



VAN DYKE AVENUE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



Acknowledgements

Mayor

Robert Binson

Mayor Pro-Tem

James Reid

City Council

Peter Harenski

Ron Lapham

Richard Moeller

City Manager/DDA Director

Dennis E. Champine

Downtown Development Authority

Glen McCandliss, Chairperson

John Motyka, Vice Chairperson

Robert Binson, Mayor

Russell Haney, Board Member

Marvin Sauger, Board Member

Jan Ornsten, Board Member

David Czapski, Board Member

Jessica D. Hite, Board Member

John Siedlik, Board Member

Assisted by:



Carlisle | Wortman
ASSOCIATES, INC.

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1 Project Objective

The Economic Development Strategy for Van Dyke Avenue provides a unified development tract for the City of Center Line, the DDA, the County, and investors. In coordination with the adoption of the master plan, zoning ordinance, Strategic Vision, and Development Plan, the protection of the Van Dyke corridor and the promotion of the growth and redevelopment of the City of Center Line is critical to the success of the area.

Commercial vacancies and the broader landscape can use this plan to provide for revitalized land uses, small area design concepts, and rejuvenated street level fabric and character.

The City of Center Line is a place of economic opportunity and potential growth. From traditional employment options to entrepreneurial endeavors and