Seven Mile Corridor, 2015.
Source: Team Photo.



CH 01: BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

Commissioned by the Arab American and Chaldean Council (ACC), this report provides recommendations to begin the process of revitalization in the area surrounding ACC's campus on Seven Mile Road. Historically home to a large number of Chaldean immigrants from Syria and Iraq, the surrounding neighborhoods have undergone significant change in the past 40 years. Chaldeans have largely moved out of city neighborhoods, while African American residents in the area have made up an increasingly higher proportion of the population. A social service organization that supports Arab American immigrants and refugees, as well as residents of neighborhoods near their campus, ACC remains committed to a neighborhood that has faced numerous challenges. As such, ACC and the neighborhood have a symbiotic relationship: the neighborhood's health and ACC's organizational effectiveness in the area are closely linked.

As seen in Figure 1-1, this report's focus encompasses all of the State Fair neighborhood as well as a substantial portion of the Grixdale Farms neighborhood. Each of these neighborhoods has independent identities and histories despite connections to the commercial corridor on Seven Mile Road (referred to as the "Seven Mile Corridor" in this report). Additionally, areas within these neighborhoods have developed at uneven rates. Penrose Village, a housing development built in two phases in 2007 and 2013 just to the north of the Seven Mile Corridor, anchors the State Farm neighborhood, but much of the surrounding land lacks viable housing options. Similarly, three main streets in the Grixdale Farms neighborhood remain in good condition, but much of the rest of the neighborhood is in poor condition.

The City of Detroit designated this area around the Seven Mile Corridor

between Woodward Avenue and John R Street as "Chaldean Town" in 1999 in an effort to spur investment and outside interest in the area.¹ We will use the name NorthTown, however, to refer to this area throughout this report. This is the term that ACC has chosen to use for their community development arm and when they speak publicly about the neighborhood.

The housing crisis and recession (along with innumerable outside forces) have recently led to conversations between important policy makers and organizations about the future of the city. These conversations (and subsequent proposals and plans) have presented a conflicting message about NorthTown. *Detroit Future City (DFC)*, a strategic framework plan, released in January of 2013, identified the northern portion of NorthTown as an "ecological innovation" area, which discourages new housing and economic development and emphasizes opportunities to utilize the area in an environmentally-friendly

way, as seen in Figure 1-3.² *DFC* is not an official land use plan adopted by the city though, which impacts how it is implemented. Less than three years after it was published, the Detroit Planning and Development Department slated the entirety of NorthTown as a target area for multi-family housing development (as shown in Figure 1-4), a significant departure from the *DFC* framework.³ Clearly, opinions and past strategies about NorthTown have not crystallized within the local government, presenting ACC and the area with a unique opportunity to shape the area's future direction. To take full advantage of this opportunity, ACC and NorthTown stakeholders must carefully take stock of both the assets and challenges found in the community and educate policy makers about the area.

In order to present the true potential of NorthTown to city officials as well as to potential investors, property and business owners, and residents, the community must take immediate,



Figure 1-1. NorthTown boundaries as described in this document. Source: Base map adapted from Data Driven Detroit, 2015.



Figure 1-2. Seven Mile Corridor, 2015. Source: Team Photo.

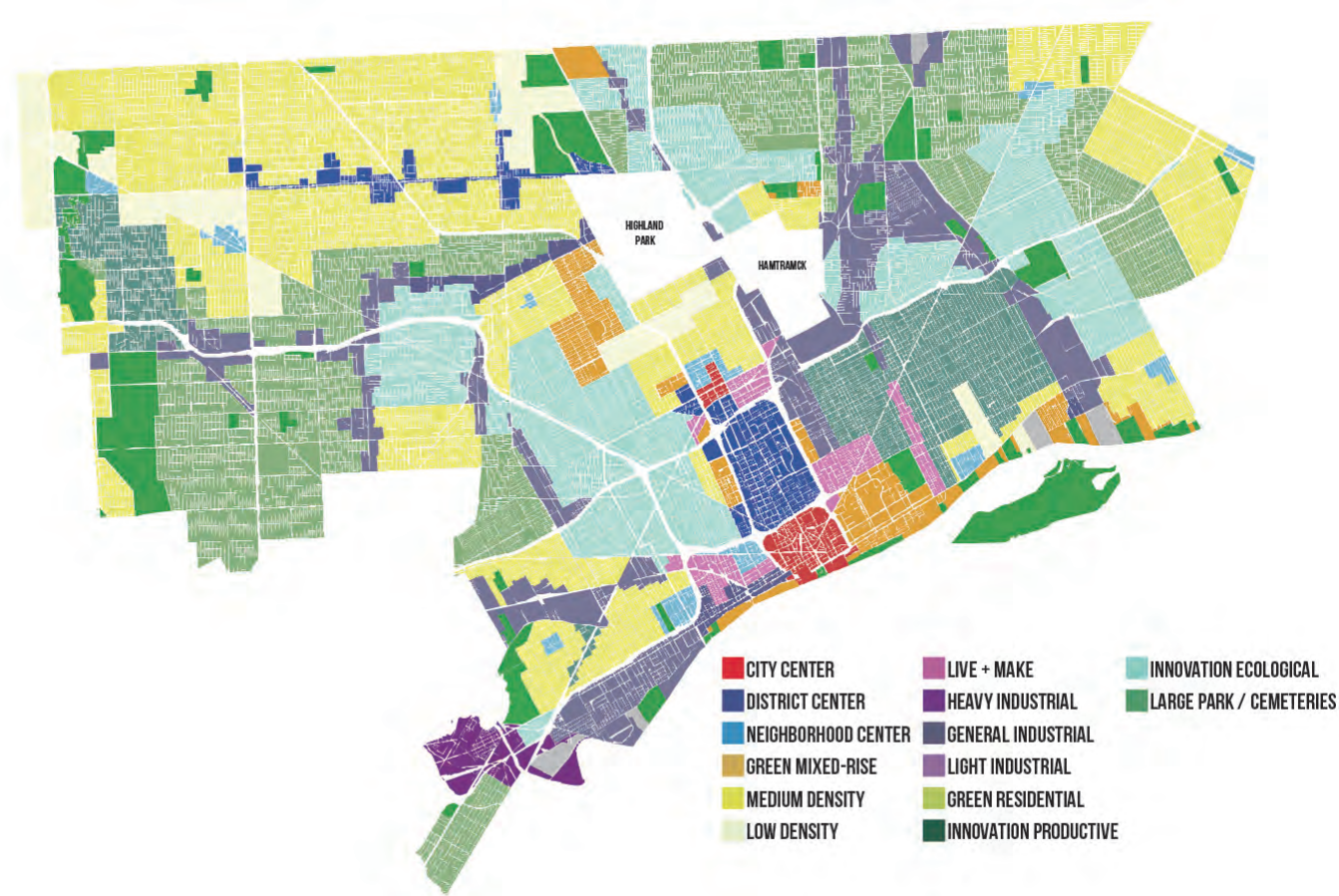


Figure 1-3. Detroit Future City 2050 Land Use Map. Source: Detroit Future City: 2012: Strategic Framework Plan.

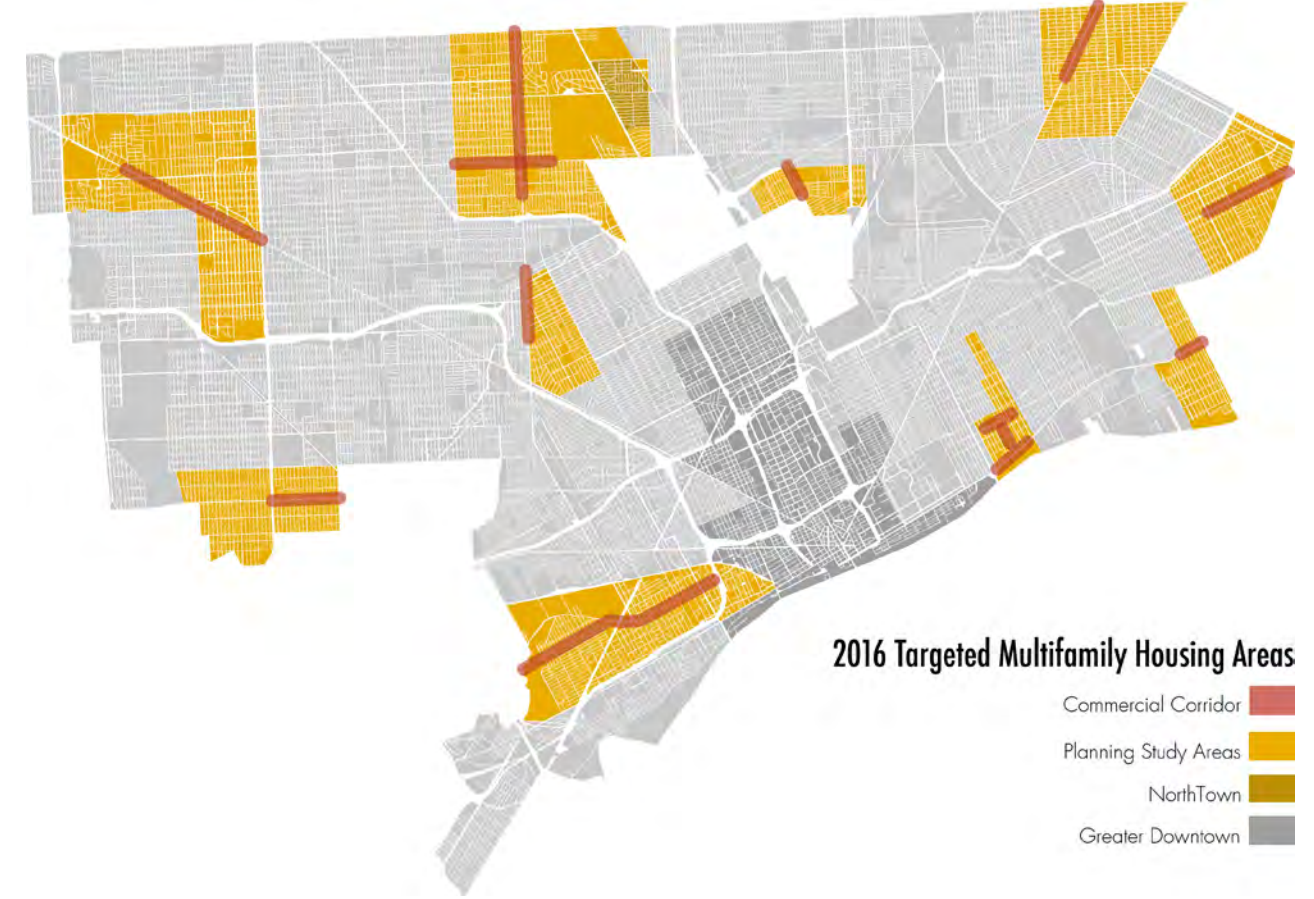


Figure 1-4. Areas targeted for 2016 Multifamily Housing Areas map by the City of Detroit. Source: Base map adapted from Data Driven Detroit with data from the City of Detroit.

long-term, and time-intensive steps to halt neighborhood decline. This report offers guidance for the beginning stages of this process. Efforts to strengthen the area must focus on two main geographic areas: the residential neighborhoods both north and south of Seven Mile Road and the Seven Mile Corridor itself. With many residential properties lacking maintenance and upkeep, stabilizing vacant land and deteriorating structures will be necessary to increase property values and repopulate the community. Additionally, the business corridor needs strengthening, both to serve the

existing neighborhood residents and to support potential growth in the future. ACC cannot undertake these tasks alone. Collaboration will be necessary to combat the entrenched forces of neighborhood decline. Luckily, many potential allies can be found in NorthTown. The residents of the Grixdale Farms neighborhood have just formed a neighborhood association, which has started to deliver positive results in the area. Penrose Village is a well-maintained community just north of the Seven Mile Corridor. A number of business owners along Seven Mile

Road maintain businesses, possess a wealth of neighborhood knowledge, and provide needed employment and services for residents. Additionally, many surrounding areas stand poised to benefit from new development, which has the potential to add even more invested stakeholders to the area. Leveraging the efforts of these diverse actors will prove vital for the future direction of NorthTown. We structured this report to guide ACC and others invested in the health of NorthTown through the beginning phases of revitalizing the neighborhood.

Chapter One gives a brief history of the area and highlights current conditions. Using our team’s research, we highlight important trends in NorthTown while providing resources for ACC and other stakeholders to use as a foundation when making decisions about future efforts. **Chapter Two** identifies five main findings strong implications for the future health of NorthTown. These findings highlight both physical conditions within the neighborhood, as well as necessary strategic connections between stakeholders that will be crucial in improving the neighborhood.

Chapter Three presents a case study of the Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation that provides important lessons for ACC as a non-profit organization striving to improve the neighborhood around it. The Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation has a history of successful efforts in supporting neighborhood revitalization, and the case study distills important takeaways that ACC could emulate. **Chapter Four** presents a series of recommendations ACC could undertake to catalyze improvements in NorthTown. These recommendations

focus on engagement with the community, neighborhood stabilization, and economic development. **Chapter Five** lays out implementation steps for each recommendation, including potential partners and funding options. NorthTown has the potential for a strong recovery, but strong collaboration around data-driven and strategic efforts must exist to realize this potential. With the opportunity to build upon its current efforts in NorthTown, ACC’s leadership will be an important factor in the future of the neighborhood.

PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

In an effort to identify challenges and opportunities, as well as meaningful ways to address them, we combined research and data analysis with interviews and observation, both inside and outside the NorthTown community. We used a variety of methods that include data analysis, interviews, site visits, observation of community meetings, literature review, and a case study.

We started by trying to gain a better understanding of our community through data analysis and interviews with residents and other stakeholders.

DATA ANALYSIS

We consulted numerous sources of data about the NorthTown neighborhood that provided information about existing housing stock, vacant land, property ownership, and economic trends. Our main sources include:

Motor City Mapping

With information provided by Loveland Technologies, *Motor City Mapping* is a property information database and mapping system that provides information on property ownership and condition throughout the City of Detroit. Additionally, the website provides information about property tax status, vacancy, and property values. Loveland Technologies gathered the information in conjunction with Data Driven Detroit in late 2013. Trained temporary employees, often residents of Detroit, gathered the information by visiting properties in person throughout the six months prior to the debut of the website. The information is maintained through Motor City Mapping's bleeding initiative.

Esri

Esri produces economic data for areas throughout the country. Most importantly for this report, Esri provides data on how much money consumers within a

certain area spend in different sectors of the economy as well as commuting patterns for workers.

United States Census Bureau

A government agency, the Census Bureau provided vital demographic data for this report.

TARGETED INTERVIEWS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

We conducted interviews focused on stakeholders within the community who could talk about their own experiences and their priorities moving forward. These stakeholders included Business owners and customers along the Seven Mile Corridor;

- Residents of Penrose Village, the neighborhood directly north of Seven Mile Road;
- Managers and Developers of Penrose Village; and
- Residents of the Grixdale Farms Community, the neighborhood south of Seven Mile Road.

In addition to interviewing stakeholders within the NorthTown Community, we also sought out stakeholders from institutions and organizations around Detroit who could provide either expertise on a specific challenge facing the community or a description of their current relationship with NorthTown. These included:

- Detroit Planning and Development Department,
- Business development organizations,
- The Detroit Land Bank Authority
- Case study community development corporations, and
- Housing and data analysis groups (technical assistance).

OBSERVATION OF COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Team members also attended two Grixdale Farms Neighborhood Association monthly community

meetings, held at the local police precinct. At these meetings, we observed resident conversations and interviewed individual residents afterward using a pre-determined set of questions to learn their individual perspectives on the community.

REVIEW OF RESEARCH WITHIN OUR AREAS OF FOCUS

Once we identified specific areas of need within the community, we performed a review of current literature, such as recent reports and journal articles, focused on each of these different areas in an effort to build on expert stakeholder interviews.

RELEVANT PLANS

In addition to a review of relevant literature, we also studied existing plans that could provide helpful context and guidance and inform our recommendations. Many plans were read and analyzed. Some of the plans address Detroit as a whole, while others, like the *Seven Mile Road Development Plan: Detroit, Michigan*, are more focused on the NorthTown area. Plan summaries may be found in Appendix 1: Relevant Plans; those that can be considered tools are referenced in Recommendation 2.

CASE STUDIES

We developed a comprehensive case study of the Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation, which has proven success in neighborhood stabilization and commercial efforts. Through an in-depth analysis of this organization, we were able to offer examples of how some of our recommendations can be implemented. Additionally we provide shorter spotlights throughout the report on innovative organizations doing work in other parts of Detroit.



Figure 1-5. Penrose Village homes, 2015.
Source: Team Photo

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

For much of the first half of the 20th century, NorthTown was home to a thriving population of Chaldean immigrants. Chaldeans (Catholics from Syria and northern Iraq) immigrated for better opportunities and in response to instability, violence, religious persecution, and injustice.⁴ Many Chaldeans moved to Detroit and worked in the automobile industry, particularly once there was an Arab community and a Lebanese Catholic Maronite congregation.⁵ The majority of these immigrants originally settled in the area between Six Mile Road and Eight Mile Road and between Woodward Avenue and John R Street.⁶

Mother of God, the first Chaldean church established in Michigan, opened in 1948 in Detroit at the intersection of Hamilton and Euclid Avenues, and Sacred Heart was established in 1973 as Detroit's second Chaldean congregation.⁷ Furthermore, in response to the large numbers of Chaldean students in the 1970s, Detroit Public Schools incorporated the *Chaldean Arabic English Picture Dictionary* into curriculums in parts of the city.⁸

During this time, many Chaldeans in Detroit opened their own businesses, especially grocery stores.⁹ Chaldeans owned 120 grocery stores within Detroit in 1962 and more than 1,000 food establishments by the beginning of the 1990s.¹⁰ Chaldeans also operated newspapers and media outlets and ran social, business, cultural, and community organizations, including ACC, the Chaldean Iraqi American Association of Michigan, the Chaldean Cultural Center, the Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce, the Chaldean Community Foundation, the Chaldean Federation, and the Shenandoah Country Club.¹¹

A CHANGING COMMUNITY

The Chaldean population in this area began to decline in the 1970s, however, with many Chaldeans moving to the suburbs at the same time that the black population in the neighborhood increased and tensions between the groups rose. Many Chaldean grocery stores at this time were located in heavily marginalized neighborhoods with high black populations.¹² These populations saw Chaldeans as a threat, and Chaldeans tended to be insular, doing business in black communities without contributing to them or hiring local residents.

In the 1970s and 1980s, violence and conflict between the two groups increased, some of which prompted a movement by black residents to boycott Chaldean-owned stores. In

response to these conflicts, the NAACP joined with other organizations to create task forces that would encourage communication and conflict resolution.¹³ Arab American store owners and residents in Detroit neighborhoods also undertook efforts such as the Harmony Project, founded in 1995, to foster communication between the two groups.¹⁴

The racial composition of the neighborhood continued to change during the 1990s and early 2000s. In 1990, white residents made up a slight majority of the area's population, with black residents comprising 44 percent of the population. By 2010, the percentage of white residents had declined to just over 15 percent, while black residents made up almost 80 percent of area population.¹⁵ It is important to note that the U.S. Census

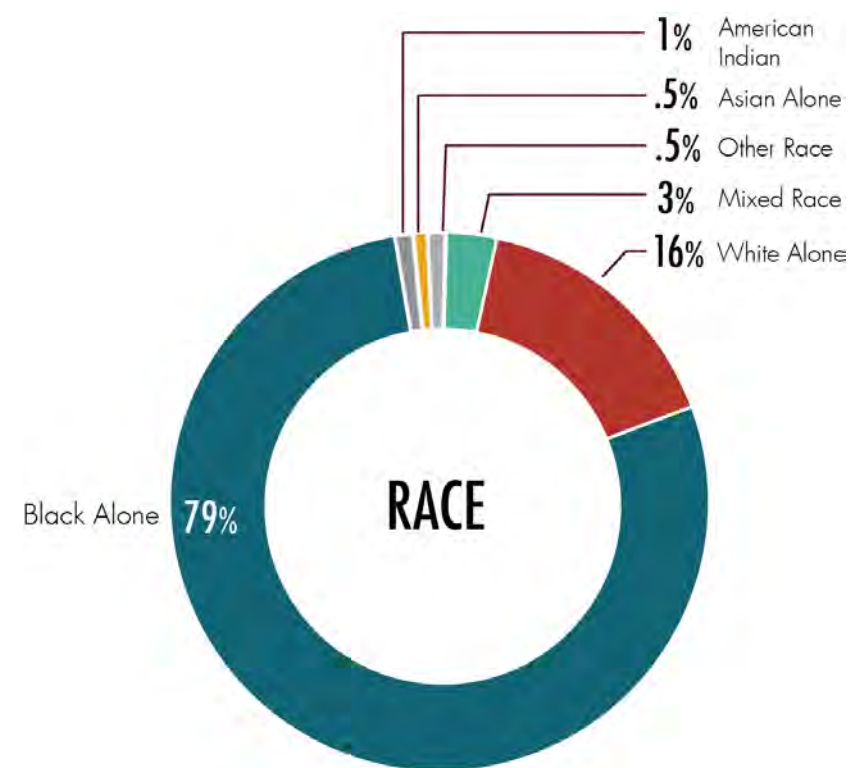


Figure 1-6. Resident population by race of NorthTown in 2010. Source: US Census Bureau, 2010.

Bureau data counts Arab populations as 'white.' Additionally, the number of immigrants settling in NorthTown decreased significantly around this time. Of the nearly 400 foreign-born residents currently in the area, only one percent has entered the United States since 2010. At this time, Iraqis compose the largest proportion of the foreign-born population in NorthTown, making up just over 70 percent of the foreign-born residents in the area.¹⁶

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Since 2000, the area's population has declined by almost 55 percent.¹⁷ As of 2010, 2,786 people resided in NorthTown, compared to 6,186 residents in 2000. The number of households also decreased by 39 percent from 2000 to 2010. As of 2010, there are only 1,225 households (compared to 2,005 in 2000), resulting in decreased density throughout NorthTown neighborhoods.¹⁸

48 percent of total households in the neighborhood are occupied by one single person, while the remaining households contain two or more individuals (52 percent). Only 27 percent of all total households in the neighborhood have children. Residents aged 18-64 compose 63 percent while seniors (aged 65 and older) compose 10 percent.¹⁹

EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

Of the population in the area over the age of 16, approximately 22 percent of residents were not in the labor force as of 2013. Additionally, about 43 percent were unemployed but still looking for work. In other words, over 65 percent of total residents in the area did not participate in the formal economy through employment.²⁰ It is also worthwhile to note that residents may be employed in informal economies that are typically underreported in conventional counts. The median household income in this area lags behind that for the City

of Detroit as a whole. The median household in the area brings in just under \$17,000 annually, compared to a median household income of approximately \$26,000 for all of Detroit. Just over half of the area's population lives in poverty, compared to just under 40 percent of city residents. Perhaps most importantly, NorthTown residents live in extreme poverty (defined as living in a household that makes less than 50 percent of the poverty line) at almost twice the rate of Detroit residents as a whole.²¹

While the area experiences depressed incomes compared to the rest of the city, education levels in the area are about on par with city levels. As of 2010, two in five area residents had a high school diploma or equivalent, while just under eight percent of the population had a bachelor's degree. Approximately one in five residents do not have a high school diploma.²²

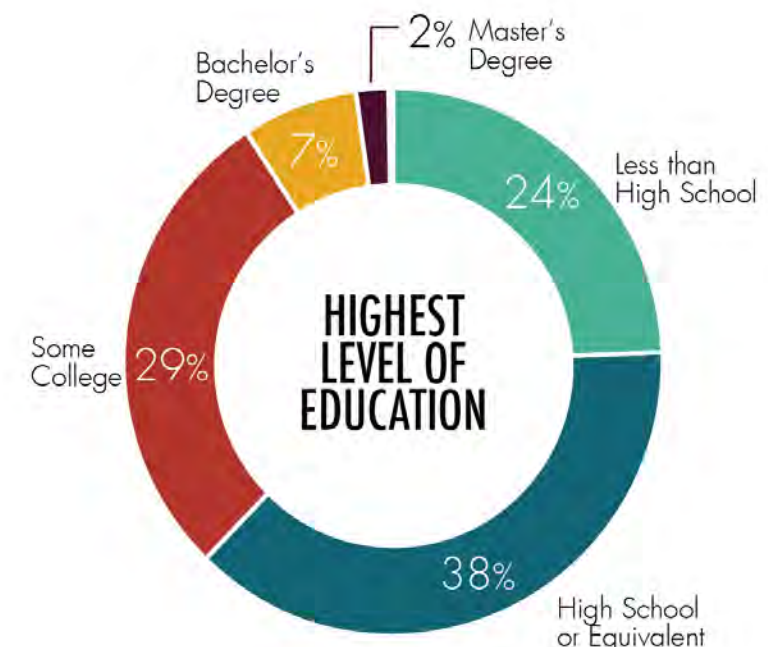


Figure 1-7. Education attainment of residents in NorthTown. Source: American Community Survey, 2013.

RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

The NorthTown area faces significant challenges, but also presents many unique opportunities. Recent land developments and the formation of community organizations, both internally and externally, are strengthening this area. These opportunities contrast with the significant blight, disinvestment, and foreclosures in the area.

The NorthTown residential areas can be categorized into two fairly distinct neighborhoods: those streets located south of Seven Mile Road, and those located to the north. Though both are part of the overall Seven Mile area, these two areas have seen different levels of preservation, disinvestment, and development.

NORTH OF SEVEN MILE

The area north of Seven Mile Road, south of West State Fair Avenue, and between Woodward Avenue and John R Street is largely comprised of vacant blocks with pockets of housing along the southeast and northwest portions.²³ Though the State Fair neighborhood is sparsely populated, the Penrose Village development and farmhouse now serve as the anchor of this area. Other developments, both nearby and within the community itself, have the potential to further transform the community and build upon the progress made through Penrose Village.

Community Anchor: Penrose Village

Penrose Village is a particularly strong asset within the State Fair Neighborhood. As of 2015, the development has built 84 new single family homes, injecting more than \$40 million into the area between 2007 and 2013. Both phases of the Penrose Village were developed using low-income housing tax credits (LIHTC),

and every unit is occupied by families who receive a subsidized rental rate.²⁴ Tenants pay a monthly rental rate of 30 percent of their monthly income.²⁵

Penrose Village provides many benefits to the NorthTown community, including increased density in the neighborhood. The development also increases the profile and publicity of the neighborhood, contributing a positive momentum to the area. Additionally, it has provided or encouraged the development of new public space, such as Herman Park and the Farmhouse.

Opportunities

Penrose Village housing is not the only positive influence on the State Fair neighborhood. Several other organizations are creating (or have great potential to create) new community assets that improve the quality of life in the area.

GrowTown

This non-profit organization has helped launch several initiatives in Penrose Village with the goal of using sustainability and food systems as



Figure 1-9. Select community assets for the NorthTown community. Source: Base map adapted from Data Driven Detroit.



initial economic drivers to revitalize the community. It has also invested significant effort into planning for the future growth of NorthTown, including proposing a master plan for the neighborhood, conducting a study assessing the viability of providing housing for highly-skilled immigrants in the area, and creating a public spaces and public amenities plan. Because GrowTown operates citywide on a variety of projects, it has the ability to connect NorthTown with a variety of potential stakeholders to which the community might otherwise not have direct access.

Penrose Gardens, Farmhouse, and Arthouse

These amenities, a part of the Penrose Village in partnership with various other organizations, provide public space and programming to the public. The gardens utilize vacant lands to produce food that the residents of Penrose can consume at no cost. The Farmhouse and Arthouse provide public meeting spaces for community events, a place

for neighborhood youth to congregate, and meeting space for community groups.²⁶

Perfecting Church

Located just to the west of Penrose Village, Perfecting Church has bought and held many parcels in the neighborhood, potentially to provide housing at some point in the future.²⁷ The congregation is still fundraising to complete the multi-million dollar megachurch's main structure, however, and development of any housing likely remains years away. That said, a church of its size and influence, particularly because of its current land holdings, has the potential to be a major force for change in the neighborhood.

State Fairgrounds

NorthTown could benefit significantly from the redevelopment of the old State Fairgrounds directly to the north. The developers have generated a lot of local buzz with proposals for mixed-use development on the site.²⁸

Although the project has stalled on multiple occasions, the developers behind the project continue to engage the community and city. Should a large-scale, mixed-use redevelopment come to fruition, NorthTown will have a tremendous opportunity due to its proximity to the site.

SOUTH OF SEVEN MILE

The Grixdale Farms neighborhood, located just south of the Seven Mile Corridor, is much larger in area than the State Fair Neighborhood and contains significantly more parcels. Though blight is as much a problem to the south of Seven Mile as to the north, this neighborhood includes several blocks of housing in good condition.²⁹ Based on condition assessments, blight is clustered in much tighter and more well-defined areas in Grixdale Farms. Recently, neighborhood block groups have begun to organize and take a more active role to ensure their community continues to remain intact and livable.³⁰

This neighborhood does contain very large swaths of vacant property though, with significant amounts of blight and dumping, particularly on the streets just to the south of Seven Mile Road. In some locations, entire blocks have been reduced to urban fields, with just one or two homes sitting within them.

Community Anchor: Hildale, Grixdale, and Greendale Streets

The streets within the central portion of the Grixdale Farms neighborhood have remained well-maintained, vibrant spaces despite the downturn of the surrounding neighborhood. Home values within these streets remain significantly higher than those in the rest of the neighborhood and Detroit in general.³¹ The neighborhood is particularly intact between Woodward and Charleston Street, with very few blighted or unsecured properties there.³² East of Charleston Street, the parcel conditions become more varied, but property values remain above the neighborhood average.

Opportunities

Community Block Groups

Community organizing forms the core of this neighborhood's strength. Block groups have formed in recent months to articulate and work toward the community's collective goals, such as securing blighted homes and removing solid waste dumped on vacant parcels. Based on community meeting observations, residents seem willing to network for resources both inside and outside of their community, articulate their grievances to one another, and turn those concerns into a community action plan.³³ Though this block group is very new and has yet to establish a long-term history of action, it is an encouraging development for the neighborhood.

The block groups have only recently started meeting regularly, but have already reported noticeable results and formally become a neighborhood

association. This association communicates regularly with the district manager and organizes cleanup efforts. Multiple residents reported initiatives to collect free plywood from the mayor's office and board up vacant and unsecured homes on their block. Though it's too early to assess outcomes, residents at a recent neighborhood association meeting indicated that they felt safer as a result of the home boarding.

Contiguous Detroit Land Bank properties

Grixdale Farms contains several areas with contiguous properties owned by the Detroit Land Bank Authority (DLBA). These could be potential future locations for multi-family housing development or for implementing innovative ecological zones from the *Field Guide*, especially if ACC were able to take advantage of DLBA property-transfer programs.

Side Lot Program

Within Grixdale Farms several vacant properties also exist next to properties currently being maintained by their owners. These owners could take advantage of the DLBA's Side Lot

program, in which they can purchase certain lots contiguous to their own for \$100 if they pay the taxes and maintain them. More information on this program is found in Chapter 4.

Property Values

Though they are somewhat different from one another, State Fair and Grixdale Farms do share certain common traits. For instance, median home values in both areas have consistently struggled to rise to the citywide median over the past 20 years.³⁴ Despite home values steadily rising in Detroit as a whole since 2013, property values in NorthTown and the surrounding areas have remained stagnant.³⁵ As shown in Figure 1-11, sales prices throughout the area have roughly followed the market trends of the city as a whole over the past 20 years. The gap between the City's median sales price and NorthTown's median sales prices has closed significantly though since the economic recession of 2008-2009.

Home-Foreclosure Rates

Tax foreclosures are affecting a significant population of the Seven



Figure 1-10. Grixdale Farms Neighborhood, 2015. Source: Team Photo.

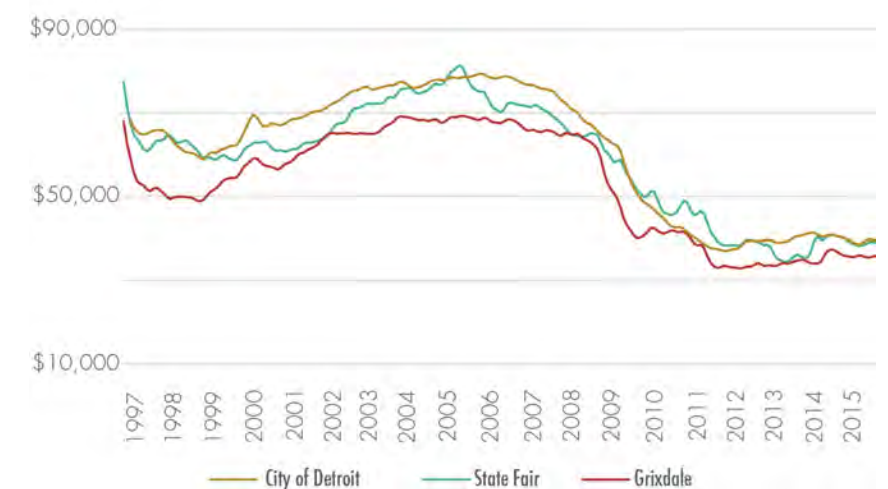


Figure 1-11. Median Home Prices in Study Area by Month, Jan 1997 – October 2015. Source: Calculated using data from Zillow Research, 2015.

Mile area.³⁶ Loveland Technologies indicates that about 15 percent of owners in the Seven Mile area were subject to foreclosure in 2015, with another 16 percent already facing foreclosure. Evictions stemming from foreclosures remove residents from the neighborhood who may

have otherwise stayed, and, if neighborhood trends continue, these residents will not be replaced. Should large numbers of residents continue to be forced out of their homes due to foreclosure, vacancy rates will likely rise and more of the community's housing stock will likely fall into

disrepair. Aggregating the areas north and south of Seven Mile, a total of 401 parcels were expected to fall into tax foreclosure in 2015, 91 of which were occupied structures. Figure 1-12 highlights these properties:



Figure 1-12. Properties Expected to Fall into Tax Foreclosure in 2015. Source: Base map adapted from Data Driven Detroit with data from Loveland Technologies.



Figure 1-13. Proximity to surrounding developments. Source: adapted from Kenneth Weikal Landscape Architecture.

THE SEVEN MILE BUSINESS CORRIDOR

The Seven Mile Corridor has a number of existing assets that provide a strong foundation for growth moving forward. In addition to proximity to other developments, the corridor also benefits from several institutional anchors and long-time business owners who are dedicated to that area.

CENTRALITY AND PROXIMITY TO MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

NorthTown is a 10-minute drive from Ferndale, Royal Oak, and Hazel Park. Its proximity to major corridors, bounded by Woodward, John R Street, and less than a mile from the I-75 freeway provides good access to both nearby neighborhoods and the suburbs while the availability of bus route 45

provides limited access for transit users. Additionally, a proposed transit hub on Woodward Avenue to accommodate new residents has the potential to attract residents from other areas of Detroit.

The Corridor's proximity to other commercial areas, in particular the Gateway Shopping complex and Livernois Avenue of Fashion, present opportunities for synergy and the potential to draw in customers that are already visiting these neighboring areas, as shown in Figure 1-13. The Gateway Marketplace includes regional and national chains, among them Meijer, Starbucks, and Applebees, while the Livernois area has locally-based businesses such as Simply Casual, Kuzzo's Chicken and Waffles, and Jo's Gallery.

Availability of redevelopment-ready sites

There is an availability of building stock along Seven Mile Road in fair to good condition, the majority of which range from one to four stories. Most of the sidewalks are designed for pedestrians. Although some buildings need renovation, a few simple steps such as setting up street-facing windows or facade improvement can make this place more pedestrian-friendly.

One of the issues that people might face in the future is the numerous property ownerships, as can be seen in Chapter 2. Due to the fact that properties on the corridor are mostly held by different people, it will require more effort to create consensus among them.

Business anchors

Several existing businesses that have operated along Seven Mile Road for decades, including Sullaf Restaurant, S & J Meats, B & S Auto Collision, and Pointe One Source Auto. The owners of these businesses present an enormous source of historical neighborhood knowledge and expertise in weathering economic cycles. In particular, one business owner who opened his shop 36 years ago has invested in facade improvements in partnership with ACC and requires his employees to regularly clean up the sidewalks surrounding his business. There is also a new business that has opened in the past two years, Safari Boutiques and Gifts. In addition, the recent arrival of the Oasis of Hope Christian Church (Oasis Church); GrowTown's plans to expand their urban farming operations and nutrition program; and development

proposals for State Fairgrounds north of Seven Mile Road all signal emerging interest in the area and potential for investment by select civic, business and institutional stakeholders

The resources and capacity of these businesses is enhanced by civic and institutional anchors along the corridor, including Greenfield Union Elementary-Middle School, Oasis Church, and ACC's offices. These are also an asset to the community, as each anchor draws its own set of people to the area and can provide a wide range of services and assistance to redevelop the corridor and increase livability.

High unemployment and job-housing imbalance

Of the 57 percent of residents in NorthTown who are employed, the majority hold jobs in three

sectors: education, health care and social assistance (25 percent), service industries (13 percent), and professional, scientific and management industries (11 percent). The major occupations held by residents (in the above industries and others) are professional, office and administrative positions, as well as transportation and materials movement. A small number of self-employed residents live in the community (6.4 percent).³⁷ Within this context, it is perhaps not surprising that of the approximately 290 jobs within the study area, only two are held by residents living in the neighborhood while the remaining 288 employees live outside and regularly travel into the neighborhood (Figure 1-14).³⁸ This suggests that there are opportunities to increase local employment of residents through business attraction in the future. ■

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Figure 1-14. Mismatch of local jobs and resident skills within Seven Mile neighborhood
Source: Base map adapted from Data Driven Detroit with data from US Census Bureau, 2015



CH 02: FINDINGS

FINDING 1

Stakeholders within NorthTown could amplify the impact of their work through better collaboration.

FINDING 2

NorthTown has significant opportunities for additional placemaking.

FINDING 3

The physical environment presents a barrier to development and safety.

FINDING 4

Property owners have varying levels of accountability.

FINDING 5

The Seven Mile Corridor lacks retail and dining destinations.

FINDING 1. STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN NORTHTOWN COULD AMPLIFY THE IMPACT OF THEIR WORK THROUGH BETTER COLLABORATION.

The limited collaboration and connection between different stakeholder groups and community leaders is a significant barrier to redevelopment. Our field research indicates that each group engages in its own activities focused on improving the community's livability and physical conditions, but that these lack alignment with other neighborhood entities.

NEIGHBORHOOD ENTITIES

Two separate initiatives currently exist at the neighborhood level: a partnership between ACC and Penrose Village focused on providing food and health care to residents and the Grixdale Farms Neighborhood Association organization.

The cooperation between ACC and Penrose Village highlights collaboration efforts in the area. An initial partnership between the developer and ACC

led to the construction of low-income housing units that now serve as an anchor in the State Fair neighborhood. Additionally, the two organizations coordinate a number of neighborhood events that benefit residents.

Outside of ACC's partnership with Penrose Village, many opportunities for sustained collaboration exist and should be capitalized upon. The newly formed Grixdale Farms Neighborhood Association presents one such option for ACC. Though the neighborhood association has only existed since June of 2015, the group has achieved some measurable progress in increasing street lighting and addressing crime in the area.¹ While leaders of both ACC and the neighborhood association have knowledge of the other group, the two groups have had minimal interaction. In conversations, however, both residents and a leader of the neighborhood association expressed a strong desire

to understand ACC's goals for the community and collaborate to improve the neighborhood.²

Respondents from institutional and civic stakeholder groups such as Penrose Village, GrowTown, Oasis Church and community residents also discussed several initiatives that had taken place in the past, like clothing drives, or were currently in operation, such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs. All of these initiatives had limited partnerships and benefitted only select groups in the community. These dynamics exist in a context of constrained resources, limited capacity and common challenges, which suggests significant opportunity for greater collaboration between community, business and institutional stakeholders to leverage shared resources and increase overall capacity.

THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Newer members of the business community reported little or no contact with surrounding business owners and ACC, but also expressed strong interest in building relationships with their neighbors. While more tenured business owners had significant familiarity with several other tenants and owners, particularly those that were members of the Chaldean business community, there was no formal structure for collaboration, such as a business association. Several property and business owners have also engaged in limited efforts with ACC for storefront and façade improvements in the past, but without creating a cohesive strategy for improving the appearance of the corridor.³

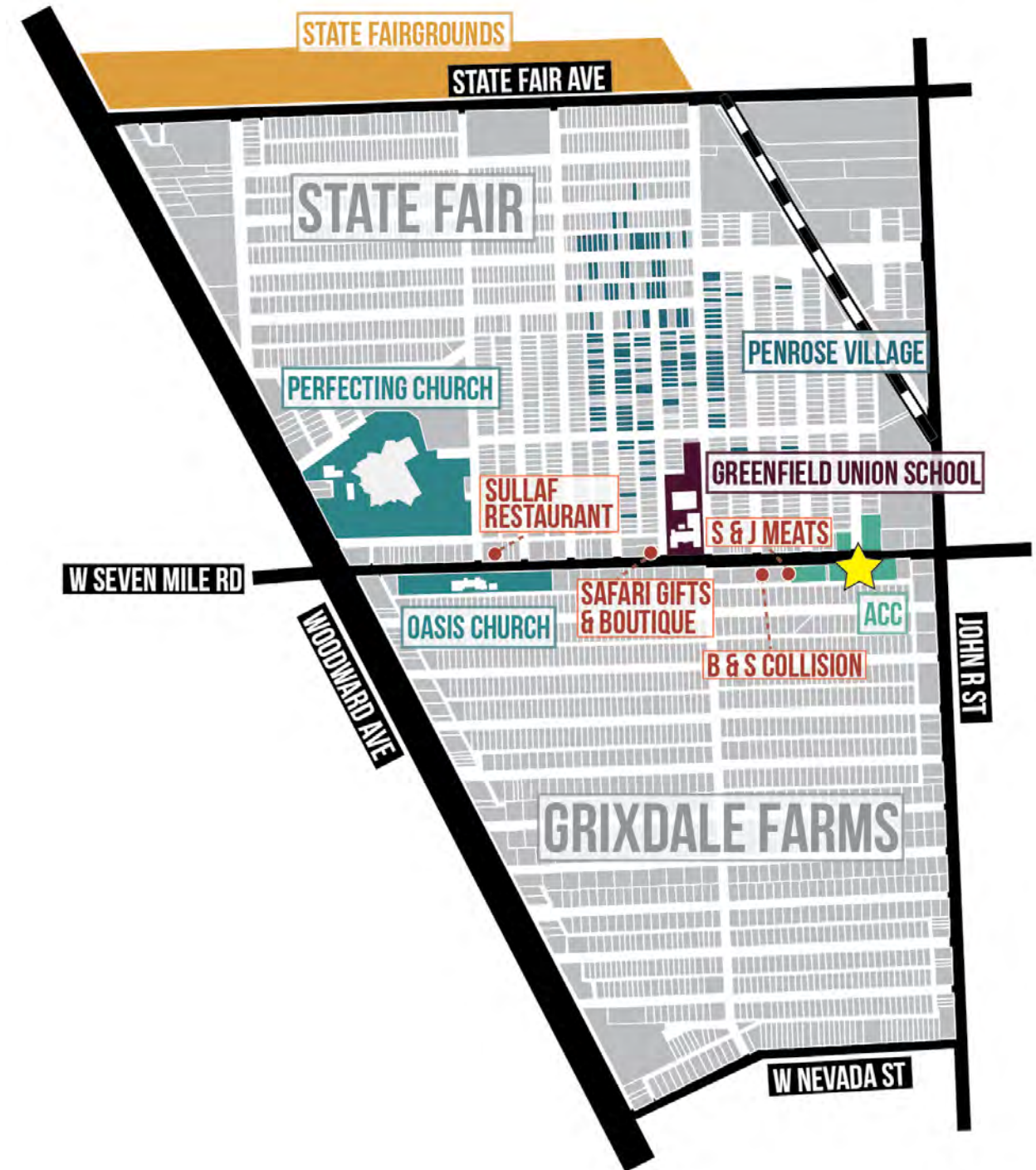


Figure 2-2. Stakeholders throughout the NorthTown Community
Source: Base map adapted from Data Driven Detroit, 2015.



Figure 2-1. A multi-family home on Derby Street, 2015.
Source: Team Photo.

FINDING 2. NORTHTOWN HAS SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADDITIONAL PLACEMAKING.

Within NorthTown currently, significant opportunities exist for creating new spaces and improving existing spaces in a way that could have an important impact, especially along the Seven Mile Corridor and the blocks immediately surrounding it.

The Vacant Property Toolbox, developed for neighborhoods by Michigan Community Resources, suggests that in neighborhoods struggling with high vacancy rates, it is important for residents to be able to articulate why they live there and why it could be a desirable location for others.⁴ In order to do this, residents need to have a clear understanding of the neighborhood's identity and a strong connection to the place itself. If this connection does not already exist,

the process of defining a neighborhood identity and building that connection can be, in itself, an important step in strengthening a neighborhood.⁵ One way to develop this kind of connection to place is through the act of placemaking. Placemaking provides the people who will be living near and using public spaces the opportunity to come together around a common design and purpose for those spaces – and then implement it.⁶ Successful placemaking creates spaces that are uniquely suited to their context and the needs of the people who will use them.⁷ Developing and enhancing public spaces in NorthTown can help to solidify a common identity and build a stronger connection between residents and the place itself.⁸

Currently, this area does not even have a commonly agreed upon name, which is both a barrier to accurate external knowledge of the area, as well as a symptom of the lack of cohesion inside the community. Without one easily-identified name, for example, it could be harder to gain and maximize positive publicity because external media and other groups will not know how to refer to it or may call it a variety of different names when they do. While we are calling it 'NorthTown' for the purposes of the report, as explained in the Introduction, many Detroiters still think of this area as 'Chaldean Town' instead, despite a decreased Chaldean residential population. Furthermore, when we spoke with residents, we found that some identify more with individual



Figure 2-3. Natural figures in Herman Park in Penrose Village, 2015
Source: Team Photo



Figure 2-4. Herman Park in Penrose Village, 2015.
Source: Team Photo

neighborhoods (i.e. Penrose Village or Grixdale Farms) than with NorthTown as a whole.⁹

In the previous finding, we suggest that stakeholders within the community lack sufficient connection, which is exacerbated by the fact that there is no strong and common identity to rally around. If this area could develop a coherent identity that was internally and externally consistently, it would be easier to build momentum. A truly successful placemaking process would require a more coherent understanding of the community's identity as a first step (and also as a consistent underpinning to creation of future spaces).

OPEN SPACE

Both the corridor and the neighborhoods closely surrounding it need additional open spaces that provide public places for residents and visitors. Currently, only two small parks are located within the community, as well as a school playground that is fenced off. The Seven Mile Corridor itself has few public spaces outside of a small plaza on ACC's campus. In an interview, a 12-year resident of Penrose Village talked about the need for additional spaces in which children can play and families can gather

In addition to this, Penrose Village also contains the recently completed Herman Park (shown in Figure 2-3 and 2-4), on the corner of Blake and Annin Streets. KMG, the Penrose Village property management company, maintains the park, which is open to all residents of that neighborhood.¹² Finally, Greenfield Union Elementary-Middle School, located on Seven Mile Road, also has a playground attached to it. The playground has a fence around it, however, suggesting it is not open to public use.

SEVEN MILE CORRIDOR

As previously mentioned, the corridor itself lacks open spaces that would draw visitors and encourage congregation. In addition, the corridor does not have clear entrances and visible markers that indicate to a visitor that they are on a specific and unique commercial corridor.

outside. She mentioned that children in the neighborhood end up playing in the streets or travelling more than a mile to find a place they can play basketball or gather after school.¹⁰

According to Data Driven Detroit, the only park within the NorthTown neighborhood maintained by the Detroit Parks and Recreation Department is the Hildale-Grixdale Mini Park, located on the very outskirts of the community near Palmer Woods.¹¹



Figure 2-5. The Seven Mile Corridor facing east from Carmen Street, 2015.
Source: Team Photo

FINDING 3. THE EXISTING PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT PRESENTS A BARRIER TO DEVELOPMENT AND SAFETY.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONDITIONS

High levels of blight and vacancy within the residential neighborhoods to both the north and south of the Seven Mile Corridor have the potential to decrease property values, discourage outside investment, and attract crime.

Structural Conditions in North of Seven Mile Road

North of Seven Mile Road, according to Motor City Mapping's citywide database, only an estimated 457 properties surveyed contain structures, about 30 percent of all properties in the neighborhood; 366 of these— or 80 percent— were rated to be in "good" or "fair" condition.¹³ About 20 percent of the neighborhood's structures were evaluated to be in either poor or unsalvageable condition. Several of these parcels have significant fire damage, are unsecured, and experience dumping on their grounds. As shown in Figure 2-6 to the right, blighted structures (highlighted on the map in purple) tend to exist in "pockets" around the neighborhood, particularly in the areas closest to Seven Mile Road. Penrose Village creates a gap in this trend, but blight still flanks the development on the east and west. About 20 percent of all structures in the area need windows and doors boarded in order to become secure.¹⁴

The northern portion of this area (between Annin Street and West State Fair Avenue) contains mostly vacant lots.¹⁵ Figure 2-6 illustrates the prevalence of parcels that do not contain structures, highlighted in red.

Structural Conditions South of Seven Mile Road

The physical conditions in the area south of the Seven Mile Corridor are quite a bit better than those north of the Seven Mile Corridor.¹⁶ This area contains about 3,244 parcels; more than half contain structures, and 85 percent of those structures are rated to be in "good" or "fair" condition. Just over 30 percent of structures are vacant though, and about 25 percent of the structures are unsecured and in need of boarding. Because some structures currently in good condition are vacant and/or unsecured, many residential properties are in danger of becoming blighted in the future.¹⁷

As Figure 2-6 illustrates, parcels without structures in good or fair condition are clustered in fairly well-defined and tightly-bound areas south of the Seven Mile Corridor. The bulk of blighted structures in this neighborhood are located between Seven Mile Road and Golden Gate Avenue. Hildale Street, Grixdale Avenue, and Greendale Street, however, are located just south of this blight cluster, each of which have maintained existing housing

structures throughout the neighborhood's recent decline. These homes are nearly fully occupied, tend to be in very good condition, and create a contiguous community in the heart of the Grixdale Farms neighborhood.

Most of the blight clusters along Brentwood, Hollywood and Robinwood Streets consist of vacant lands with dumping.¹⁸ Additionally, much of this land is publicly held, either through the city or land banks. In Figure 2-8 on the next page, light green parcels represent publicly-held land. It is of particular note that many of these publicly-held parcels occur contiguously.

Data also indicates that private ownership is a strong predictor of a structure's condition. 95 percent of the structures surveyed south of Seven Mile Road were reported to be in "good" to "fair" condition, with 83 percent of these being rated as "good" (the highest rating available in this metric). Meanwhile, just 68 percent of those structures that are publicly held were surveyed to be in "good" or "fair" condition. Furthermore, 81 percent of the publicly-held parcels with structures are reported to be unoccupied, indicating that many of the properties rated to be in decent shape are sitting empty and potentially not being cared for.¹⁹

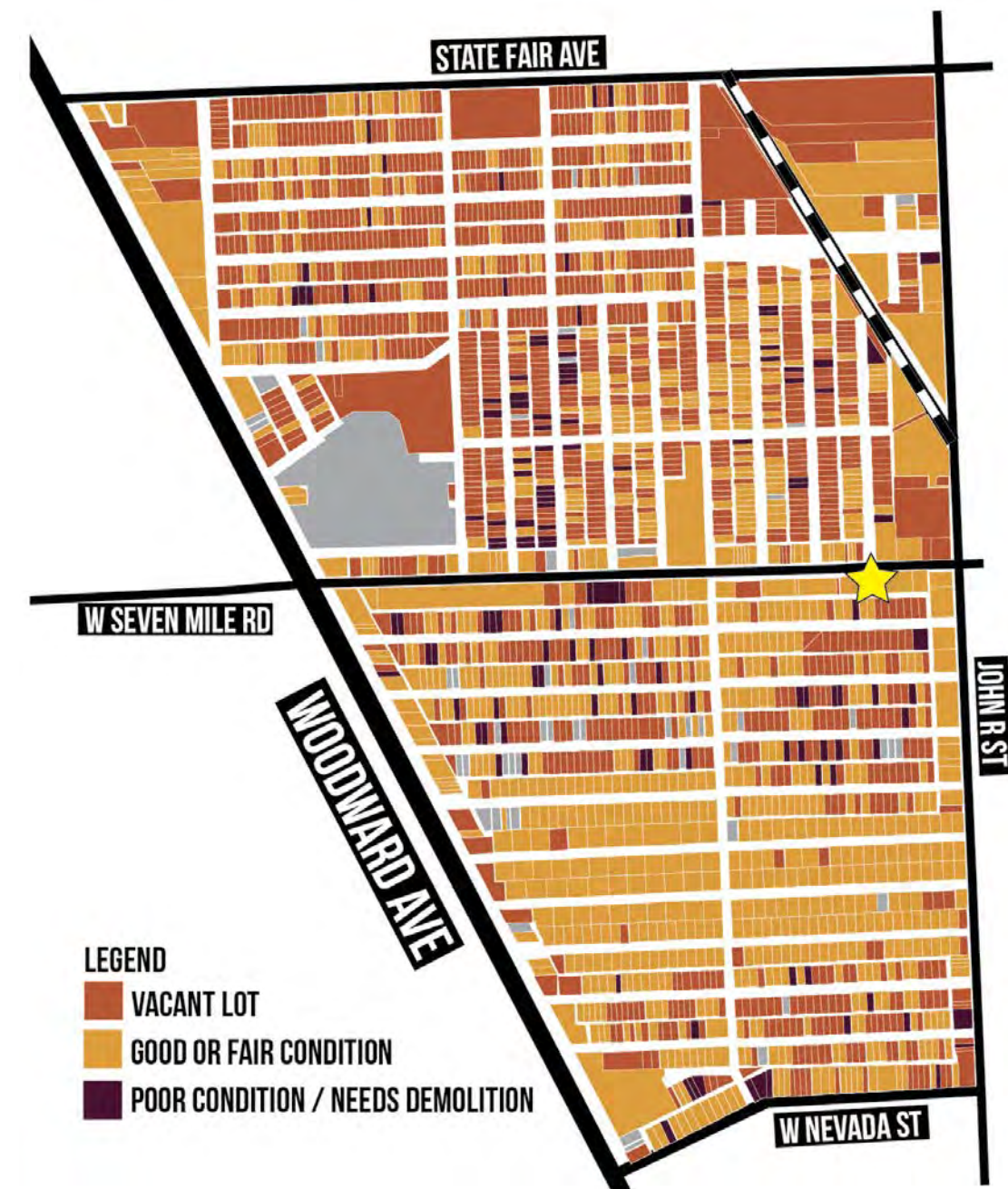


Figure 2-6. Parcel Conditions in Northtown. Source: Base map adapted from Data Drive Detroit, edited with data from Loveland Technologies, 2015.



Figure 2-7. Physical conditions of parcels fronting the Seven Mile Corridor, 2015. Source: Base map from Google Earth, data from team field collections.

SEVEN MILE CORRIDOR CONDITIONS
Physical Conditions Along Seven Mile Road

Several of the buildings along the corridor are vacant and in poor condition.²⁰ Notable exceptions include ACC’s campus and several well-maintained properties, such as Greenfield Union Elementary/Middle

School, Oasis Church, the Detroit Fire Hall, the former Goodwill Community Chapel, a parcel of commercial buildings directly east of Blake Street, and the north side of Seven Mile Road between Charleston Street and John R. Recent landscaping improvements and the addition of street furniture along the eastern portion of the corridor have improved walkability, but the area as

a whole is marked by concentrated pockets of blight and vacancy. While physical conditions east of Charleston Street are overall much better than those to the west, the number of buildings with broken windows and vacant, dilapidated storefronts alongside empty surface parking lots, wooden streetlights, and overgrown lots signal a lack of investment. Sections of the corridor that are occupied by tenants still contain some barriers to pedestrians, such as chain-link fences, abundant surface parking lots, poor quality signage, and blank walls without windows.

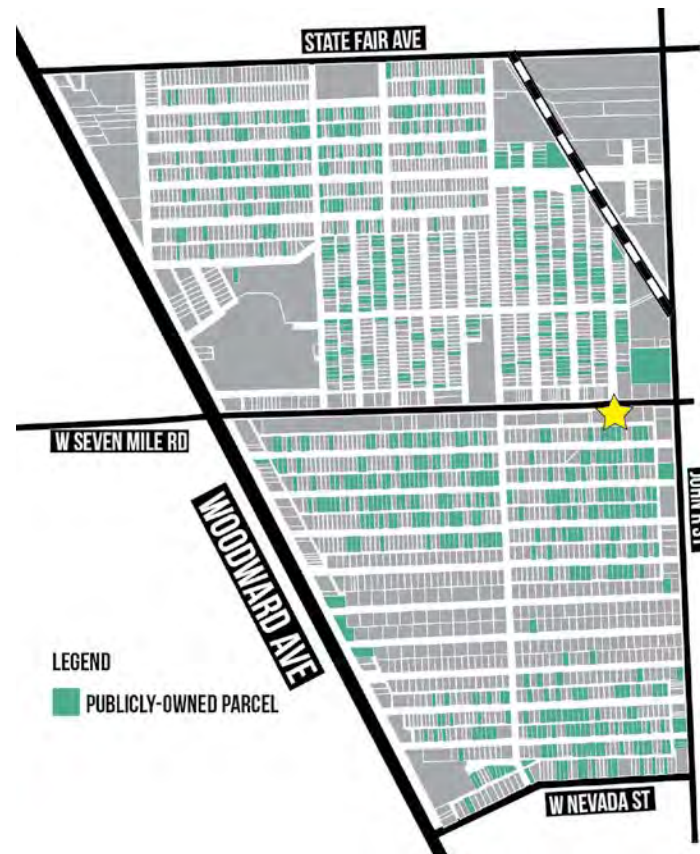


Figure 2-8. Distribution of publicly-owned parcels in NorthTown. Source: Base map adapted from Data Driven Detroit, edited with data from Loveland Technologies, 2015.

Commercial blocks along the north side of Seven Mile Road are short in length and have easily accessible alleys. These blocks retain the traditional main street form, with stores opening up to the pedestrian edge and parking behind the building. The south side of Seven Mile Road between Woodward Avenue and John R Street contains two long blocks that are bisected by Charleston Street, which turns into a one-way street north of Seven Mile Road. The limited accessibility to these lots from the south side has resulted in most parking spaces being located next to the buildings, as can be seen above in Figure 2-7.



Figure 2-9. Examples of well-preserved homes in the Grixdale Farms neighborhood, 2015. Source: Team Photo.

FINDING 4. PROPERTY OWNERS HAVE VARYING LEVELS OF ACCOUNTABILITY.

LARGEST NORTHTOWN PROPERTY HOLDERS BY NUMBER OF PARCELS HELD

PRIVATE OWNERS	NUMBER OF PARCELS
Penrose Village	122
Perfecting Church	69
Atheer Ibrahim	27
PPM Managment	23
London Group, LLC.	20
Arab American & Chaldean Council	18
Lisa Asker	16
Original New Grace Baptist Church	14
Detroit Leasing Company	14
Odis Buffington	10
Fannie Mae	10
RSD Development	10

PUBLIC OWNERS	NUMBER OF PARCELS
City of Detroit	366
Detroit Land Bank Authority	220
Michigan Land Bank FTA	106
Wayne County	30
Detroit Public Schools	6
TOTAL PUBLICLY HELD	728

Figure 2-10. Largest NorthTown property holders by number of parcels owned. Source: Data calculated from Loveland Technologies, 2015.

RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

The two neighborhoods that make up NorthTown (State Fair and Grixdale Farms) illustrate distinct patterns of residential property ownership with governmental entities serving as the largest property owners in the area. The local, county, and state governments own almost 29 percent of the total parcels in NorthTown in roughly similar proportions north and south of Seven Mile Road.²¹

Land in the area has transferred to public ownership for many reasons, most commonly through property foreclosure. The Wayne County Treasurer's Office plays a leading role in seizing foreclosed properties from delinquent taxpayers, as mandated by Michigan state statute.²² Properties seized through property tax foreclosure enter a public auction if the local government refuses to take control of the property (known as the right of first refusal). Many of the foreclosed properties have not sold at recent public auctions despite low opening bid prices. In past years, the Wayne County Treasurer often transferred the properties that fail to sell in auction back to the City of Detroit. Beginning last year, county officials began transferring properties to the DLBA instead of the city.²³

Moving forward, the DLBA will serve as the public storehouse for most of the foreclosed and unused municipal properties. While the City of Detroit owned 366 parcels in NorthTown as of 2014, it either has transferred or will transfer many of these properties to the DLBA.²⁴ The DLBA, in turn, will attempt to sell these properties to Detroit residents. This practice is common throughout the

city. In fact, one DLBA official estimates that the land bank will control nearly one-third of the total parcels in the Detroit by the end of 2015.²⁵

North of Seven Mile Road, in the State Fair neighborhood, a significant number of development corporations own numerous parcels. While Penrose Village has actively worked to develop housing and other productive uses, each of the other four largest land owners in the State Fair neighborhood have allowed parcels to remain largely undeveloped and unmaintained. Of the 137 parcels owned by the next four largest land owners, only seven parcels have structures, and the owners fail to maintain over 80 percent of the vacant parcels. This creates large areas of empty, unmaintained land that attracts dumping and crime. Additional information about these property owners can be found in Appendix II.

In contrast, the Grixdale Farms neighborhood lacks entities that own large numbers of properties. The current condition of parcels held by the largest land owners in Grixdale Farms varies widely depending on the owner. While a number of owners provide housing in good condition and avoid vacancies, many owners possess only vacant, unmaintained parcels.

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

The Seven Mile Corridor is

characterized by a wide variety of property owners who have shown varying levels of investment and maintenance in their properties. The 79 parcels along the corridor are owned by a mix of 48 public and private property owners, and the majority of landowners hold more than one parcel along the corridor. As shown in Figure 2-10, the top ten largest owners (by total area in square feet of all parcels) own a combined 61 percent of property, with private and public institutions and ACC owning the largest portion (40 percent).²⁶

Seven private individual owners own another 21 percent of all property along the corridor, while the remaining 39 percent of property is split among a large mix of private individuals and institutions.²⁷ Some properties along the corridor have been well-maintained and show signs of regular upkeep, but others are in very poor condition and display clear evidence of neglect and dumping. Without direct contact, limited information exists as to whether owners are unable or simply lack financial incentive to maintain and reuse the many vacant properties along the Corridor. These inconsistent building conditions and pockets of blight have resulted in a disconnected streetscape that can significantly deter investment in the area.

The mix of private and public property ownership along the Seven Mile

Corridor presents an added layer of complexity that can inform where to focus initial redevelopment efforts. For example, the parcels held by the top seven landowners are primarily concentrated in blocks along high-traffic areas, such as the Woodward and Seven Mile intersection, the Charleston Street intersection and the John R and Seven Mile intersection (see Figure 2-11).²⁸

Private property owners play a key role in redevelopment efforts, especially with general property upkeep and maintenance, selecting uses for their buildings and marketing the corridor to potential tenants, investors and customers. When selecting sites for redevelopment, engaged and committed owners can be valuable partners in redevelopment efforts or in the case of absentee owners, act as barriers.



Figure 2-11. Map of top10 property owners along Seven Mile Corridor. Source: Base map adapted from Data Driven Detroit and edited with data from Loveland Technologies, 2015.

FINDING 5. THE SEVEN MILE CORRIDOR LACKS RETAIL AND DINING DESTINATIONS.

Overall, the Seven Mile Corridor lacks a vibrant mix of retail destinations and is characterized by a high density of auto-related businesses, in particular a gas station, a rental car business, two auto centers, and three car dealerships. These businesses, along with the few retail and dining destinations that are currently located on Seven Mile Road, however, have demonstrated a strong commitment to the area; one business owner in particular opened his business in 1979 and has remained on the Seven Mile Corridor since then, despite a changing customer base. Multiple business owners expressed optimism that the neighborhood will improve and those interviewed planned to stay in the area. One owner even expressed plans to expand her business if profits are there.²⁹

The only retail and dining destinations

along the corridor are S & J Meats, Sullaf Restaurant, and Safari Gifts & Boutique. S & J Meats has been a long-time business anchor that draws loyal customers from around the city and surrounding suburbs. Sullaf Restaurant has also been a long-time fixture on the corridor and is the only dining destination, drawing a host of regular customers for its Middle Eastern cuisine. Although few in number, these longtime retail and dining destinations have shown an historical commitment to staying on the Seven Mile Corridor. The recent arrival of Safari Gifts & Boutique provides an array of imported goods and gifts from Kenya that also draws customers from throughout the city. In addition, Baker's Keyboard lounge is currently the only art and entertainment destination located less than one mile from the area but is not

actually within the neighborhood itself. A need exists to attract additional retailers to the corridor itself that can serve as "attractors," such as coffee shops and restaurants.

The high concentration of automotive repair and maintenance services along Seven Mile Road, coupled with a lack of "destination" businesses, presents a key challenge for attracting both customers and additional retail tenants. While several of these businesses have shown long-term commitment and draw loyal customers, such as B&S Collision, an overabundance of auto-related establishments will not attract the regular foot traffic that is desired for a vibrant, commercial corridor. Multiple business owners, in interviews, mentioned consistently low levels of foot traffic along the corridor, a finding that was corroborated by multiple site visits to the area by our team.³⁰

Another challenge is the relatively small number of residents who currently hold local jobs. A sizable minority of residents travel more than 40 minutes to reach their workplace.³¹ This means that the local economy does not benefit from the majority of local residents contributing their skills and income to business and services outside of the community. Moreover, the large number of workers living outside of NorthTown who are making daily trips to the area for employment presents an untapped potential; their disposable income can be captured by retail destinations and services along the Seven Mile Corridor, thereby stimulating spending within the local economy.³² One business owner along Seven Mile Road commented on the benefit of being close to employees from surrounding agencies such as ACC, since many local workers have come to his auto repair shop for services because of the convenient location.³³

RETAIL MARKET ANALYSIS

An analysis of the retail supply and demand within 0.5 miles of the Seven Mile Corridor can serve as one of several indicators of how well existing businesses in the area meet the retail needs of residents.³⁴ The center point is at Seven Mile Road and Charleston Street (see figure 2-12 on the left). The 0.5 mile radius was chosen for analysis because it signifies an average walking distance for residents in the neighborhood who do not have access to vehicles and either walk or rely on public transit. It is important to understand that this quantitative analysis only represents one part of what should be a much more comprehensive evaluation of the local retail sector. Corroborating these findings with additional research on surrounding competition, consumer preferences, and other market indicators will provide more accurate and well-informed conclusions about retail market opportunities for the Seven Mile Corridor.

Retail Surplus

Retail businesses within a 0.5 mile radius area captured almost \$2 million more in retail sales than was spent by residents in the area in 2014, indicating a surplus. This implies that some businesses within the 0.5 mile area are also drawing non-local shoppers.³⁵

Three main types of businesses captured significant retail sales surpluses in the area. The largest surplus was experienced by motor vehicle and parts dealers, which generated approximately \$2.4 million more in gross sales than was spent by local residents in 2014. Gasoline stations follow, capturing \$2.2 million more than local spending. With three gasoline stations within a 0.5 mile radius and the heavy traffic flow of Seven Mile Road and Woodward Avenue, gasoline stations service not only the local and surrounding neighborhood, but also traffic passing

through. Finally, food and beverage stores captured \$1.1 million more than was spent by local residents, with most of the demand met by specialty food stores and beer, wine, and liquor stores.³⁶

A surplus in retail sales within these categories suggests a potential to capture spending by non-local customers along the corridor. For example, locating retailers and food and dining establishments in close proximity to the many automotive and parts dealers might present additional opportunities to attract customers that already travel to the area.

Retail Leakage

Local spending for health and personal care and food services and drinking places exceeded the amount that local businesses captured in 2014 by \$770,000 and \$250,000, respectively. This suggests that the community has potential to support additional businesses within these specific sectors to meet existing demand.³⁷

The lack of health and personal care stores, full-service restaurants, and limited-service eating places along the corridor suggests these can be potential sectors to explore for business attraction. Keep in mind that these figures do not explicitly guarantee a positive business climate or successful retail opportunity; rather, they are a helpful starting point for identifying potential sectors of unmet demand within the community.³⁸ In multiple different interviews, stakeholders, including business owners, residents, and employees in the area commented on a desire to see more food options such as restaurants and cafes.³⁹

The role of other commercial districts within two miles of the Seven Mile Corridor (such as the Gateway Complex and the Livernois Fashion District) in attracting local spending outside of the neighborhood should also be considered when evaluating viable retail opportunities for the community. ■



Figure 2-12. 0.5 mile study area with business type distribution on the Seven Mile Corridor. Source: Base map edited with data from Esri, 2015.



Figure 2-13. One of several car dealerships along the Seven Mile Corridor, 2015. Source: Team Photo.

ENDNOTES

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Figure 2-14. An abandoned apartment complex in Grixdale Farms is secured with boards along the entirety of the first floor, 2015. Source: Team Photo.



CH 04: RECOMMENDATIONS

AREAS OF FOCUS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Engage and develop formal collaborative partnerships with residents and institutions in NorthTown.

NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION

Deploy targeted blight reduction tactics.
Connect neighborhoods with open green spaces.
Partner with local agencies and organizations to facilitate better land management practices.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Build capacity along the Seven Mile Corridor.
Target businesses in the food industry.
Create a more active corridor.

AREAS OF FOCUS

With limited capacity and resources available for neighborhood-scale interventions, it makes sense to concentrate the community's resources on key focus areas with the greatest potential to yield favorable returns on investment.¹ An emerging body of research is indicating that targeted investments within concentrated sections of distressed neighborhoods have substantial impacts for the neighborhood's overall value.² Over time these targeted areas become strong anchors of the community, and resources can then be reallocated to the remaining portions of the community.

We propose targeting six highly visible, strategic locations within NorthTown and adopting a two-pronged strategy that simultaneously focuses on the business corridor and specific sections of the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Targeting commercial and residential properties will require different resources and tactics, so a focus on one should not limit the other. Instead, meaningful initiatives in both areas will support each other and maximize the impact.

Three of the suggested focus areas fall along the Seven Mile business corridor, while another three are in the surrounding neighborhood. Figure 4-1 shows the location of each of the focus areas.

Targeting focus areas does not mean simply ignoring all other sections of the neighborhood. Instead, it means that the majority of the community's available resources, funds and manpower should be dedicated toward revitalizing these areas first. We suggest three different phases for suggested implementation.

SEVEN MILE CORRIDOR FOCUS AREAS

Focus Area 1: Seven Mile and Woodward intersection

As the main, western entrance into the Seven Mile Corridor, this represents a significant opportunity for targeted investment. Currently a BP gas station, dental office, fast-food outlet, and Oasis Church, as well as ample surface parking and two bus stops north and south of the street serving Route 45 are located here. This site experiences the most pedestrian traffic due to the bus stops and location.

Focus Area 2: Charleston and Seven Mile intersection

This site is located in the center of the corridor and represents a strategic location due to the presence of Greenfield Union Elementary-Middle School, which can serve as an anchor institution for the redevelopment, and Charleston Street, which serves as the main thoroughfare connecting the north and south communities. 2012 Traffic count data indicates an average daily traffic volume of approximately 11,000 vehicles (10,913 eastward, 11,071 westward).³

Focus Area 3: Seven Mile and John R intersection

This is the main, eastern entrance for the Seven Mile Corridor and also represents a significant opportunity for placemaking and targeted investment. This area currently has two auto sales/repair shops (Montana Auto Sales and Pointe One Auto Center), a fast-food restaurant (Julian's Coney Island-currently closed), the district firehall, and the ACC complex. Several surface parking lots exist in this area. The majority of buildings in this area have well-preserved facades, and the infrastructure is of fairly good condition relative to focus areas 1 and 2.

RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD

FOCUS AREAS

Focus Area 4: Penrose Village

The Penrose development shows other potential investors and developers that the area is not just primed for development, but that development is already happening there. That one developer has invested in this location signals that an opportunity exists for others to jump into the neighborhood as well.

Focus Area 5: Charleston Street

The other two residential focus areas are connected via Charleston Street. Therefore, Charleston and the properties that surround it should also be of focus. This is for two reasons: first, the area is fairly densely populated with housing stock in relatively good condition, and second, this road is an excellent opportunity to connect the areas north and south of the Seven Mile corridor.

Focus Area 6: Grixdale Farms

The Grixdale/Hildale area should be of focus due to its densely populated, well-maintained housing stock, and the existing community organizations that can be tapped for help in cleaning up the area.

PHASES

Phase 1: Charleston Street

We propose that ACC begin with a complimentary strategy of focusing on two specific areas: 1) Focus Area 5 or the properties ACC already owns south of Seven Mile, as well as the blocks around Charleston Street and Focus Area 2 along the commercial corridor in that same area. It makes sense to start there because of Charleston's value as a strong connecting street and because ACC already has some measure of control over some of the properties there. Furthermore,

concentrating on both the residential and commercial properties in the area around Charleston at the same time allows each separate piece of work to support the other and increase the likelihood of sustainable change. Improvements made to these properties could help support potential growth along the corridor as well by improving the surrounding environment and beginning to develop an additional customer base.

Phase 2: Woodward and Penrose Village

During the second phase of deploying resources, we recommend that ACC begin to focus resources on the Seven Mile, Woodward intersection along the corridor. Because of the likelihood of additional transit options along Woodward, this area will see increased traffic that could be

drawn into the corridor. Furthermore, as an entrance onto the corridor, it is important that it have an appearance that can draw in customers and set a context for the rest of the corridor visually.

At this time, we also recommend that resources begin to be focused on the properties around Penrose Village, especially those closest to the corridor. This continues to build on existing strengths and the Phase 1 focus areas. Moreover, this area is important to maintain because ACC already has a strong development partner interested in building additional housing in this area.

Phase 3: John R and Grixdale Farms

In Phase 3, we suggest that resources should be focused on the John R and

Seven Mile intersection. As a result of ACC's nearby presence, this part of the corridor already has strong anchors and, like the Woodward focus area, is an entrance to the corridor itself.

We also recommend that ACC and other organizations next focus residential resources and efforts on the properties within Focus Area 6 in the Grixdale Farms neighborhood. While this area is further from the corridor, the neighborhood association there has already begun these efforts and increased support could potentially have a strong impact on blocks that already have a number of well-maintained properties.

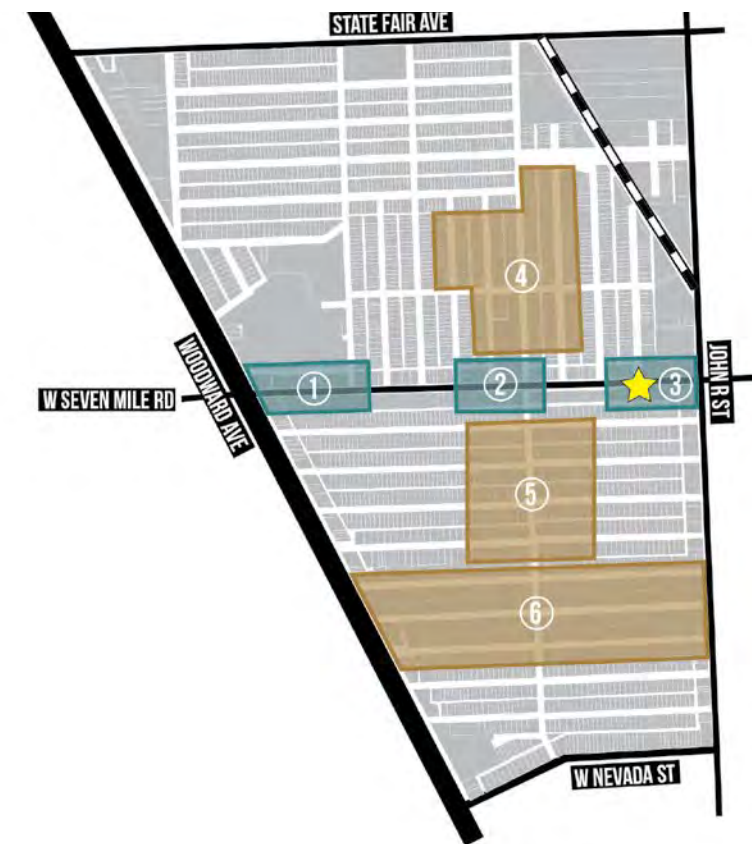


Figure 4-1. Recommended Areas of Focus in NorthTown. Source: Basemap adapted from Data Driven Detroit and edited with data from LOVELAND Technologies, 2015.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Building a strong community vision means first understanding the community's goals, problems and its opportunities. This understanding is achieved through a rigorous process that begins with meeting and getting to know people, businesses, and key stakeholders.

We recommend that ACC initiates a long-term community engagement process that brings together residents, business owners, institutional anchors, and other stakeholders to build consensus around community needs and priorities and to develop the networks and momentum necessary to address those priorities. While separate efforts to organize exist in Grixdale Farms, ACC has the unique ability to act as a bridge between multiple neighborhoods and bring groups together. ACC can act as a leader in organizing and engaging the entire community to identify common priorities and coalesce around specific goals.

By choosing to engage community partners and residents and to help build a foundation for future community efforts, ACC will strengthen the health of the neighborhood, help create structures for communicating and identifying community priorities, and develop the momentum and volunteer base to accomplish other goals. Furthermore, many of the recommendations that follow will require collaboration and the combined efforts of residents and multiple organizations to successfully implement. It is important to start by building the relationships necessary for this kind of collaboration early.

ROBUST ENGAGEMENT

The DFC report defines civic engagement as an "open and ongoing two-way dialogue among all stakeholders," including residents, schools, faith-based institutions, community organizations, businesses, and city representatives.⁴ DFC suggests this should be an active process for all parties involved; residents should not be passive observers, but rather full participants in the design and implementation of the engagement itself, as well as the goals that come out of it.⁵ When done well, this can help not only to build a base of support for initiatives, but also to develop the leaders and advocates necessary to successfully implement those initiatives.⁶

In order to have a meaningful impact, this kind of engagement should be simultaneously focused on two specific goals: building strong relationships and working toward active, measurable goals.⁷ These should both be based on existing assets and places of strength within the community and seek to connect and grow them. If successful, this will help to develop sustainable capacity that can support long-term change while still accomplishing short-term goals with an immediate effect.⁸

Examples of successful engagement strategies appear in Chapter 3, in the GRDC case study. Many of the organization's accomplishments were largely dependent upon the networks that had been built in the community, networks that provided communication mechanisms, volunteers, and planning support.



Figure 4.2: Crew members of the Detroit Conservation Leadership Corps (DCLC). Source: Detroit Conservation Leadership Corps.

RECOMMENDATION #1: ENGAGE AND DEVELOP FORMAL COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH RESIDENTS AND INSTITUTIONS IN NORTH TOWN.

As discussed in earlier chapters, NorthTown already has a range of strong and active stakeholders currently focused on efforts within their own separate neighborhoods, with insufficient connection between efforts and relatively little cohesive identity. A strong community-wide engagement process could begin to address these gaps with the following goals:

- Build connections between stakeholders and residents throughout the community;
- Create a cohesive community identity that is accessible to those outside; and
- Develop greater capacity for work in neighborhoods.

PHASE 1: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Initially, ACC should focus on reaching out to residents, churches, neighborhood organizations, and other institutional stakeholders in NorthTown to begin a dialogue about how to move forward together. This can be done through a range of outreach processes that seek out different types of community members, including larger community meetings or focus groups, as well as individual meetings with targeted members of the community. These conversations should ensure that work is grounded in priorities of the community.

PHASE 2: CREATION OF TASK FORCE

After an initial period of relationship-building, we recommend that ACC

build a formal Blight Task Force with other major stakeholders in NorthTown, including Penrose Village and the Grixdale Farms Neighborhood Association. This task force can work together to direct neighborhood stabilization efforts, including blight reduction tactics. Tapping into stakeholders already established in the community will develop extra capacity, as well as provide diverse connections and institutional knowledge.

The Blight Task Force should include leaders and residents from different neighborhoods in the community who can provide consistent direction for neighborhood efforts, as well as connections to volunteers. It is important to have a coordinating body that can identify properties to focus on and

organize specific initiatives to work on those properties. The Vacant Property Task Force, described in the GRDC case study provides an interesting example of how such a group can work.

It is likely that organizing many of the neighborhood recommendations that follow this will be time-intensive and could require full-time attention. As a result, we propose that once the Blight Task Force has been created, they create an AmeriCorp VISTA position that would be focused on implementing the priorities of the Task Force on a day-to-day basis. AmeriCorps VISTAs work for a period of at least one year for a non-profit or other social service organization at a clearly defined position that is entirely funded by the National Corporation for Community Service.⁹ This would provide the capacity needed to design and implement successful neighborhood stabilization initiatives, initiatives that could be guided by the Blight Task Force priorities.

ACC's community development arm, the NorthTown CDC, could act as the entity through which the Blight Task Force secures this VISTA position, as well as other grant funding for initiatives moving forward.

PHASE 3: DEVELOP A COMMUNITY PLAN

The recommendations that follow this section attempt to implement concrete steps that could have an immediate impact on NorthTown within the next few years. After those first steps though, it will be necessary for ACC and partners to identify new priorities on which to focus. We recommend implementing a community-wide planning process as a way to build on previous work and maintain momentum moving forward.



Figure 4-4: Community members develop a vision for their neighborhood plan. Source: Community Development Advocates of Detroit.

A good community planning process will build upon the actions recommended in this report, help ACC develop stronger relationships within the community, and identify community needs to address moving forward. A community plan identifies the goals, direction, and actions of the collective community and also carefully engages the community throughout each step in order to produce a plan that is truly beneficial and accepted by the entire neighborhood. This step functions to leverage the social, political, and community capital built through each of the previous recommendations set forth in this report and begin producing a vision for the future of NorthTown.

After understanding the community's strengths and weaknesses, a planning document is drafted and approved. This process also involves a wide range of community input and identifies the community's collective vision. This should build upon the relationships and structures that were developed in the previous step.¹⁰

In order to successfully implement this step, ACC should consider using grant funding to temporarily hire an individual who can manage and facilitate this process effectively. ACC could also work with an outside organization with experience in this area, such as Michigan Community Resources or CDAD, to develop a strategy for this process, focusing on implementing a variety of engagement methods to gather community feedback around needs. These methods could include surveys that are mailed or emailed to residents; focus groups and community conversations with residents and stakeholders; and more in-depth interviews with selected individuals. The data gathered from these conversations can then be used to identify common priorities across the community. The planning document would use these priorities to shape community goals for the next several years.



Figure 4-3: Community residents and University of Michigan students partner to improve building facades in Detroit. Source: University of Michigan, Edward Ginsberg Center.

NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION

Vacant and blighted properties often have an outsized negative impact on a neighborhood. Visible lack of maintenance and deterioration of lots and structures can depress property values on surrounding blocks and invite illegal dumping or other crime, thereby impacting both the public appearance of the neighborhood as well as the residents' sense of safety and community well-being.

If the NorthTown community is interested in attracting residential and commercial development, an important step in that process is to first stabilize the neighborhoods by addressing blight in a very targeted fashion. We recommend a series of specific steps intended to make immediate and visible improvements within neighborhoods both north and south of Seven Mile Road. These improvements will not only lay a strong foundation for future investment within the community, but also help to demonstrate a positive energy to current property owners, who may be more likely to make improvements and undertake maintenance on their own lots if they see evidence of changes in other parts of the neighborhood.



Figure 4-5. Duplex in Penrose Village Phase I, 2015.
Source: Team Photo.

RECOMMENDATION 2: DEPLOY TARGETED BLIGHT REDUCTION TACTICS

The neighborhoods both north and south of Seven Mile Road are challenged by vacant lots that are not maintained and dilapidated housing that has fallen into disrepair. In order to address these challenges, we recommend that the Blight Task Force focus on a few specific tactics to combat blight, starting in the aforementioned residential areas of focus.

In recent years, several field guides and publications have been published describing steps local organizations can take to combat blight and vacancy in their communities.¹¹ Nearly all of these guides suggest that the formation of a dedicated neighborhood block group is one of the most efficient methods of achieving measurable

results at the local level. This group of concerned residents can organize to remove trash, take turns mowing vacant lots or boarding up abandoned homes, and organizing community policing strategies.

Moreover, several Detroit organizations have achieved great success by organizing local volunteers to support their blight elimination goals. The Motor City Blight Busters of District 1, for instance, have been organizing volunteers to combat blight for more than 25 years. They partner with both public and private organizations to secure funding, which they use to supply materials to volunteers on targeted work days throughout the year. To date, the organization reports tearing down more than 300 abandoned homes, boarding up

another 379, and painting many neighborhood homes.¹² Newer organizations are also achieving similar results, including I Believe in the D, which recently coordinated more than 1,000 volunteers across several neighborhoods in the city for a one-day intense blight removal effort.

BOARDING VACANT STRUCTURES

The mayor's office currently offers free materials to residents interested in boarding vacant structures within their neighborhood. Boarding can help to secure a structure and prevent squatting, vandalism, or other illegal activity from occurring inside the building. The AmeriCorps VISTA could be responsible for selecting properties to board and getting the materials or helping residents get access to them.

CLEANING UP EMPTY LOTS

On empty lots that are not being maintained, we recommend that the community focus on cleaning up trash from illegal dumping, mowing the grass, and improving the physical appearance of these lots so they do not detrimentally impact the neighborhood environment. If the Blight Task Force were able to mobilize strategies to clean up and maintain vacant properties, especially focused in areas with potential for growth moving forward, they could help to improve the neighborhood appearance and remove a major obstacle toward future development.

The Blight Task Force should develop priority properties to target in different neighborhoods and identify the type of strategy that should be used on those properties, providing a guiding structure. The VISTA could work on accessing materials for lot clean-up and organizing residents and volunteers for specific initiatives.

TAP INTO EXISTING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITIES BUILT INTO NEIGHBORHOODS

Both of the above strategies for combating blight require a consistent volunteer base, willing to put in the time and effort to maintain properties around their neighborhood. If ACC were able to establish a network throughout the community, they could draw on volunteers to fight blight nearby their own homes.

The common thread among the groups across Detroit that successfully bring together volunteers for blight elimination efforts is solid organization. When ACC or other groups in NorthTown are trying to create a volunteer network to target blight, it is important to:

- be clear about the intended goals,
- communicate those goals effectively to the local residents via a website or word of mouth tactics, and
- efficiently organize all of the logistics ahead of time.

The Vacant Property Task Force in Grandmont Rosedale, for example, works hard to ensure that materials and details are fully confirmed before even starting to publicize an event. This prevents confusion and ensures that when volunteers do come to an event, it is a success, a strategy that encourages people to come back and participate again.¹³ Organizations like Detroit Blight Busters also work to

create publicity about their efforts by focusing on just a few large project days, which helps attract enough volunteers at once to tackle large projects in shorter amounts of time. Since organizations are often able to provide dumpsters, safety gear and tools. All a volunteer needs to do is show up, making it a more attractive opportunity for potential recruits.



Figure 4-6. Vacant lot in the State Fair neighborhood, 2015. Source: Team Photo.

IMPORTANT TOOLS

Blight Task Force Plan

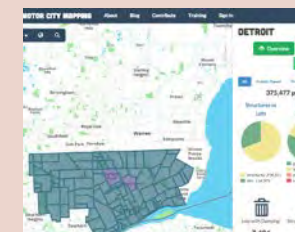
The Blight Removal Task Force Plan provides a general picture of blight in Detroit and provides comprehensive recommendations for tackling blight in neighborhoods. This can be a valuable tool because it provides targeted interventions for different types of properties and structural conditions.¹⁴ Refer to the Appendix for more information on this plan and the way in which NorthTown is depicted on maps in the plan.

Motor City Mapping

Motor City Mapping (MCM) data can be used to keep track of which properties are being maintained and which properties should be targeted as priorities for blight initiatives. The data informs an analysis of land use, vacancy, and blight in the North Town area and helps to provide context on these conditions in a more focused way. Refer to the Findings for more information on and data from MCM.

Working with Lots: A Field Guide

Detroit Future City: Working with Lots: A Field Guide (Field Guide) is an excellent resource that could be used in the endeavor to create green spaces. The Field Guide is essentially a workbook with activities and a step-by-step handbook on how to improve vacant lots. It also provides information on land use and potential designs and interventions for vacant lots. ACC could use the Field Guide to embark upon a program of improving vacant lots, focusing first on implementing designs that have low requirements for capacity, experience, maintenance and cost.¹⁵ Refer to the Appendix for more information on this guide.



RECOMMENDATION 3: CONNECT NEIGHBORHOODS WITH OPEN GREEN SPACE.

In addition to cleaning up blighted properties within the neighborhood, ACC should also consider options that develop public spaces throughout the community and improve connections between major focus areas. Charleston Street physically connects these areas, making it an appropriate location for intervention. Furthermore, Charleston Street is an area of focus in terms of both economic development and neighborhood stabilization. We recommend three specific interventions along Charleston:

- using vacant lots along the street to create park space;
- improving sidewalks to create a more cohesive pathway between neighborhoods; and
- making improvements to provide more of an entrance to the Seven Mile Corridor.

POCKET PARK

ACC should consider redesigning vacant lots to fill community needs. As previously stated, ACC should start by targeting specific empty lots for basic clean-up and maintenance. Additionally, however, some of these lots can be redesigned for innovative uses, including a pocket park.

A pocket park is a small outdoor space, more often located in an urban area surrounded by commercial buildings or houses on small lots with few places for people to gather, relax, or to enjoy the outdoors. Efforts to create green spaces like this should be prioritized within North Town. Pocket parks would not only provide needed public space for community members and residents, but also if constructed along the Seven Mile Corridor, serve

as additional support for visitors and customers in the area. They also serve to improve the overall appearance of a block or neighborhood.

TARGETED STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS NEAR CHARLESTON STREET AND SEVEN MILE ROAD.

Charleston Street can serve as a key connector from the neighborhoods to the Seven Mile Corridor. The blocks directly off Seven Mile Road to the north and south, however, are in need of specific streetscape improvements, including sidewalk repair and brush removal. Focusing on these will offer immediate and visible changes to an important intersection along the corridor. Such changes can help encourage future commercial investment in properties and businesses along the corridor.



Figure 4-7. Charleston Street in NorthTown, 2015. Source: Team Photo.



Figure 4-8. Example of a simple and inexpensive pocket park along Charleston Street. Source: Google Earth, 2015; Team Photo and Rendering.

CONNECTING NEIGHBORHOODS THROUGH CHARLESTON STREET GREENSPACE

A longer-term recommendation is to connect stable areas in NorthTown through land use mechanisms. After blight and vacancy are addressed, a linear path could provide additional green space while aiding in connectivity and accessibility, enhancing the NorthTown neighborhood's environment and quality of life.

A linear park or path could link adjoining parks and gardens, establishing even more green space and enhancing connectivity. Similar to

a greenway, it could provide land for recreation, improve property values, and stimulate commercial revenue.

We recommend creating a simple path that could help to enhance connectivity in the North Town area and provide many other benefits. This could be accomplished by improving sidewalks along Charleston, with extensions to the ACC campus and residential areas that are more stable.

In order to implement a linear park or path project, due diligence would have to be conducted; the state, City of Detroit, property owners, community members, and others would need to

be involved and engaged; feasibility and cost should be assessed; and any legal or other protocol would need to be followed.

The Center for Community Progress' *Open Space in Detroit* report describes different open space categories, as well as funding and ownership options and is a valuable resource that could be consulted when considering implementation of any type of open space.¹⁷

RECOMMENDATION 4: PARTNER WITH LOCAL AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS TO FACILITATE BETTER LAND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES.

As discussed in Chapter Two, several public land authorities hold significant amounts of land within NorthTown. This presents an opportunity for a land management partnership with these and other organizations to influence future land uses. If done well, a land management program operated in conjunction with major neighborhood stakeholders could eventually lead to more attractive development opportunities for the private sector in the future.

The public land in NorthTown is mostly held by the DLBA, Wayne County Treasurer's Office, and the Michigan Land Bank. Each of these organizations is operating with the goal of offloading its properties to taxpaying landowners, and they have all developed several programs that help to do so. In many cases, simply promoting these programs may have a positive effect on the neighborhoods.

PROMOTE THE DLBA AND MICHIGAN LAND BANK'S SIDE LOT PROGRAM

The DLBA began a program in 2015 that allows property owners adjacent to vacant lots to purchase the parcels as "side lots" for as little as \$100.¹⁸ The City of Detroit's Planning and Development Department offers a nearly identical program, and the Michigan Land Bank Fast Track Authority hosts a similar program in which residents are able to purchase adjacent lots for \$250. The new owner must maintain the lot and pay its annual property taxes, but is then able to use it as they wish. The Blight Task Force could lead a campaign to encourage homeowners in the neighborhood to purchase side lots, which would reduce dumping and

blight and increase surrounding home values. This might be an especially attractive program in the Grixdale community, where just a few vacant lots exist between homes that are otherwise in good condition. According to Motor City Mapping, only one parcel has been purchased via a side lot program within the entire NorthTown community. It is possible that residents are simply unaware of this opportunity, however, and more would be willing to purchase neighboring lots if information was provided to them.

EXPLORE PARTNERSHIPS WITH EXISTING LAND MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS, SUCH AS GREENING OF DETROIT

The Greening of Detroit is a local non-profit organization that helps neighborhoods manage their vacant land by planting trees. Community organizations like ACC can partner with them to bring additional trees to the neighborhood. In such a partnership, Greening of Detroit would provide the trees, and ACC would just need to market and recruit volunteers for the effort. Two volunteers are needed for each tree that is to be planted. The organization only plants trees on public land. Community groups can also request that Greening of Detroit plant additional trees within the boundaries of their community by simply filling out a request form on the organization's website.

Additionally, Greening of Detroit offers a summer program for Detroit students that teaches them about sound ecological practices while working in their neighborhoods. ACC could investigate setting up a partnership between Greenfield

Union Elementary-Middle School and Greening of Detroit. This would provide additional greening opportunities to the neighborhood, as well as offering programming to the neighborhood's youth.¹⁹

GAUGE LOCAL DEMOLITION COMPANY'S INTERESTS IN PRO BONO WORK WITHIN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

ACC should generally consider mutually-beneficial outcomes that might draw the interest of local demolition companies and lead to potential partnerships. As a member of the adjacent neighborhood, for example, such a company could possibly also benefit from blight removal in the area. If ACC can develop a relationship with a demolition company, they should prioritize specific properties for demolition: blighted structures, located within the areas of focus with the most extreme levels of disrepair.

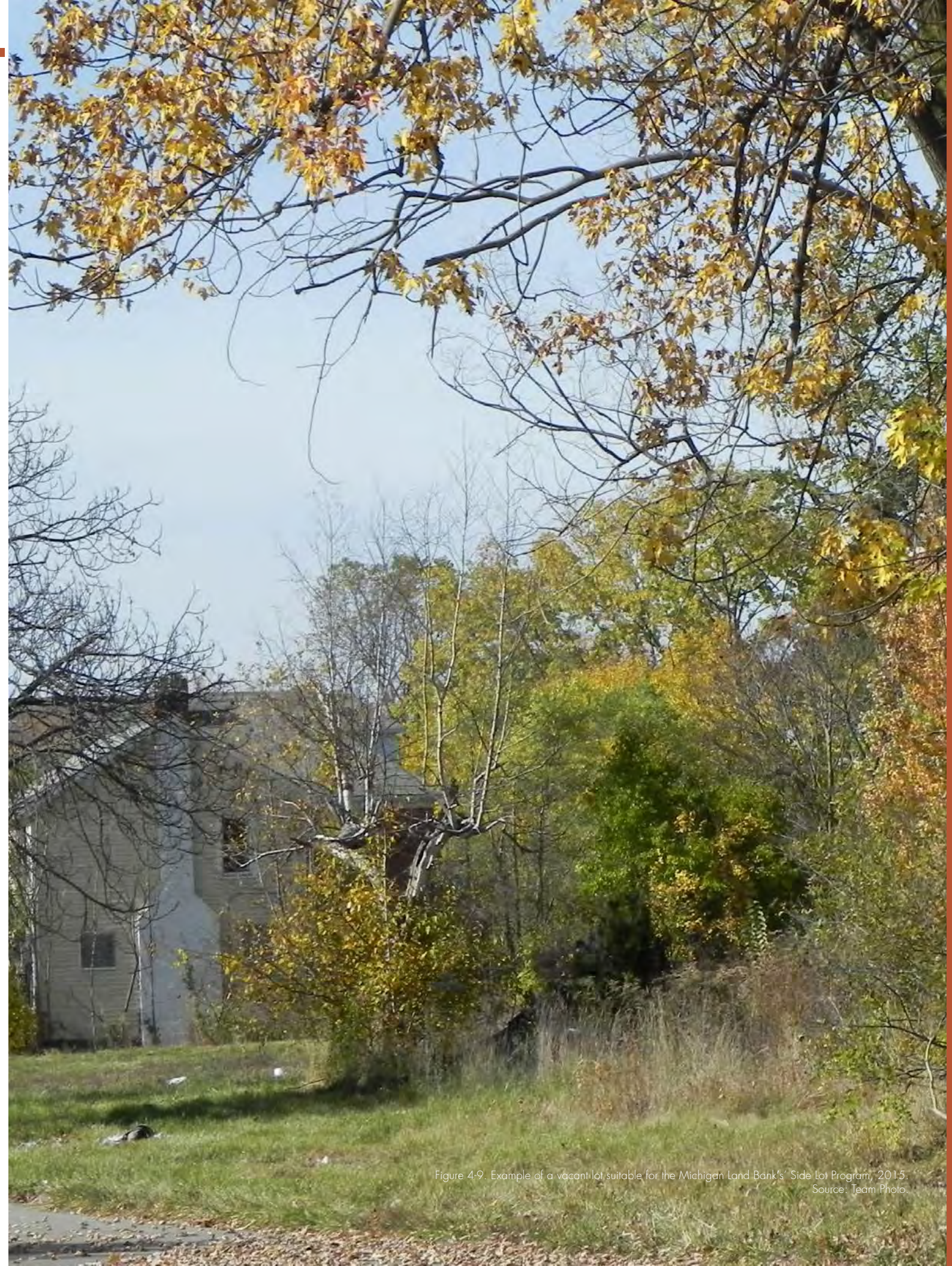


Figure 4-9. Example of a vacant lot suitable for the Michigan Land Bank's Side Lot Program, 2015. Source: Team Photo.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

An effective local economic development strategy is built upon both existing community strengths, as well as increased access to resources.²⁰ Diverse capacity in the community can better leverage existing resources into development opportunities, increase access to outside resources and also target barriers to economic development, such as poor business climate or neighborhood stigma. This requires the community to be diligent in effectively managing limited resources or forging partnerships with other organizations and communities to increase access to resources.²¹

FUNDAMENTALS FOR A VIBRANT COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR²²

Several components are necessary for attracting (initial) investment and customers to the corridor.

Management

In the absence of single land ownership, successful commercial streets require a management committee that can lead and coordinate all development-related activities and efforts along the corridor.

Engaged Tenants and Property Owners

Retailers and property owners with vision, energy and a commitment to the community are invaluable. Coordinating consistent business hours along the corridor increases the likelihood that customers will visit the area. Regularly maintaining storefronts and creating engaging window displays during peak and off-season also provides attractive streetscapes that draw greater foot traffic.

Safety

People are attracted to spaces that are filled with other people, and most customers are only willing to visit retail environments where they feel safe and secure. Despite what might be a low actual level of criminal activity within an area, the mere perception of an unsafe or declining neighborhood can be enough to detract visitors. Well-maintained building facades, clean windows and sidewalks, and ample lighting can promote the perception of a safe environment.

anchors and Tenant Mix

A diverse mix of local and community-oriented businesses creates a corridor that reflects the community's culture and tastes. The tenant mix should also include destinations that both attract a diverse group of customers, and also function as social gathering spaces. Venues such as bars and pubs, cafes, barbershops, bakeries and bookstores provide informal gathering places for people to socialize and interact.

Public, Multi-Use Spaces

Publicly accessible and well-designed gathering spaces that are welcoming to a wide range of people and uses can provide a "common ground" for the corridor. Many examples exist of year-round "lighter, quicker and cheaper" options that are attractive for daily and occasional users, such as decorative light poles or clear signage.



Figure 4-10: Vacant storefronts along the Seven Mile Corridor, 2015.
Source: Team Photo.

RECOMMENDATION 5: BUILD CAPACITY ALONG THE SEVEN MILE CORRIDOR.

PHASE 1: CREATE A BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

We recommend that ACC facilitate the creation of a Business Association (BA) that will provide clear leadership and a formal mechanism for communication and collaboration among Seven Mile Corridor stakeholders. A Seven Mile BA can improve business climate, provide networking opportunities, and provide a unified voice to access resources.

A BA is an organization of members who serve as stewards for a given area.²³ BAs typically advocate for the interests and concerns of their members; have a proper governance structure; and respond to their members needs by delivering services and information.²⁴

The BA has no membership requirements; all businesses, community members, and external stakeholders can voluntarily be a part of the association without paying fees or

living within the district. In addition to property owners, brokers, and retailers, key community stakeholders, such as Greenfield Union Elementary-Middle School, Oasis Church, and Growtown, could also be members. The more ACC can leverage the expertise, resources, and capital of these community partners, the greater the chances of success for redevelopment of the corridor.

In the long term, we also recommend that the BA hire a Commercial Corridor Manager (CCM) who can continue to oversee the implementation of all redevelopment strategies for the Seven Mile Corridor. The CCM could provide expertise and project management for more intensive redevelopment efforts and would be accountable for the following key outcomes:

- Business attraction and retention,
- Sourcing small business development and training,
- Marketing of NorthTown, and
- Seven Mile Corridor Programming.

For a sample of detailed job profiles, including responsibilities and qualifications, please see Appendix IV.

PHASE 2: MARKETING AND PROMOTION

We recommend that the BA make deliberate efforts to market the Seven Mile Corridor's assets and position the corridor as an ideal site for emerging businesses and tenants, especially in the food industry. Limited or inaccurate information about existing businesses, community demographics, and vacant properties presents a barrier to attracting private investment and customer traffic. For example, area median income is a primary criterion for retailers' site location decisions. Furthermore, many existing businesses along Seven Mile do not have an online presence; an online search for commercial properties (for sale or lease) revealed only two listings despite the high vacancy rate.

As an initial step, the BA can collaborate with property owners to list and promote vacant properties that are for lease or for sale through a commercial real estate database such as the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's (MEDC) Real Estate Database (GIS), LoopNet, Craigslist, or CityFeet. Alternatively, many commercial corridors also create their own websites, which include a neighborhood business directory, listing of available properties and highlights of neighborhood amenities.

The BA can also leverage the funding and technical support available for both property and business owners through the DEGC's MotorCity Match competition. Seven Mile Corridor building owners with vacant properties that are in compliance (or headed towards compliance) can apply (or



Figure 4-12. Retail corridor managed by the Southwest Detroit Business Association. Source: "Scenes from a Changing Detroit." The Atlantic, 2015.

have the BA apply on their behalf) to have their property listed on the MotorCity Match website.²⁵ This provides additional exposure to tenants looking for space and if a match is made, both the building and business owner can qualify for additional assistance with design and build, renovations, financial planning, and priority permitting.²⁶

Creating a neighborhood information packet for new and prospective tenants, developers, and investors is also useful in closing the information gap. A cooperative property owner or broker is invaluable to district promotional efforts. Once data is collected, the presentation of this information is also important. Several agencies and organizations provide

sample templates that the BA can emulate, such as the example in Figure 4-8.

While searching for new tenants, it is also important to reinforce the commitment of existing model tenants and business owners. Promoting success stories and efforts of engaged business owners and residents (whether online or in print) creates positive press for the neighborhood, and identifies positive role models and leaders.

Once Phases One to Three have been completed, we recommend the Seven Mile BA engage in more intensive branding and marketing efforts. Several resources are available to guide a community in branding and promotional efforts, in particular

the MEDC Marketing and Branding Strategy Guide which provides detailed step-by-step instructions, the International Council for Shopping Center's Guide for Commercial District Practitioners, and Neighborworks America's Neighborhood Marketing Program.²⁷

PHASE 3: FACILITATE ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Fiscal resources, whether in the form of financial services, affordable credit or investment capital, are a fundamental requirement for implementing redevelopment projects or opening and operating a business along the Seven Mile Corridor. Limited access to financing is a common challenge, however, for underserved communities and minority-business enterprises.²⁸

EXAMPLE VACANT PROPERTY LISTING

8th Street Coffee House 720 Ludington Street, Escanaba MI 49829

This corner three-level historic structure has the potential for historic tax credits and federal grants for the refurbishing of the façade and residential units. Seven residential units comprise the upper floor of the building with an additional 7,000 square feet of commercial space on the main level and an additional 7,000 square feet of basement area. The large first floor commercial space has access entry ways from both Ludington Street and 8th Street for the creation of multiple commercial opportunities.

Owner: H2 Development LLC

Contact: 815.210.9075

City contact: Ed Lagault | 906.789.8696 | edwarddd@aatt.net
Blaine DeGrave | 906.786.9402 | bdegrave@escanaba.org

Site zoning: Commercial

Lot size: 0.16 acres

Building size: 21,000 square feet

State equalized value: \$191,992

Utilities: Water, sewer, natural gas, electricity, cable, DSL



Figure 4-11. Example of a site marketing brochure. Source: Michigan Economic Development Corporation, 2015.

Facilitating access to capital for emerging businesses along the corridor is a key building block to sustained redevelopment. We recommend that the Seven Mile BA develop a database of financing and funding resources, form partnerships with community-development financial institutions, and explore the creation of a one-stop shop for financial and business management resources.

Sources of capital can be divided into two general categories: grants and loans. While grant funding is typically associated with public sector subsidies and foundational grants (and distributed without consideration of the project's income generating potential), financing through loans involves identifying sources of capital (often from the private sector) that can provide an initial surge of capital for projects that are anticipated to generate income in the long term.²⁹

Identifying sources of capital and partnering with mission-driven financial institutions is a valuable aspect of implementation. Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) and Community Development Entities (CDEs) are both intermediaries that deliver financial products and services for low-income communities in support of initiatives, such as creating local jobs and businesses, developing affordable housing and expanding community facilities. CDFIs and CDEs are certified by the U.S. Department of the Treasury and can be regulated institutions such as local banks and credit unions, and also non-regulated institutions such as non-profits or loan, micro-enterprise, or venture capital funds.³⁰ Detroit-based CDFIs include One Detroit Credit Union, Detroit Development Fund, First Independence Bank, and Invest Detroit Foundation. For a current listing, visit the US Department of the Treasury CDFI Fund website.

PHASE 4: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Partnering with experienced organizations that provide a full range of services from business attraction and retention to business development and training can aid the Seven Mile BA's redevelopment efforts. The Detroit BizGrid is an invaluable resource for business assistance and potential partners. The database is both an online directory and infographic of Detroit-based organizations that offer a multitude of services ranging from business planning and strategy, to real estate, funding, and legal assistance.³¹ The MotorCity Match competition also provides technical assistance, funding and matching grants to entrepreneurs who are starting a new business or expanding operations.



Figure 4-13. Detroit entrepreneurs in a class provided by the BUILD Institute. Source: The BUILD Institute.

IMPORTANT TOOLS

BUILD Institute

The BUILD Institute provides entrepreneurship classes, networking, workshops, and pop-up opportunities for existing and potential small business owners. With a mission focused on inclusion, accessibility, and diversity, BUILD has developed a model for classes that attracts a wide range of participants and strives to provide a platform for collaboration and knowledge-sharing. BUILD partners with small business owners or community organizations to hold classes within the neighborhood, ensuring accessibility for a wide range of residents. In turn, the neighborhood partner is responsible for providing a space for the classes (free of charge) and managing recruitment of participants.

The BUILD curriculum helps develop the capacity and skills needed to be a successful business owner, including budgeting, credit reports, and developing a business plan. Graduates of the program also gain a supportive network of other entrepreneurs, comprised of both potential and current business owners in the community. In addition to classes, BUILD maintains an active alumni network and provides networking events, workshops, short-term pop-ups, and promotional opportunities. Graduates often cite access to this strong alumni network as one of the most important assets of the program.³²



Figure 4-14. The Detroit Development Fund and Michigan Saves Program provided funding for the rehab of Cass Cafe. Source: Detroit Development Fund.

RECOMMENDATION 6: TARGET BUSINESSES IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY.

Before targeting specific retailers, we strongly recommend that the BA develop a thorough understanding of market dynamics in NorthTown. Our surplus and leakage analysis provides only a starting point for exploration.

We recommend further investigating market demand for targeted businesses and creating a detailed inventory of vacant spaces, specifically the leasable square footage and configuration of vacant buildings along the corridor, so as to identify the suitability of available retail spaces for potential tenants.³³

In addition, we strongly recommend investigating the spending habits of the various types of consumers that frequent the corridor (e.g. resident, employer, employee, visitor) and gaining a better understanding of their preferences. These efforts should be complemented by community outreach to verify the preferences of local residents and business owners. Findings from both groups are important in supporting and refining preliminary conclusions based on market data. To this end, MCR

has conducted consumer surveys for several commercial corridors in Detroit and may be an invaluable resource for conducting a similar study for NorthTown.³⁴

Businesses that provide services and products for the local community while also drawing visitors from outside can provide a more robust stream of foot traffic than just convenience retailers that solely serve the neighborhood. In particular, the Seven Mile BA is encouraged to especially target local and regional retailers and businesses involved in food production, packing, storage, and distribution.

With the recent closing of the John R Market, the neighborhood lacks healthy food sources within a walkable distance, with the closest grocer (Meijer) located on Eight Mile Road. In addition, Detroit's food production industry is rapidly growing with support from the urban farming movement.³⁵ Existing initiatives in the NorthTown community can be leveraged, such as

GrowTown's SPIN farming and nutrition program along with the Penrose Village Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. Local retailers engaged in food production and distribution also include the Great Lakes Fish and Seafood Wholesaler and S&J Meats deli.

We recommend the BA work with Seven Mile Corridor building owners to identify a supply of suitable spaces for small-scale food processing, packing, shared storage/warehousing, and retailing. Vacant spaces can be used as pop-up stores for new food retailers to minimize risk and provide an affordable way of testing market demand. Several of the vacant buildings along Areas of Focus 1 (Seven Mile and Woodward intersection) and 2 (Seven Mile and Charleston intersection) are potential sites (providing they meet building and code standards) due to their location. The suitability of interior conditions would require further research, while exterior conditions would require minor repair and façade improvement. Renovations may be eligible for funding or financing through the Michigan Good Food Fund and Capital Impact Partners provided they promote healthy food access. Furthermore, featuring a steady rotation of food-based retailers can provide temporary income to property owners and activate parts of the corridor that have long been vacant.

On the demand-side, the BA could explore partnerships with food incubators and organized assistance programs for food-based entrepreneurs. These organizations can serve as conduits for emerging, local food businesses in search of affordable, brick-and-mortar spaces. Three organizations in particular are

FoodLab, Detroit Kitchen Connect and the DEGC's Green Grocer Project.

FoodLab is a community of food businesses and allies, including bakers, brewers, restaurateurs, and food distributors, that promote access to healthy, sustainable food within Detroit.³⁶ FoodLab also provides speakers for topics on sustainable food business and economic development, in addition to arranging for pop-up retailers if space is available.

Detroit Kitchen Connect facilitates access to affordable, commercial, licensed kitchen facilities and equipment for local food entrepreneurs. Founded through a partnership with Eastern Market and FoodLab, entrepreneurs involved with the Kitchen Connect Program also have access to Detroit's larger food production network.

The Green Grocer Project's involvement with neighborhood grocers can also provide exposure to existing or emerging grocery store owners that may be looking for new locations and in some cases will provide matching funding for façade improvements.

Additional databases and resources that ACC and the Seven Mile BA can consult in developing strategies to establish a healthy food district include the Fair Food Network, the Michigan Food Hub Network, Regional Food Solutions, and Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems. The guide on Food Innovation Districts: An Economic Gardening Tool, may also provide a useful resource for future implementation.

IMPORTANT TOOLS

Michigan Good Food Fund (MGFF)

One recommended funding source is the Michigan Good Food Fund. The MGFF is a \$30 million public-private partnership loan and grant fund intended to finance the production, distribution, processing and retailing of healthy food for underserved communities. The MGFF was launched through the federal government's Healthy Food Financing Initiative and is managed by Capital Impact Partners, a non-profit CDFI and leader in healthy food financing.

"Good food" enterprises such as supermarkets, grocers, community markets, co-ops, food distributors, nonprofits, commercial developers, corner store owners, entrepreneurs, value-added producers, and small business operators are eligible for flexible financing and business assistance.³⁷ Financing services includes loans (\$250,000 or more are serviced by Capital Impact Partners and lower amounts through select state intermediaries) and New Markets Tax Credits (for projects \$5 million and more). The MGFF also administers limited grants in support of workforce development, healthy food education, expanding locally grown and healthy food options, and food business assistance.



Figure 4-15. The Market Garden in Penrose Village.
Source: "Penrose Rising." Metro Times, May 15, 2013.



Figure 4-16. MGFF provides funding to increase access to healthy food in underserved communities
Source: Michigan Good Food Fund.

RECOMMENDATION 7: CREATE A MORE ACTIVE CORRIDOR.

WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL PLACE?

The Project for Public Space (PPS) has found successful places have four key qualities in common: they are accessible and connected (visually and physically) to their surroundings, they provide a multitude of activities and give people a reason to visit, they are clean, safe and have comfortable seating, and finally they are places for people to gather and interact.³⁸ Well-defined and designed gathering spaces can also reflect the community's local character.

SUGGESTED PROJECTS

The abundance of vacant land along the Seven Mile Corridor provides an opportunity to create inexpensive and easy community spaces. Two relatively simple, inexpensive and quick strategies are pocket parks and pop-up food and drink gardens.

Pocket Park on the Corridor

Pocket parks can be created with inexpensive and reused materials such as abandoned tires and wooden pallets (see also Neighborhood Stabilization Recommendations). They can also be designed for multiple uses, such as a child's play area, a place for employees to sit and have a meal, or for residents to share a community garden.¹⁶ Suitable locations for pocket parks along the Corridor would be the vacant lots along 516-540 W Seven Mile Road (Area of Focus 2 - across the street from Safari Gifts & Boutique).

Pop-Up Food and Drink Garden

A temporary pop-up food and drink garden has the potential to bring nonresidents into the community and can transform a formerly underused lot into a thriving community space. Again, simple and inexpensive materials such as wooden pallets and woodchips, along with seating, trees and plants, can change a surface

parking lot into a more attractive location for people to gather around mobile food vendors.

A suitable location for a pop-up food space could be along 359 W Seven Mile Road (Area of Focus 2: across the street from the former Goodwill Community Chapel).

In addition to creating community spaces along the corridor, we recommend continuing to implement streetscape and façade improvements.

Continue Streetscape Improvements

Overall, the majority of sidewalks along the corridor are in good condition, however, some sections west of Charleston Street are in poor condition and have not been maintained for many years. Poor sidewalk conditions not only create a barrier for pedestrians, they are also visible signs of disinvestment and



Figure 4-18. Turner Mini Park in downtown Lansing, MI
Source: Lansing Downtown, 2015.



Figure 4-17. Easy and inexpensive pocket park with reused materials.
Source: Atenistas.



Figure 4-19. Proposed streetscape improvements for eastern section of Seven Mile Road, 2015.
Source: Team Photo and Rendering.

should be prioritized for improvements before bringing new businesses. In addition, street trees, plantings, and pedestrian-scale lighting (attractive light stands which include greater detail) can help to create an attractive and comfortable environment for pedestrians.

Continue Façade Improvements

Another inexpensive and effective way to make a positive impact on the physical environment is to organize a clean-up effort targeting poorly maintained storefronts and buildings that have been tagged by graffiti. We recommend the BA lead this initiative with support from business owners and community partners.

Improving dilapidated and deteriorated store façades with new paint, windows

and awnings can significantly improve the street environment and encourage pedestrian foot traffic. All façade elements (e.g. signage, awnings, color scheme, and architectural features) should be coordinated to produce a strong, unified and high quality image. Also, design guidelines for storefront signage can also help bring coherency and vibrancy to the streetscape along the corridor.

According to Grandmont Rosedale's Façade Improvement Program Design Guidelines, the façade improvement program should follow two principles:

- When multiple tenants occupy a single building, all tenant signage and storefront designs should be coordinated to create a harmonious and consistent design.

- Façade improvements should preserve or restore historic building features when present. Projects should not cover or remove historically significant elements like ornate brickwork.

If elements are missing, they should be replaced. Where buildings are either historically designated or eligible for designation, all renovations shall be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.³⁹



Figure 4-20. Proposed façade improvements along Seven Mile Road and Charleston Street. Source: Google Earth, 2015; Team Rendering.



Figure 4-21. A local business on the Seven Mile Corridor. Source: Team Photo.

SPOTLIGHT: CENTRAL DETROIT CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Central Detroit Christian Community Development Corporation (CDC) has been able to successfully stabilize its neighborhood and attract potential new development. As both a social service agency and community development corporation, CDC serves as a useful example of how an organization with limited capacity can use resources from within the community to have a positive impact on neighborhood stabilization efforts.

In this chapter, we have provided a series of initial steps for ACC to stabilize their community. The work that CDC has been doing over the last few years builds upon such stabilization efforts. We include this spotlight as a potential example of the kind of work that ACC could pursue in future years.

BACKGROUND

CDC is a non-profit, faith-based organization located in the Central Detroit neighborhood surrounded by North End, Boston Edison, New Center, and Virginia Park neighborhoods of Detroit. It was founded in 1994 by Executive Director, Lisa Johanon, as a youth ministry program in a neighborhood with high

crime rates. While working with youth in the community, CDC began to broaden its work, including a focus on families and community.

From 2008 to 2009, the number of vacant properties in the Central Detroit neighborhood increased from 29 to 103, all within a 24-block area. This drastic increase prompted CDC to begin engaging in blight mitigation, rehab, and development.⁴⁰ In 2014, CDC rehabbed 20 units of housing, with 114 units, including three apartment buildings, in the pipeline for development.⁴¹

Programs

CDC has developed a variety of service programs, including programs in education, employment, economic development, housing, and family financial wellness, all of which grew out of community demand. Programs that focus on housing and land management are highlighted in more detail below.

Solid Rock Property Management

This was developed to manage properties that CDC owns. This company cuts the grass and maintains

both vacant lots and land bank properties. It also provides security for the neighborhood, helping to reduce crime in the area. The company employs people from within the community.⁴²

Peaches & Greens

A fresh produce market that opened in 2008 as a model for community self-reliance, it uses fresh-grown produce from a community garden that started as a way to use vacant property. The produce is then sold to residents in nearby neighborhoods. Peaches & Greens also provides nutritional education and healthy meal preparation workshops.⁴³

Higher Ground Landscaping

Higher Ground Landscaping was started in 2011 to employ unemployed and hard-to-employ men from within the community to cut and maintain lawns for customers who pay for the service. The business has currently has a customer base of over 200 clients.⁴⁴

Cafe Sunshine

Cafe Sunshine is a restaurant along Second Avenue that provides healthy and diabetic-friendly food options. It is

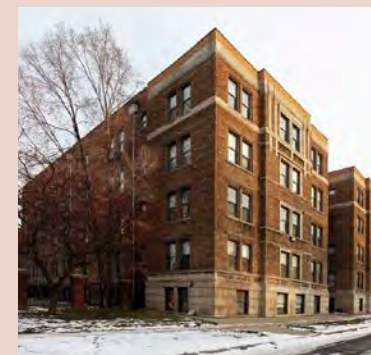


Figure 4-23. (clockwise from left). Cafe Sunshine, Peaches and Greens and CDC housing development. Sources: "Cafe Sunshine." mLive, May 4, 2012; "5 Cool Grocery Stores in Detroit." Daily Detroit, July 29, 2015; "Detroit Nonprofit to do \$10.2 Million Redevelopment of 1925 Apartment Building." Revitalization News, September 15, 2015.

part of a property that was acquired by CDC in 2007, where they initially opened an ice cream store and deli and soul food restaurant. CDC opened Cafe Sunshine in 2010, after these two businesses closed. Currently, the managers of the cafe are in the process of buying the business.⁴⁵

independent commercial development in the neighborhood, allowing the organization to create streams of commercial revenue through programs like Peaches & Greens and Solid Rock Land Management.

CDC housing development is strategic.

Although CDC uses a scatter purchase approach of acquiring as much property as possible in the area, their use of that property is guided by a neighborhood plan. They prioritize blocks with the densest amount of existing development and secure funding from the city. While waiting redevelopment and rehabilitation opportunities, CDC focuses on stabilizing properties through blight removal, vacant lot maintenance, and the creation of community gardens.

While CDC was originally focused on homeownership programs, it has become renter-driven due to the volatile market and lack of credit of community members. CDC acquired properties

through the city, foreclosures, and direct sales or donations from owners who walked away. Acquisition has become increasingly more difficult as development around Mid-town and New Center has sparked speculation into this area.⁴⁶

It is important to live and interact within the community.

CDC has benefited from the fact that the Executive Director lives in the neighborhood. A large majority of the staff live within the community as well, which is a direct result of CDC intentionally looking to hire community members and giving them opportunities to impact their own neighborhood.⁴⁷

CDC hosts quarterly neighborhood meetings. At these meetings every voice is heard, but value is especially placed on community members who have been there the longest. They also provide space for block meetings to take place and try to foster those relationships within the community. ■



Figure 4-22. The CDC Farm and Fishery. Source: "CDC: Central Detroit Christian Community Development Corp." Calvary Community & Pastor Blog, July 28, 2015.

The background features a collection of 3D cubes of varying sizes and orientations. Some cubes are white, while others are a dark teal color. They are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, with some cubes appearing to be stacked or overlapping. The lighting is soft, casting subtle shadows and highlights on the surfaces of the cubes.

CH 05: IMPLEMENTATION

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

RECOMMENDATION #1: DEVELOP FORMAL COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH RESIDENTS AND INSTITUTIONS IN NORTHTOWN

Who:
 Grixdale Farms Neighborhood Association
 Growtown
 Penrose Village
 ACC
 Residents of Grixdale Farms and State Fair Neighborhood

YEAR 1.
 MONTHS 1-6

YEAR 1.
 MONTHS 1-3

PHASE 1: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Step 1:
 Set up a series of community conversations throughout NorthTown, accessible to as many residents as possible, to identify resident goals and solicit feedback on possible neighborhood initiatives.

Step 2:
 Facilitate meetings with and between targeted community leaders, including representatives from the Grixdale Farms Neighborhood Association, Penrose Village, GrowTown, and business owners to discuss common goals and how to better coordinate efforts. Assess interest in participating in a formal collaborative structure.

PHASE 2: CREATION OF BLIGHT TASK FORCE (BTF)

Step 3:
 Invite interested community leaders and residents to participate in a Blight Task Force (BTF), focused on coordinating efforts within the Grixdale Farms and State Fair neighborhoods.

Step 4:
 Apply to sponsor an AmeriCorps VISTA position, focused on supporting and coordinating blight reduction tactics as outlined by the BTF.

YEAR 1.
 MONTH 4

YEAR 1.
 MONTH 5

Funding:
 • LISC
 • AmeriCorps
 • CNCS
 • CDAD
 • MCR

Partners:
 • MCR
 • CDAD
 • Vacant Property Toolbox The
 • City of Detroit
 • DLBA
 • Quicken Loan in the Community

Figure 5-1. (above) Heraman Park in Penrose Village, 2015.
 Figure 5-2. (below) Greenfield-Union Elementary and Middle School, 2015.
 Source: Team Photo.

NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION

RECOMMENDATION #2: DEPLOY TARGETED BLIGHT REDUCTION TACTICS

DEPLOY TARGETED BLIGHT REDUCTION TACTICS

Step 1:
 Organize a group of volunteers to address blight in the NorthTown area, with the support of an AmeriCorps VISTA and community organizations.

Step 2:
 Invite community members to meet with the Blight Task Force to determine priorities within the neighborhood.

YEAR 1.
 MONTHS 1-3

YEAR 1.
 MONTHS 3-6

Who:
 Grixdale Farms Neighborhood Association
 Growtown
 Penrose Village
 ACC
 Residents of Grixdale Farms and State Fair Neighborhood

Funding:
 • City of Detroit

Partners:
 • Blight Task Force Plan
 • Motor City Mapping
 • Working with Lots: Field Guide

YEAR 1.
 MONTHS 6-12

YEAR 1.
 MONTHS 6-12

YEAR 1.
 MONTHS 6-12

PHASE 2: BOARDING OF VACANT STRUCTURES AND CLEANING OF VACANT LOTS

Step 3:
 Apply for target funding for materials to support blight reduction initiatives.

Step 4:
 Coordinate efforts through the Blight Task Force to board vacant structures with the help of community volunteers and materials from the Mayor's Office.

Step 5:
 Oversee projects in which community members clean up trash, mow, and perform other small maintenance tasks on vacant lots in their neighborhood.

Figure 5-3. (above) Seven Mile Road & Charleston Street intersection, facing south, 2015.
 Figure 5-4. (below) Seven Mile Road & Charleston Street intersection, facing north, 2015.
 Source: Team Photo.

NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION

RECOMMENDATION #3: CONNECT THE NEIGHBORHOOD

PHASE 1: PROVIDE PUBLIC GREEN SPACE ON SEVEN MILE CORRIDOR AND CHARLESTON STREET

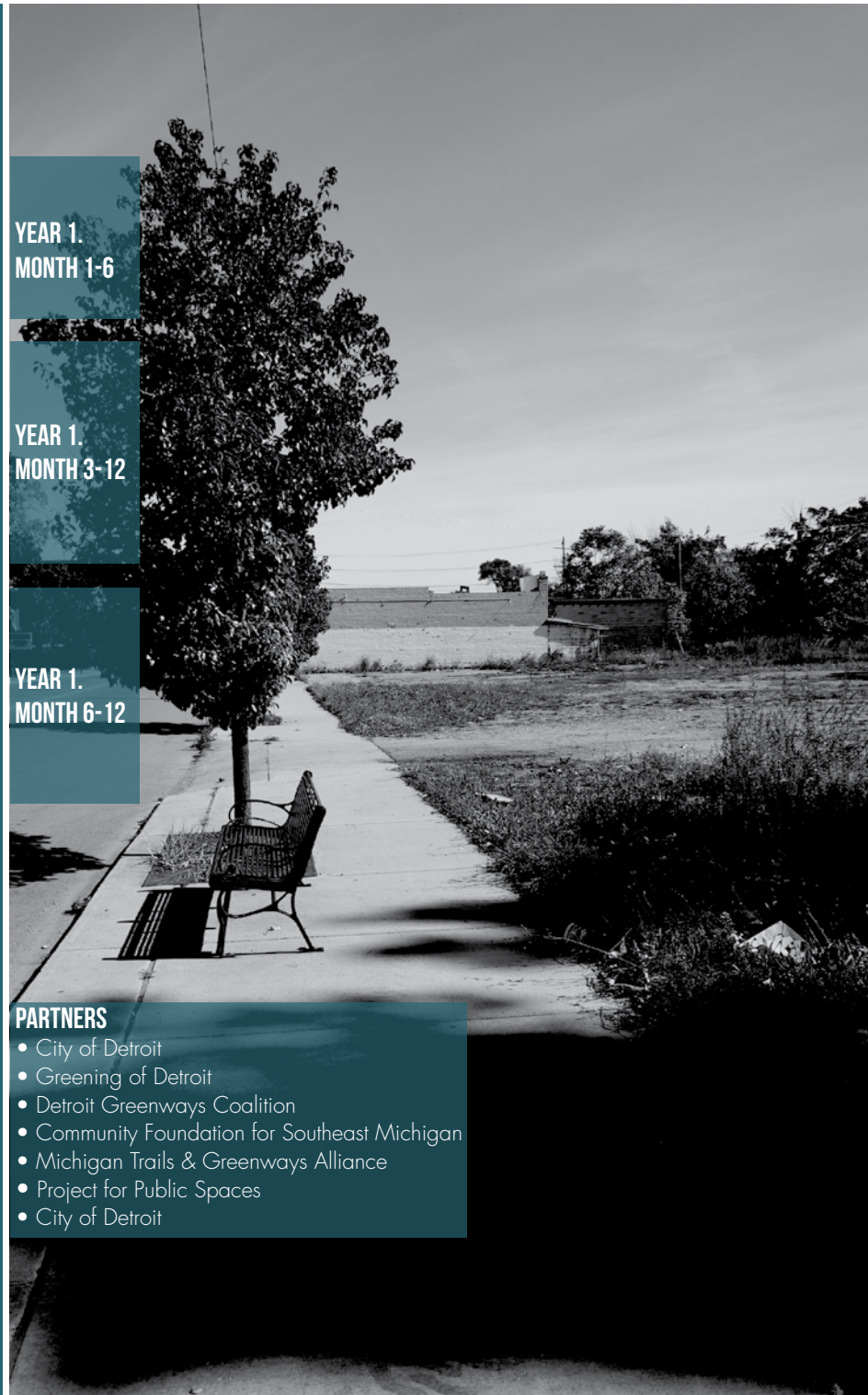
Step 1:
Secure funding for a pocket park near the ACC campus. Engage with a partner for installation to provide public space along the Seven Mile Corridor.

Step 2:
Coordinate efforts through the Blight Task Force and a Seven Mile Business Association partner to implement improvements along Seven Mile Road, including improved streetlights, public artwork and murals, and landscaping.

Step 3:
Encourage neighborhood organizations to utilize funding from the City of Detroit and foundations working within the city to target vacant lots along Charleston Street for the development of cost-effective "mini-parks."

Who:
Grixdale Farms Neighborhood Association
GrowTown
Penrose Village
ACC

Funding:
City of Detroit
Grants
Adopt-A-Lot
Kresge Foundation
Knight Foundation
Kellogg Foundation



YEAR 1.
MONTH 1-6

YEAR 1.
MONTH 3-12

YEAR 1.
MONTH 6-12

PARTNERS

- City of Detroit
- Greening of Detroit
- Detroit Greenways Coalition
- Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan
- Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance
- Project for Public Spaces
- City of Detroit

Figure 5-5. Vacant lot and sidewalk on Seven Mile Road, 2015. Source: Team Photo.

NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION

RECOMMENDATION #4: PARTNER WITH LOCAL AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS TO FACILITATE BETTER LAND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES.

PHASE 1: PROMOTION OF SIDE LOT PROGRAM OF THE DETROIT LAND BANK AUTHORITY

Step 1:
Coordinate efforts through the Blight Task Force to promote the Side Lot Program, which allows property owners adjacent to a land bank-owned parcel to purchase the parcel for about \$100, to local residents.

PHASE 2: ENGAGING OUTSIDE PARTNERS TO IMPROVE VACANT LOTS

Step 2:
Engage the Greening of Detroit to help manage vacant lots not purchased through the Side Lot Program.

Step 3:
Facilitate conversations among the Blight Task Force and other neighborhood organizations with local demolition partners about removing targeted blighted structures in NorthTown.



YEAR 1. MONTHS 1-12

YEAR 1. MONTHS 3-9

YEAR 1. MONTHS 3-12

Who:
ACC
Residents of Grixdale Farms and State Fair neighborhoods
Grixdale Farms Neighborhood Association
Penrose Village
GrowTown
Greening of Detroit
Adamo Demolition

Partners:

- DLBA
- Michigan Land Bank
- Greening of Detroit
- Local demolition groups

Figure 5-6. Sidewalk on Charleston Street, 2015. Source: Team Photo.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

RECOMMENDATION #5: BUILD CAPACITY ALONG THE SEVEN MILE CORRIDOR.

PHASE 1: CREATE A BUSINESS ASSOCIATION (BA)

Step 1:
Invite business owners and other organizations along the corridor to participate in an initial meeting hosted at ACC. Set goals for BA and formalize membership in association.

Step 2:
Apply for grant funding to support hiring a full-time support position (commercial corridor manager), who could coordinate and implement efforts of the BA.

PHASE 2: MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Step 3:
Collaborate with property owners to list and promote vacant properties on corridor on a commercial real estate database, such as MEDC's Real Estate Database or Motor City Match.

Step 4:
Develop a neighborhood information packet that includes property profiles, community asset maps, key demographics such as household income and population density, and transportation routes. This can be given to potential developers, investors, and tenants to help them better understand the community.

PHASE 3: FACILITATE ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Step 5:
Identify diverse sources of capital for existing and prospective business owners and develop a database to make that information readily available to members of the BA.



YEAR 1, MONTH 1

YEAR 1, MONTH 6

YEAR 1, MONTH 3

YEAR 1, MONTH 6

YEAR 2, MONTH 1

YEAR 2, MONTH 6

YEAR 2, MONTH 10

Who:

Business owners along Seven Mile Corridor
GrowTown
ACC

Funding:

Chaldean Chamber of Commerce
Michigan Black Chamber of Commerce
Southwest Detroit Business Association
Neighborworks America
TechTown
BUILD Institute
Detroit BizGrid
One Detroit Credit Union
Detroit Development Fund
DEGC: Motor City Match
First Independence Bank
Invest Detroit Foundation

Partners:

DEGC: Motor City Match
MEDC
NeighborWorks
Build Institute
TechTown

Step 6:

Develop formal partnerships with CDFIs and other mission-driven financial institutions that can act as consistent sources of capital.

PHASE 4: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Step 7:

Identify business creation and development needs along the corridor and form partnerships with existing organizations in Detroit that can provide the needed knowledge and support.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

RECOMMENDATION #6: TARGET BUSINESSES IN FOOD PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

Who:

ACC's nutrition program
GrowTown and SPIN Farming initiative
Penrose Village Community Supported Agriculture Program
Great Lakes Fish and Seafood Wholesaler
S&J Meats

Funding:

Green Grocer Program
Michigan Good Food Fund
FoodLab Detroit
Detroit Kitchen Connect
DEGC: Green Grocer Program
Michigan Community Resources
Detroit Food Policy Council
Fair Food Network
Michigan Food Hub Network
Detroit Eastern Market
Capital Impact Partners
New Market Tax Credits

Partners:

DEGC: Green Grocer Program
Detroit Kitchen Connect
FoodLab
Fair Food Network
Michigan Food Hub Network
Regional Food Systems



YEAR 1, MONTH 3

YEAR 1, MONTH 3

YEAR 1, MONTH 6

YEAR 1, MONTH 10

YEAR 2, MONTH 3

YEAR 2, MONTH 6

Step 1:

Perform a market analysis of NorthTown, potentially leveraging support from an organization like Michigan Community Resources that has done this for other communities in Detroit.

Step 2:

Conduct a consumer survey of the commercial corridor, again leveraging a partner like MCR with expertise in this area.

Step 3:

Create an inventory of vacant spaces along the corridor, including the leasable square footage and configuration of vacant buildings. Identify spaces suitable for different food distribution needs, including processing, packing, storing/warehousing, and retailing.

Step 4:

Identify needed building renovations to make them suitable spaces for the above needs and seek funding from partners, such as the Michigan Good Food Fund.

Step 5:

Create partnerships with organizations that specifically support food entrepreneurs, such as FoodLab, Detroit Kitchen Connect, and DEGC's Green Grocer Program. Focus on partnerships that support needs identified through the market analysis and consumer surveys.

Step 6:

In future business attraction efforts, focus specifically on food distribution and production businesses that fit identified needs.

Figure 5-7. Sidewalk and storefront on Seven Mile Road, 2015. Source: Team Photo.

Figure 5-8. Sidewalk on empty street tree planter on Seven Mile Street, 2015. Source: Team Photo.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

RECOMMENDATION #7: CREATE A MORE ACTIVE CORRIDOR

Who:
ACC
Business Association
Blight Task Force



YEAR 1.
MONTHS 1

STEP 1:
Identify suitable vacant lots for potential pocket parks or pop up gathering spaces along the corridor. Possible options include: 516-540 W Seven Mile Road or 359 W Seven Mile Road.

YEAR 1.
MONTHS 3

STEP 2:
Apply for Adopt-A-Lot permits from the City of Detroit, which provide access to a vacant lot for one year for beautification or gardening.

YEAR 1.
MONTHS 3

STEP 3:
Apply for funding from the MEDC/MSHDA Public Spaces Community Places program to develop public gathering spaces in select vacant lots along the corridor.

STEP 4:
Facilitate coordinated efforts between the BA and the Blight Task Force to create a plan for vacant lots based on funding acquired.

YEAR 1.
MONTH 6

STEP 5:
Acquire necessary materials to create public spaces on selected lots and organize volunteers to implement plan.

YEAR 2.
MONTH 8

Partners:
Adopt-A-Lot

Funding:
Adopt-A-Lot
NEA: Our Town Grant Program
MEDC/MSHDA: Public Spaces
Community Places Initiative



Figure 5-11. Burned and abandoned building south of Seven Mile Road, 2015. Source: Team Photo.

Figure 5-9. (above) Closed business on Seven Mile Road, 2015. Figure 5-10. (below) Street view of Seven Mile Road, 2015. Source: Team Photo.



APPENDIX

I
Relevant Plans

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Largest Property Owners North and South of Seven Mile

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Business Summary

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V
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VI
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APPENDIX I. RELEVANT PLANS AND TOOLS

CITY OF DETROIT MASTER PLAN OF POLICIES

The *City of Detroit Master Plan of Policies (CDMPP)* that was created during the Dave Bing administration is an update of the 1992 plan and serves as the city's comprehensive plan.¹ Several sections of the plan are relevant to this project even though they may not specifically refer to the area bounded by Woodward Avenue, John R Street, State Fair Avenue, and Nevada Avenue or the Arab American and Chaldean Council.

The City Design chapter focuses on economic and community development and design. The policies address such aspects as connectivity, walkability, streetscapes, community and stakeholder involvement, and inventory and reuse of vacant land. The Community Organizations chapter addresses the way in which different groups can contribute to these efforts.²

The Economy chapter also addresses development, as well as businesses, investment and disinvestment, and is focused on identifying specific areas for investment and providing development assistance to those areas. Within the Parks, Recreation and Open Space chapter, one of the goals is to "Support and promote the reuse of vacant land for community and school gardens and urban agriculture."³

A chapter on Retail and Local Services concerns local businesses and commercial zones. Policies address blight removal, accessibility, funding, and design and include, "Assist ethnic retail districts and other commercial areas to capitalize on the economic potential of visitors and tourism."⁴

According to the plan, goals for the State Fair neighborhood include a

focus on poor housing conditions and revitalizing commercial corridors. Policies address development and redevelopment, blight removal, and streetscape beautification, including a specific focus on demolishing housing north of Seven Mile and east of John R. Two other relevant policies include, "Develop neighborhood commercial nodes along John R, Seven Mile and McNichols with a compatible mix of locally serving, small-scale businesses and medium density residential..."⁵

DETROIT ZONING ORDINANCE (16 OCT 2014)

The *Detroit Zoning Ordinance* (16 Oct 2014) provides zoning information for the City of Detroit, and the Zoning Map Index shows the whole City of Detroit divided into different zoning districts. It appears NorthTown is situated within districts 62, 17, and 15; detailed PDF maps of each display the zoning designation of each property. These same maps are included in the *Detroit Zoning Ordinance* (16 Oct 2014).⁶

Among the three different district maps, the zones that are present in NorthTown are R1, R2, R3, B4, M4, PD, and P1. R2 parcels are scattered throughout, and there are some R1 parcels south of Seven Mile, B4 parcels adjacent to roads like Woodward, Seven Mile, and John R, M4 parcels along the Grand Trunk Western Railroad line, a collection of PD parcels by the intersection of Woodward and Seven Mile, and few R3 and P1 parcels.⁷

DETROIT FUTURE CITY: 2012 DETROIT STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK PLAN

Detroit Future City: 2012 Detroit Strategic Framework Plan (DFC Strategic Framework) provides a framework for the future of the City of Detroit. The plan describes Imperative Actions, which address jobs and the economy, land use, people, sustainability, the region, and implementation. Though not an official comprehensive plan, "The Detroit Strategic Framework establishes a set of policy directions and actions designed to achieve a more desirable and sustainable Detroit in the near term and for future generations" and is intended to be used by a variety of people and groups as a blueprint. The plan is organized around five themes: The Economic Growth Element: The Equitable City, The Land Use Element: The Image of the City, The City Systems Element: The Sustainable City, The Neighborhood Element: The City of Distinct and Regionally Competitive Neighborhoods, and The Land and Buildings Element: A Strategic Approach to Public Land.⁸

Recognizing the way in which NorthTown is depicted on maps in the *DFC Strategic Framework* is helpful for informational, contextual, and planning purposes. The Framework Zones map shows NorthTown designated in three ways: High-Vacancy, Moderate-Vacancy 2, and Industrial Land Use Strength. This map is based on current and/or projected vacancy and is intended to guide decision-makers. Industrial Land Use Strength zones have favorable characteristics, for they "combine higher employment density with good infrastructure access, a variety of appropriate development sites, and buffering from residential land uses. These corridors have the best potential for meeting the needs of current and future advanced and traditional industrial sectors."⁹

The 50-Year Land Use Scenario map shows NorthTown designated in four ways: Innovation Ecological, Green Residential, Large Park, and General Industrial. This map contrasts with the Existing: Current Land Use map in which most of the area is considered residential. The Innovation Ecological designation connotes natural landscapes, habitats, and functions. Green Residential zones are a creative way to reconsider residential areas in the context of today's Detroit. They consist of neighborhoods that combine residential uses with green spaces. The Large Parks category refers to green spaces of at least four acres, including parks and golf courses. Finally, the General Industrial classification designates centers for medium-intensity industrial uses. According to the *DFC Strategic Framework*, "General Industrial areas...provide job centers to accommodate a wide range of production and distribution activities, buffered from other uses with blue/green infrastructure."¹⁰

The Proposed: 2030 Public Transit Routes map shows nodes for the future public transportation system on Woodward at the intersection with Seven Mile, light rail routes on Woodward, and Tier 2 Crosstown Routes on Seven Mile. This is in contrast to the Existing: Current Public Transit Routes map that shows DDOT Bus Routes around and in NorthTown. The Proposed Transit Corridors by Tier map indicates Tier 1 BRT routes on Woodward and a passenger railroad line bisecting a corner of NorthTown. The Existing: Current Commercial Corridors map shows zones designated both Occupied Commercial Parcels and Vacant Commercial Parcels in NorthTown, while the Proposed: Commercial Corridors in 2030 map indicates Green Residential in the area, as well as Traditional Strip and Multi-Use Strip: Green Residential on Woodward.¹¹

The 10-Year Strategic Renewal Scenario map shows NorthTown

designated in two ways: Replace, Repurpose, or Decommission and Reduce and Maintain. The same two designations are also shown for this area in the 20-Year Strategic Renewal Scenario map. These maps are intended to help with planning for the future. According to the *DFC Strategic Framework*, Replace, Repurpose, or Decommission is a classification for transitional areas where services will be retired and land uses will shift, and Reduce and Maintain is for areas where there will be fewer residents.¹²

The Detroit Mean Household Income map shows NorthTown colored to represent an area mean income of 30-50 percent. Based on the Public Land Ownership by Agency map and the Publicly Owned Vacant Property map, it seems that there is a significant amount of land in NorthTown not held by private owners.¹³

SIX TO EIGHT MILE/WOODWARD NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

The *6 to 8 Mile/Woodward Neighborhood Plan* was a 2009 plan intended to foster investment and community on Woodward between 6 Mile and 8 Mile through 2012. Goals, objectives, and action items are set forth addressing support for the 6 to 8 Mile/Woodward Initiative and partnerships, communication with stakeholders, promotion of the corridor and businesses, funding for realization of the 6 to 8 Mile Revitalization Plan initiatives, fostering of public safety and walkability, enforcement of maintenance and codes, cleaning of trash and prevention of dumping in the corridor, improvement of neighborhood appearance and aesthetics, blight assessment, beautification and enhancement of streetscapes, and consideration of green infrastructure. Stakeholder groups included the Arab American Chaldean Council.¹⁴

SEVEN MILE ROAD DEVELOPMENT PLAN: DETROIT, MICHIGAN

The *Seven Mile Road Development Plan: Detroit, Michigan* by the Arab American Chaldean Council (ACC) and McKenna Associates, Inc. was published in 2003 and focuses on the Seven Mile Road corridor and neighborhood, as well as ACC, development, and design. The plan includes maps, diagrams, cost estimates, and succinct conclusions.¹⁵

The plan describes ACC's involvement in the area and future aspirations, which are largely focused on creating a strong business community and increasing affordable housing and job supply. In 2003, ACC followed up and ask for more specific site plans to support redevelopment efforts along the Seven Mile Corridor. ACC commissioned architecture firm Aboody-Keer Associates to design new ACC buildings to go on the three properties that were chosen.¹⁶

The plan first addresses physical design, streets, and circulation. Though the neighborhood streets in the Seven Mile area have potential, the one-way streets are inefficient and detrimental. For instance, "One-way traffic reduces the opportunity for neighbors to casually inspect, survey and become familiar...the ability of neighbors to feel connected to, responsible for or to 'own' the entire length of their own local neighborhood street through increased familiarity is therefore severely weakened."¹⁷ According to the plan, this is the case in the area south of Seven Mile, with implications for the neighborhood continuity. The plan identifies use of traffic calming measures and two-way streets as ways to improve accessibility and the neighborhood, as well as safety.¹⁸

The next significant topic in the plan concerns ACC and its new properties,

as well as the design, development, and streetscape of the campus. The north side of Seven Mile is considered a commercial thoroughfare with pedestrian access, the south side of this part of Seven Mile is considered less accessible, the residential neighborhood north of Seven Mile contains high vacancy, and Brentwood also has accessibility and vacancy problems. In regards to physical design conclusions, the plan identifies potential for parking lots and retail, an access street, and infill on Seven Mile's north side, residential infill and development in Brentwood, and the catalyzing of development on Seven Mile's east side as a result of ACC's development. McKenna and Aboody-Keer set forth physical design guidelines in regards to setbacks, land use, parking, green space on vacant land, connection between ACC's new buildings and the surrounding neighborhood, and activation of the street.¹⁹

The third main section of the plan addresses the Seven Mile Road streetscape between Charleston and John R. The plan considers the potential impact of angled parking, which, when combined with redevelopment of the corridor, could create a more walkable corridor. It notes that ACC hopes to use streetscape enhancement, including both road and sidewalk improvements, to revitalize the business district from Woodward to John R. For the various phases of streetscape enhancement, the cost is projected to be \$3,754,510.²⁰

The final section describes opportunities, including housing, parks and recreation areas, commercial development, and other design and development considerations. The plan recommends that the design fit the context of the area and that other local organizations working on infill housing serve as examples.²¹

GREENFIELD UNION COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS: DETROIT, MICHIGAN

The *Greenfield Union Community Development Analysis: Detroit, Michigan* was developed in 2013. In the 50 Year Land Use Plan, NorthTown is designated Green Residential or Innovative Ecological. The Site Status Plan identifies Parcels with Dangerous Structures, Vacant Parcels, and Maintained Structures in the core area around Seven Mile between Woodward and John R. The Concept Plan shows greenways and green spaces in this area, bus routes on Woodward and Seven Mile and anticipated Bus Rapid Transit or rail on Woodward, and commercial, institutional, and residential uses. The Land Use Plan identifies residential, commercial, and institutional properties, as well as green spaces and parking, in the core area.

Three ACC properties are shown and identified as institutional, while residential properties are divided into Existing Bungalows, 2 Story New Town Homes and Existing Homes, Three-Story Apartments, Two-Story Mixed-Use, and Three-Story Mixed-Use. The Phase Plan identifies Phase 1 as the northern portion of the core area, Phase 2 as the western portion, Phase 3 as the next portion to the east, and Phase 4 as the eastern portion, generally. The Phase 1 Concept identifies existing properties as well as proposed locations for commercial, educational, and townhome land uses. Renderings are shown for townhomes, apartments, and mixed-use structures. Finally, there is an outline showing the commercial square footage and numbers of the different residential and mixed-use types that would be built over the four phases. In Phase 1, about 44,000 square feet of New Retail/Commercial were planned. Over four phases, 415 New Two-Story

Townhouses, 390 New Three-Story Apartments, 71 New Two-Story Mixed-Used, and 88 New Three-Story Mixed-Used were anticipated, for a total of 1,116 total units including 28 Existing Bungalows.²²

EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD HAS A FUTURE...AND IT DOESN'T INCLUDE BLIGHT: DETROIT BLIGHT REMOVAL TASK FORCE PLAN: MAY 2014

According to the *Blight Removal Task Force Plan*, "Align anti-blight efforts with the broader visions for the future of the city and neighborhoods," as well as use technology and partnerships to evaluate progress.²³ According to the plan, "merely addressing the existing Blight understates the problem because blight creates more blight. Without swift remedies, blight will continue to spread and expand."²⁴

The Structures That Meet the Task Force Definition of Blight map shows many Residential Structures and some Non-Residential Structures in parts of the NorthTown area. The preponderance of blighted structures is south of Seven Mile, with many fewer between Seven Mile and State Fair. The Structures With Indicators of Future Blight map shows many Residential Structures and Non-Residential Structures in parts of the NorthTown area.²⁵

The Blighted Vacant Lots map shows Empty Lots with Dumping On-Site scattered throughout the NorthTown area, most between Seven Mile and State Fair Avenue. The enlightening Total Scope of Blight map shows the Parcels Recommended for Structure Removal throughout the NorthTown area and Blighted Vacant Lots mostly between Seven Mile and State Fair.²⁶

According to the *Blight Removal Task Force Plan*, "the highest threat areas... represent the areas of highest priority for blight intervention. With immediate

intervention these geographies have the highest potential for stabilization and reinvestment. Lack of intervention has the potential to quickly result in significant decline."²⁷

The Neighborhood Blight map in the *Blight Removal Task Force Plan* shows many Residential Structures Needing Intervention throughout the NorthTown area, in an especially heavy concentration south of Seven Mile, and some Commercial Structures (<25,000 SF Lot Size) Needing Intervention, especially along major thoroughfares. According to the *Blight Removal Task Force Plan*, deconstruction is a good option for addressing blight when residences are no more than four units in size, because elements can be resold and reused. The plan suggests that ten percent of the blighted neighborhood structures in Detroit could be addressed through deconstruction, which can be partial or full and accomplished manually or with equipment. In contrast, the other 90 percent could be demolished, especially useful in areas with a lot of blight and vacancy and where structures have no remaining value.²⁸

The Large-Scale Commercial Blight map shows a few Industrial Structures Needing Intervention in the NorthTown area north of Seven Mile and one Commercial Structure (>25,000 SF Lot Size) Needing Intervention off of John R south of State Fair.²⁹

The plan suggests that vacant parcels be cleared so as to improve appearance and lessen the potential for crime and additional blight, though these lots then have to be maintained.³⁰

The Publicly Owned Properties in Detroit map shows many Structures and Vacant Lots in the NorthTown area. The 2014 Tax Foreclosure map identifies Likely Foreclosed, Temporarily Withheld, Foreclosed, and Redeemed properties.³¹ These maps indicate that there are many properties in the NorthTown area that are not in good

standing in regards to taxes and many properties that are publicly owned.

The *Blight Removal Task Force Plan* has guidelines for addressing properties that include inventorying vacant lots, creating partnerships, fundraising, planting clover on the lots and maintaining them, helping residents purchase side lots, and targeting properties at risk of foreclosure.³²

MOTOR CITY MAPPING

The Motor City Mapping (MCM) survey "produced an unprecedented property level database that not only defines the scope of blight in Detroit, but also provides critical data to assist in the overall prioritization of property intervention efforts."³³

378,138 properties in Detroit were surveyed through MCM. Of the surveyed properties, 84,641 properties (including lots and structures, but mostly the latter) were considered blighted or likely to become blighted. Of the 78,506 structures that were identified as blighted or having the potential to become blighted, 98 percent were located in neighborhoods; most were single-family homes, but multi-family residential, industrial, and commercial structures were also identified. 1,008 institutional and other buildings were considered to be in need of further study. The remaining 6,135 properties were identified as blighted lots.³⁴

These numbers provide a baseline understanding of the extent of blight in the city, though they may change due to continuing efforts of organizations such as DLBA, "a public authority dedicated to returning Detroit's vacant, abandoned, and foreclosed property to productive use. [Its] current programs include auction, side lot, community partnership and demolition."³⁵

MAXIMIZING COMMUNITY IMPACT TOOL

Data Driven Detroit uses its Maximizing Community Impact (MCI) tool to distinguish areas where intervention would have the most impact. The Task Force recommended "using common law nuisance abatement actions to acquire title to blighted properties" and "promoting a property tax policy that encourages participation and ways to address the properties currently at risk of foreclosure."³⁶

MCI produces two indices that measure neighborhood characteristics. The Neighborhood Dynamics Index (Detroit) map shows the area in and around the NorthTown area designated in three of four ways in terms of likely effect of blight intervention: Lowest Potential Impact (in the northern portion of the NorthTown area), Higher Potential Impact (in a section from Woodward to John R), and Lower Potential Impact (in a section at the south of the NorthTown area). There are no areas identified in the NorthTown area as having Highest Potential Impact, "where interventions will have the greatest market impact for the greatest number of people."³⁷

DETROIT FUTURE CITY: WORKING WITH LOTS: A FIELD GUIDE

According to *A Field Guide*, the benefits of improving vacant lots are myriad and include environmental (creation of green infrastructure and natural environments), aesthetic, and social (improving neighborhoods and communities) benefits.³⁸

An informative aspect of *A Field Guide* is the graphic on designing vacant lots, which includes a list of potential concepts, each analyzed in terms of required levels of People, Experience, Upkeep, Stormwater, and Cost. For instance, the Clean

+ Green design is low in terms of required capacity (Volunteer level), maintenance, experience, and price (\$50-1,000) and provides “Good” stormwater benefits. The guide is useful in that it specifies strategies for vacant lots, and a design can be chosen based on the vision for each lot and the characteristics of that strategy. Also helpful in *A Field Guide* is the information on “organizations, City departments, and businesses with experience, practical knowledge, and resources,” including DLBA, MCM, Wayne County Register of Deeds, various City of Detroit departments, the Greening of Detroit, and others, organized by area of expertise.³⁹

**GROWTOWN:
IT’S FOR EVERYONE,
IT’S SUSTAINABLE,
IT STARTS NOW!**

The GrowTown plan is not text-heavy but rather, a collection of words, phrases, and visuals expressing a vision and conveying a design sensibility. The importance of design, the environment, and the local community are evident in the plan.⁴⁰

The four keys of the plan include a focus on a food-based market, a toolbox for development, design, and an action plan. The value of local food is outlined first. In terms of design, public spaces, walkability, diversity, networks, and relationships are emphasized. The toolbox is especially relevant to ACC, for it is made up of categories with names like collaborators (which include organizations, leaders, and residents), placemakers (which include community spaces), connectors (which include paths and greenways), and vitamin G (which includes green spaces). The process that is outlined goes from visioning through planning to creation of an action plan for a resilient neighborhood and evaluation.⁴¹

Visual plans for GrowTown Penrose are also included in the GrowTown plan. In The Detroit Garden District plan, which shows different areas within the district, the location of the Penrose Neighborhood is indicated, and it is described as an “under served neighborhood...” The Conditions + Assets plan shows the location and visual examples of housing, Penrose Village Phases I and II, the community school, commercial zones, and structures, as well as indicating the corridors (Woodward, Seven Mile, and State Fair), assets, and an incompatible use (the railroad tracks). The Land Use Plan shows land uses including residential, mixed-use, and agricultural and green space and identifies the locations of places like the Penrose Community Center and Penrose Park. GrowTown includes plans for civic spaces within Penrose like natural play areas, an edible park, and gardens and green spaces. Additionally, creative forms of food production, reuse and restoration of existing buildings, sustainable development, and economic development are prioritized.⁴²

In regards to the action plan, suggestions are put forth including turning vacant lots into meadows, cleaning alleys and vacant lots, gardening, and creating paths. In various locations, the plan includes a representation showing aspects of the toolbox. The GrowTown plan is a valuable resource and espouses a vision of the integration of green, civic spaces into the community.⁴³

**MICHIGAN BLIGHT
ELIMINATION PLANNING
GUIDEBOOK**

The *Michigan Blight Elimination Planning Guidebook* is an excellent resource with an accompanying website that could be used in conjunction with the *Blight Removal Task Force Plan* to determine how to

go about tackling blight. Similar to *A Field Guide*, the *Michigan Blight Elimination Planning Guidebook* provides tangible steps, in this case for creating a blight elimination plan. According to the guide, it specifically “serves as a primer for Michigan communities interested in developing a strategy to more effectively address blight with limited resources...it’s meant to help local leaders identify a starting point and create a plan to eliminate blight.”⁴⁴ The *Michigan Blight Elimination Planning Guidebook* might be useful to ACC in determining how to tackle blight and in implementing a plan for blight removal.⁴⁵

Five steps are outlined in the guide to tackle blight:

- “Understand the scale and nature of blight”
- “Establish a blight elimination goal”
- “Assess your resources”
- “Design your plan”
- “Implement and evaluate”⁴⁶

The guide supplies details on each of these five steps. Four groups of partners are mentioned: government entities, community organizations, anchors, and local businesses. Valuable lessons include to focus on addressing blight at the scale of the block rather than at the scale of the individual parcel, understand networks, develop relationships and partnerships, and engage with stakeholders.⁴⁷

APPENDIX II. LARGEST PROPERTY OWNERS NORTH AND SOUTH OF SEVEN MILE⁴⁸

GRIXDALE NEIGHBORHOOD

LARGEST PROPERTY HOLDERS BY NUMBER OF PARCELS OWNED

OWNER	NUMBER OF PARCELS
ARAB AMERICAN & CHALDEAN COUNCIL	10
LISA ASKER	9
LISA ASKER	9
KR ENTERPRISES	8
JULIE SEMMA	5

STATE FAIR NEIGHBORHOOD

LARGEST PROPERTY HOLDERS BY NUMBER OF PARCELS OWNED

OWNER	NUMBER OF PARCELS
PENROSE VILLAGE	122
PERFECTING CHURCH	69
ATHEER IBRAHIM	24
PPM MANAGEMENT	23
LONDON GROUP, LLC.	20

APPENDIX III. BUSINESS SUMMARY⁴⁹

DATA FOR ALL BUSINESSES IN THE AREA	0.5 MILE RADIUS		1.0 MILE RADIUS		DETROIT CITY	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
TOTAL BUSINESSES	118		350		20966	
BUSINESSES BY NAICS CODES						
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, FISHING & HUNTING	1	0.8%	1	0.3%	14	0.1%
MINING	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	9	0.0%
UTILITIES	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	25	0.1%
CONSTRUCTION	6	5.1%	23	6.6%	1200	5.7%
MANUFACTURING	8	6.8%	18	5.1%	602	2.9%
WHOLESALE TRADE	7	5.9%	18	5.1%	709	3.4%
RETAIL TRADE	20	16.9%	60	17.1%	3304	15.8%
TRANSPORTATION & WAREHOUSING	0	0.0%	4	1.1%	556	2.7%
INFORMATION	2	1.7%	6	1.7%	558	2.7%
FINANCE & INSURANCE	5	4.2%	21	6.0%	1071	5.1%
REAL ESTATE, RENTAL & LEASING	5	4.2%	14	4.0%	918	4.4%
PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC & TECH SERVICES	9	7.6%	21	6.0%	1668	8.0%
MANAGEMENT OF COMPANIES & ENTERPRISES	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	18	0.1%
ADMINISTRATIVE & SUPPORT & WASTE MANAGEMENT & REMEDIATION SERVICES	2	1.7%	9	2.6%	828	3.9%
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES	1	0.8%	6	1.7%	561	2.7%
HEALTH CARE & SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	16	13.6%	30	8.6%	1621	7.7%
ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT & RECREATION	1	0.8%	9	2.6%	321	1.5%
ACCOMMODATION & FOOD SERVICES	10	8.5%	23	6.6%	1496	7.1%
OTHER SERVICES (EXCEPT PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)	21	17.8%	70	20.0%	4051	19.3%
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	1	0.8%	3	0.9%	613	2.9%
UNCLASSIFIED ESTABLISHMENTS	2	1.7%	15	4.3%	823	3.9%
TOTAL	118	100.0%	350	100.0%	20966	100.0%

APPENDIX IV. SUPPLY AND DEMAND ANALYSIS (0.5 MILE AND 1 MILE RADIUS)⁵⁰

DEMAND AND SUPPLY ANALYSIS WITHIN 0.5 MILE RADIUS						
INDUSTRY SUMMARY	NAICS	DEMAND	SUPPLY	RETAIL GAP	LEAKAGE / SURPLUS FACTOR	# OF BUSINESSES
TOTAL RETAIL TRADE AND FOOD & DRINK	44-45,722	\$10,251,774	\$12,317,281	-\$2,065,507	-9.2	32
TOTAL RETAIL TRADE	44-45	\$9,257,251	\$11,728,888	-\$2,471,637	-11.8	29
TOTAL FOOD & DRINK	722	\$994,523	\$588,393	\$406,130	25.7	3
INDUSTRY GROUP						
MOTOR VEHICLE & PARTS DEALERS	441	\$1,772,297	\$4,223,960	-\$2,451,663	-40.9	7
AUTOMOBILE DEALERS	4411	\$1,546,946	\$3,899,921	-\$2,352,975	-43.2	4
OTHER MOTOR VEHICLE DEALERS	4412	\$92,165	\$186,240	-\$94,075	-33.8	1
AUTO PARTS, ACCESSORIES & TIRE STORES	4413	\$133,186	\$137,799	-\$4,613	-1.7	2
FURNITURE & HOME FURNISHINGS STORES	442	\$178,003	\$44,947	\$133,056	59.7	1
FURNITURE STORES	4421	\$115,352	\$0	\$115,352	100.0	0
HOME FURNISHINGS STORES	4422	\$62,651	\$44,947	\$17,704	16.5	1
ELECTRONICS & APPLIANCE STORES	443	\$248,397	\$196,180	\$52,217	11.7	2
BLDG MATERIALS, GARDEN EQUIP. & SUPPLY STORES	444	\$265,349	\$58,370	\$206,979	63.9	1
BLDG MATERIAL & SUPPLIES DEALERS	4441	\$216,085	\$58,370	\$157,715	57.5	1
LAWN & GARDEN EQUIP & SUPPLY STORES	4442	\$49,265	\$0	\$49,265	100.0	0
FOOD & BEVERAGE STORES	445	\$1,308,699	\$2,460,631	-\$1,151,932	-30.6	7
GROCERY STORES	4451	\$1,064,970	\$888,746	\$176,224	9.0	3
SPECIALTY FOOD STORES	4452	\$70,381	\$593,739	-\$523,358	-78.8	2
BEER, WINE & LIQUOR STORES	4453	\$173,348	\$978,147	-\$804,799	-69.9	2
HEALTH & PERSONAL CARE STORES	446,4461	\$771,837	\$0	\$771,837	100.0	0
GASOLINE STATIONS	447,4471	\$917,063	\$3,200,325	-\$2,283,262	-55.5	3
CLOTHING & CLOTHING ACCESSORIES STORES	448	\$537,350	\$428,125	\$109,225	11.3	3
CLOTHING STORES	4481	\$386,449	\$317,780	\$68,669	9.8	2
SHOE STORES	4482	\$74,299	\$0	\$74,299	100.0	0
JEWELRY, LUGGAGE & LEATHER GOODS	4483	\$76,602	\$110,345	-\$33,743	-18.0	1
SPORTING GOODS, HOBBY, BOOK & MUSIC STORES	451	\$227,688	\$164,071	\$63,617	16.2	1
SPORTING GOODS/HOBBY/MUSICAL STORES	4511	\$176,535	\$164,071	\$12,464	3.7	1
BOOK, PERIODICAL & MUSIC STORES	4512	\$51,152	\$0	\$51,152	100.0	0
GENERAL MERCHANDISE STORES	452	\$2,077,463	\$784,529	\$1,292,934	45.2	2
DEPARTMENT STORES (EXCL. LEASED DEPTS.)	4521	\$626,496	\$701,010	-\$74,514	-5.6	1
OTHER GENERAL MERCHANDISE STORES	4529	\$1,450,967	\$83,519	\$1,367,448	89.1	1
MISCELLANEOUS STORE RETAILERS	453	\$231,495	\$90,869	\$140,626	43.6	2
FLORISTS	4531	\$12,148	\$0	\$12,148	100.0	0
OFFICE SUPPLIES, STATIONERY & GIFT STORES	4532	\$59,376	\$31,117	\$28,259	31.2	1
USED MERCHANDISE STORES	4533	\$22,136	\$0	\$22,136	100.0	0
OTHER MISCELLANEOUS STORE RETAILERS	4539	\$137,835	\$59,752	\$78,083	39.5	1
NONSTORE RETAILERS	454	\$721,610	\$57,186	\$664,424	85.3	1
ELECTRONIC SHOPPING & MAIL-ORDER HOUSES	4541	\$603,397	\$0	\$603,397	100.0	0
DIRECT SELLING ESTABLISHMENTS	4543	\$77,557	\$57,186	\$20,371	15.1	1
FOOD SERVICES & DRINKING PLACES	722	\$994,523	\$588,393	\$406,130	25.7	3
FULL-SERVICE RESTAURANTS	7221	\$374,461	\$125,560	\$248,901	49.8	1
LIMITED-SERVICE EATING PLACES	7222	\$510,083	\$252,287	\$257,796	33.8	1
SPECIAL FOOD SERVICES	7223	\$43,647	\$0	\$43,647	100.0	0
DRINKING PLACES - ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES	7224	\$66,332	\$210,546	-\$144,214	-52.1	1

SOURCE: RETAIL MARKETPLACE PROFILE, ESRI

DEMAND AND SUPPLY ANALYSIS WITHIN 1.0 MILE RADIUS						
INDUSTRY SUMMARY	NAICS	DEMAND	SUPPLY	RETAIL GAP	LEAKAGE / SURPLUS FACTOR	# OF BUSINESSES
TOTAL RETAIL TRADE AND FOOD & DRINK	44-45,722	\$60,219,547	\$24,248,665	\$35,970,882	42.6	69
TOTAL RETAIL TRADE	44-45	\$54,282,703	\$22,075,273	\$32,207,430	42.2	61
TOTAL FOOD & DRINK	722	\$5,936,844	\$2,173,393	\$3,763,451	46.4	8
INDUSTRY GROUP						
MOTOR VEHICLE & PARTS DEALERS	441	\$10,315,130	\$6,217,552	\$4,097,578	24.8	15
AUTOMOBILE DEALERS	4411	\$8,954,041	\$5,543,190	\$3,410,851	23.5	8
OTHER MOTOR VEHICLE DEALERS	4412	\$668,386	\$446,556	\$121,830	12.0	3
AUTO PARTS, ACCESSORIES & TIRE STORES	4413	\$792,702	\$227,806	\$564,896	55.4	3
FURNITURE & HOME FURNISHINGS STORES	442	\$1,052,037	\$308,189	\$743,848	54.7	2
FURNITURE STORES	4421	\$672,520	\$239,472	\$433,048	47.5	1
HOME FURNISHINGS STORES	4422	\$379,518	\$68,717	\$310,801	69.3	1
ELECTRONICS & APPLIANCE STORES	443	\$1,477,549	\$273,318	\$1,204,231	68.8	2
BLDG MATERIALS, GARDEN EQUIP. & SUPPLY STORES	444	\$1,672,156	\$505,115	\$1,167,041	53.6	2
BLDG MATERIAL & SUPPLIES DEALERS	4441	\$1,381,982	\$505,115	\$876,867	46.5	2
LAWN & GARDEN EQUIP & SUPPLY STORES	4442	\$290,174	\$0	\$290,174	100.0	0
FOOD & BEVERAGE STORES	445	\$7,666,742	\$6,635,372	\$1,031,370	7.2	16
GROCERY STORES	4451	\$6,232,830	\$2,576,327	\$3,656,503	41.5	9
SPECIALTY FOOD STORES	4452	\$412,280	\$726,639	-\$314,359	-27.6	3
BEER, WINE & LIQUOR STORES	4453	\$1,021,632	\$3,332,406	-\$2,310,774	-53.1	4
HEALTH & PERSONAL CARE STORES	446,4461	\$4,493,214	\$150,991	\$4,342,223	93.5	1
GASOLINE STATIONS	447,4471	\$5,262,909	\$5,247,858	\$15,051	0.1	5
CLOTHING & CLOTHING ACCESSORIES STORES	448	\$3,200,984	\$705,612	\$2,495,372	63.9	5
CLOTHING STORES	4481	\$2,295,147	\$595,267	\$1,699,880	58.8	4
SHOE STORES	4482	\$439,496	\$0	\$439,496	100.0	0
JEWELRY, LUGGAGE & LEATHER GOODS STORES	4483	\$466,341	\$110,345	\$355,996	61.7	1
SPORTING GOODS, HOBBY, BOOK & MUSIC STORES	451	\$1,366,493	\$347,262	\$1,019,231	59.5	3
SPORTING GOODS/HOBBY/MUSICAL INSTR STORES	4511	\$1,059,440	\$228,528	\$830,912	64.5	2
BOOK, PERIODICAL & MUSIC STORES	4512	\$307,053	\$118,734	\$188,319	44.2	1
GENERAL MERCHANDISE STORES	452	\$12,145,273	\$1,163,120	\$10,982,153	82.5	2
DEPARTMENT STORES EXCLUDING LEASED DEPTS.	4521	\$3,680,346	\$1,079,601	\$2,600,745	54.6	1
OTHER GENERAL MERCHANDISE STORES	4529	\$8,464,927	\$83,519	\$8,381,408	98.0	1
MISCELLANEOUS STORE RETAILERS	453	\$1,356,577	\$232,526	\$1,124,051	70.7	5
FLORISTS	4531	\$72,314	\$0	\$72,314	100.0	0
OFFICE SUPPLIES, STATIONERY & GIFT STORES	4532	\$353,091	\$62,234	\$290,857	70.0	2
USED MERCHANDISE STORES	4533	\$132,582	\$0	\$132,582	100.0	0
OTHER MISCELLANEOUS STORE RETAILERS	4539	\$798,589	\$170,292	\$628,297	64.8	3
NONSTORE RETAILERS	454	\$4,273,641	\$288,358	\$3,985,283	87.4	3
ELECTRONIC SHOPPING & MAIL-ORDER HOUSES	4541	\$3,563,315	\$0	\$3,563,315	100.0	0
DIRECT SELLING ESTABLISHMENTS	4543	\$471,990	\$148,684	\$323,306	52.1	3
FOOD SERVICES & DRINKING PLACES	722	\$5,936,844	\$2,173,393	\$3,763,451	46.4	8
FULL-SERVICE RESTAURANTS	7221	\$2,236,293	\$1,277,912	\$958,381	27.3	3
LIMITED-SERVICE EATING PLACES	7222	\$3,034,976	\$357,062	\$2,677,914	78.9	2
SPECIAL FOOD SERVICES	7223	\$258,912	\$0	\$258,912	100.0	0
DRINKING PLACES- ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES	7224	\$405,663	\$538,418	-\$132,755	-14.1	3

SOURCE: RETAIL MARKETPLACE PROFILE, ESRI

APPENDIX V. SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION

COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR MANAGER (CCM)

FUNCTION

Assist Arab Chaldean Council (ACC) efforts to improve the community's economic conditions; including neighborhood redevelopment efforts, planning, communication, outreach and Seven Mile Corridor business attraction. ACC is the largest non-profit human service organization serving the Middle-Eastern population in the United States. With 39 outreach offices throughout the State of Michigan and over 80,000 clients served every year. The mission of ACC is to maximize the skills, resources and expertise of clients and support the overall wellbeing of the community.

REPORTS TO:

Senior Vice President of Operations

RESPONSIBILITIES

- To assist the EDD in the coordination of commercial corridor economic development activities.
- Coordinate and communicate revitalization efforts with businesses along commercial corridors.
- Document, record and provide status reports on ongoing efforts.
- Track and maintain a list of available commercial and industrial spaces along the corridor
- Facilitate business participation in façade renovation efforts.
- Organize and implement corridor related activities to support local businesses.
- Promote the design guidelines for corridors to local developers and architects
- Complete annual business surveys and survey economic development conditions
- Provide up to date outreach and communication through a variety of channels including blogs.
- Create bi-monthly Seven Mile newsletter and regular e-blasts
- Create and maintain business association
- Attract and recruit businesses
- Marketing of NorthTown and Seven Mile Corridor
- Other tasks as assigned.

QUALIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS:

- BA in relevant field (i.e. economic/community development; city planning; business development; public administration; etc.)
- 1 - 3 years experience working with related fields dealing with the public.
- Excellent interpersonal & public relations skills. Self-motivated to develop strong relationships.
- Administrative and computer skills.
- Knowledge of city programs and business development.
- Meeting facilitation or event planning skills a plus.
- Highly organized with excellent oral and written communication skills. Team Player
- Demonstrated experience working in urban settings

APPENDIX VI. ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS OF A VIBRANT COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

PRINCIPLES:

- Open Space is any open piece of land that is undeveloped (has no buildings or other built structures) and is accessible to the public. Open space provides recreational areas for residents and helps to enhance the beauty and environmental quality of neighborhoods.⁵¹
- Streetscape design is the term given to the collective appearance of all buildings, footpaths, gardens and landscaping along a street. The streetscape is the visual identity of a neighborhood and plays an important role in facilitating interaction between residents and creating a community.⁵²
- Supported by a community development organization: are nonprofit, community-based organizations focused on revitalizing the areas in which they are located, typically low-income, underserved neighborhoods that have experienced significant disinvestment. While they are most commonly celebrated for developing affordable housing, they are usually involved in a range of initiatives critical to community health such as economic development, sanitation, streetscaping, and neighborhood planning projects, and oftentimes even provide education and social services to neighborhood residents.⁵³
- Residential Populations: the populations surrounding the model retail streets correspond to the site conditions in which they are found; populations for urban streets are denser than suburban ones, which are denser than rural ones. The population needed to support a thriving retail corridor is At least 7,500 people within 1/2 mile.⁵⁴
- Civic institutions, such as parks, libraries, city halls and cultural facilities, are the foundations of a civil society and the cornerstones of democracy. At their best, they nurture and define a community's identity by instilling a greater sense of pride, they foster frequent and meaningful contact between citizens, they provide comfort in their public spaces and they encourage an increasingly diverse population to use them.⁵⁵
- Average Daily Traffic Count is the annualized average 24-hour volume of vehicles at a given point or section of highway is called a traffic count. Average daily traffic volumes are an important measurement by which most retailers evaluate potential sites for new stores.⁵⁶
- Transportation: To ensure a vital retail street consumers should have multiple modes of reaching retail streets. This may come in the form of transit, bike, walk, and automobile. The modeled vibrant streets located within the United States have an average Walk Score of 94.⁵⁷

ENDNOTES

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25. *Ibid.*, 56-57, 60-61.
26. *Ibid.*, 64-65, 68-69.
27. *Ibid.*, 92.
28. *Ibid.*, 136-137, 148-152.
29. *Ibid.*, 160-161.
30. *Ibid.*, 173.
31. *Ibid.*, 207, 211.
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33. *Ibid.*, 14.
34. *Ibid.*, 15-17.
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39. *Ibid.*
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42. *Ibid.*

43. Ibid.
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CH 03: case study

Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation

methods
background
lessons

We chose to include a case study of the Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation (GRDC) in an effort to provide a picture of successful community work in another Detroit neighborhood, as well as examples of how to implement many of our recommendations in NorthTown. GRDC was selected as a useful example because of its longevity, multi-pronged focus within the community (on both housing and economic development), and ability to deliver consistent positive impacts as a result of its work.

METHODS

Stakeholder Interviews

We interviewed employees of GRDC, neighborhood residents and volunteers, business owners in the community, and business development partners in an effort to gather a broad picture of the Grandmont Rosedale community and GRDC's work within it. When selecting stakeholders to interview, we worked to ensure that we included both those with a focus on housing, as well as individuals who could provide information about economic development initiatives. For each different set of stakeholders (i.e., employees, residents, or business owners), we developed a generic set of questions that could then be adapted to the specific person being interviewed. Interviews were conducted by phone and in person and generally lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.

Review of GRDC materials

In addition to interviews, we reviewed materials used by GRDC, including business development tools, communication pieces, and the *Grandmont Rosedale Quality of Life Plan* developed in conjunction with Local Initiative Support Coalition (LISC).¹ We also reviewed newspaper and scholarly articles focused on GRDC and its work in the community.

Analysis

After collecting interviews and other

sources, we analyzed the materials to identify common themes, tools, and challenges that appeared consistently throughout multiple sources.

BACKGROUND

A non-profit community development corporation, GRDC focuses on community revitalization efforts within five neighborhoods in Detroit: Grandmont, Grandmont #1, Rosedale Park, North Rosedale, and Minock Park. Within these communities, GRDC works to preserve and protect residential neighborhoods through housing and vacant property programs, as well as to support commercial districts along Grand River, McNichols, and Schoolcraft.²

GRDC was formed in 1989 as a product of four existing neighborhood associations (Minock Park joined later) that hoped to amplify their impact and ability to secure grant funding

“Getting business and property owners on board with a community vision can be challenging and require taking time to build strong relationships.”

by working together.³ When it came into existence, the organization was focused on eradicating vacancy in the neighborhood by acquiring vacant housing and rehabbing it.⁴ It has evolved since its inception, however, to expand its residential property initiatives and include a focus on developing commercial corridors.⁵

Structure

GRDC's structure is crucial to engaging and communicating with residents and providing a means for the community to work towards common priorities. Each of the five neighborhoods within the Grandmont Rosedale community continues to maintain its own neighborhood association,

which advocates for residents and coordinates neighborhood specific initiatives. An umbrella organization for these five associations, GRDC has a board entirely composed of residents that includes representatives from each association.⁶ Communication methods include newsletters (both electronic and paper mailings), flyers, email, and word of mouth.

Programs

GRDC implements a multifaceted strategy to support its five neighborhoods and drive positive momentum within the community. This strategy includes a focus on housing and vacant property, commercial revitalization, public safety, and a regular farmers' market.

Housing

For many years, the bulk of GRDC's work was focused on tackling vacancy through cleaning and maintaining vacant properties, as well as rehabbing and selling houses in the neighborhood. According to GRDC, the Grandmont Rosedale community currently has an 85 percent homeownership rate, partially as a result of these efforts.⁷

Programs include:

- **Housing Renovation:** GRDC purchases and renovates rundown vacant houses in the community and then sells to new buyers
- **Housing Repair:** the organization has funding available for low-income home owners who need to make repairs on current homes
- **Public safety:** GRDC supports a Crime Prevention Task Force that coordinates with local law enforcement to prevent and monitor crime throughout the five cooperating neighborhoods.⁸

Vacant Property Task Force (VPTF)

This task force monitors and maintains vacant properties; it focuses on a range of projects designed to combat blight, including:

- keeping a database of vacant

- properties;
- working with property owners to maintain properties;
- organizing clean-ups and boarding of properties when property owners fail to maintain them;
- pushing for demolition or contacting the DLBA's Nuisance Abatement program on unmaintained properties; and
- educating homeowners who occupy their homes about the foreclosure process and their rights.⁹

Economic Development

GRDC supports commercial revitalization along multiple important corridors in the community; currently the bulk of its efforts are focused upon the Grand River corridor. It supports the development of this area in multiple ways:

- **Vacant Property Purchase:** purchasing and rehabbing vacant commercial properties to provide space for program initiatives and small business owners;
- **Partnerships:** developing partnerships with existing organizations that provide small business assistance and support, such as TechTown, ProsperUS, and CEED;
- **Grand River Workspace:** managing a co-working and pop-up space on Grand River for existing entrepreneurs;
- **Property Owners:** building relationships with current property owners; and
- **Development Tools:** providing prospective business owners with community-specific tools like design guidelines and a market analysis.¹⁰

Farmers' Market

GRDC also runs a weekly farmer's market in the community from June to October that provides community members with access to fresh produce and accepts both the Bridge Card and WIC.¹¹

LESSONS

Through our study of the Grandmont Rosedale community, we have identified several key lessons that could be useful to ACC in implementing their own neighborhood and economic development programs.

Residential Area Development

Efforts to combat blight are time- and volunteer-intensive and require a strong base of resident support to accomplish successfully.

The VPTF projects require a large number of consistent volunteers to successfully implement. Some projects are focused on actually cleaning and maintaining vacant properties, all of which need groups of individuals who are regularly willing to take time to maintain properties, board houses, etc. Other initiatives involve trying to identify and get in contact with property owners to encourage maintenance or educate occupants to avoid eviction or foreclosure processes.¹²

Building the necessary volunteer networks for this kind of work is time and people intensive. Developing a reliable network of volunteers will be crucial to the success of efforts to combat blight.¹³

A community planning process provides a direction for development efforts and an opportunity to involve residents.

Supported by LISC, GRDC finished an extensive quality of life planning process in 2012. Through a series of resident interviews and survey responses, the organization was able to identify common priorities and needs within the community. Once these priorities were identified, GRDC could use them to guide future work. While some of the areas of concerns for residents were already being addressed by GRDC, others, like economic development and youth programming, were outside of their current scope and required new initiatives.¹⁴

As an organization that serves five different neighborhoods that do not always have the exact same priorities, it was important for GRDC to identify concerns that were common to a majority of residents. It can help guide future work and coalesce funding and effort around these concerns.

Moreover, the Quality of Life Plan provided GRDC with a better understanding of the gaps between community needs and its current efforts.



Figure 3-1. Grandmont Rosedale Community Sign. Source: June Manning Thomas.

It was able to develop new initiatives as a result of this plan that better serve community needs. The plan also gave GRDC a platform from which to recruit and organize volunteers. A series of targeted subcommittees were created to implement the resulting action plan, with stated goals and broad action steps already in place.¹⁵

Economic Development

Successful development of a business corridor is time-intensive and requires a person or entity to facilitate.

While GRDC initially focused its efforts primarily on combating residential blight within its neighborhoods, it shifted to include commercial corridor revitalization in 2012, after the quality of life planning process. This process highlighted concerns from residents that commercial corridors had growing levels of vacancy and failed to fill community needs.¹⁶

GRDC's involvement in economic development has allowed the community to come together around organized goals for the commercial corridor and establish a plan to

accomplish those goals. This has included:

- structured partnerships with other business development organizations;
- concentrated efforts to fill identified needs by attracting certain types of businesses to the area (e.g. a family diner); and
- the addition of dedicated staff focused on supporting and building connections with business and property owners in the community.¹⁷

"GRDC has been able to act as a bridge between community members and the resources they need to build and develop their own businesses."

GRDC's structural capacity for economic development allows for formalized partnerships with business development groups in the community. GRDC has been able to act as a bridge between community members

and the resources they need to build and develop their own businesses. It is easier for such partners to work in a neighborhood when there is a clear organization from the community with which they can collaborate.¹⁸

Getting business and property owners on board with a community vision can be challenging and requires taking time to build strong relationships and show these stakeholders how this vision will benefit them. The ability to dedicate specific staff to these efforts is extremely helpful, if not necessary, to their success.¹⁹

Be intentional about business attraction, focusing on businesses that fit identified community needs.

As previously stated, GRDC has a specific vision for the Grand River commercial corridor that has developed out of a participatory community planning process. This means they are focused on supporting and attracting businesses that fit within this vision and business owners that will be invested in the community.²⁰

Amanda Brewington, who owns Always Brewing, a coffee shop that opened along Grand River in 2013, initially looked at the Grandmont Rosedale neighborhood because she knew that the community needed a coffee shop and that GRDC was specifically seeking to bring one to the area. She eventually ended up there after a three-month pop-up in the community in part because it became clear that GRDC's interest had been reflective of genuine demand for the product she was providing. Brewington was also attracted to the strong community support network that existed in the area and the opportunities for collaboration between other business owners who had recently joined the neighborhood.²¹

Focusing on businesses that meet a gap in market demand helps to ensure the success of the business in

the community. GRDC's knowledge of demand within their community and ability to demonstrate that to prospective business owners can help convince someone to locate there. By supporting business owners that have a stake in the community and are invested in collaboration, GRDC is building a strong foundation for future economic development efforts as well.²²

Improving the environment along the corridor has been crucial in attracting and retaining businesses

GRDC has implemented multiple different strategies in an effort to improve the overall appeal of the Grand River corridor to small businesses, including purchasing property and rehabbing it, providing façade improvement funds through grants, and working with property owners to help them understand what small businesses need in a structure.²³

A lack of vacant or burned-out buildings along the commercial strip provides incentive for current business owners to come into the community.²⁴ In interviews, business owners cited this as a reason for choosing to locate along Grand River, as opposed to on a different commercial corridor. GRDC's attempts to purchase property have been stymied though by a lack of accurate information about property owners. They can be hard both to identify and also to get in contact with.²⁵ It can also be challenging to get property owners (especially if they are not from the community) to invest in a specific vision for the area. It is important to have someone who has the time and skills to build the necessary relationships with property owners.²⁶



Figure 3-3. Grandmont Rosedale residents gathering at the Farmers' Market, 2015. Source: June Manning Thomas.

Leveraging partnerships with business development organizations can supplement existing organizational capacity and provide a foundation for small business attraction and support in the community.

In an effort to provide business development support in the Grandmont Rosedale community, GRDC opened the Grand River Workspace in January 2015. A co-working space owned and managed by GRDC, the Workspace provides office space and business development resources to startups and freelancers in the community. It also maintains a pop-up space for rotating small businesses.²⁷ Through the Workspace, GRDC is able to partner with existing groups that have expertise in a variety of business development areas and are willing to offer training and resources to interested community members. Partners include CEED, ProsperUS, Techtown SWOT City, and Build Institute.²⁸

It is important to be intentional about pursuing partnerships and focus on developing relationships that best fit

community goals and are mutually beneficial. GRDC works with partners, such as those previously mentioned, that serve identified needs and knowledge gaps within the community. Moreover, these relationships are most successful when the work fits within the mission of both GRDC and the partner organization.²⁹

Detroit already has a lot of existing business development capacity and expertise. GRDC has not necessarily developed its own business support programs, but rather has focused on strategic partnerships with other organizations that already provide successful services in these areas.³⁰

Building momentum and understanding community demand for services can be important in successfully bringing business development resources to the community. Because GRDC is an organization composed of and driven by residents, it is able to identify community needs and recruit participants to programs.■



Figure 3-2. Always Brewing Coffee Shop Window. Source: June Manning Thomas.

ENDNOTES

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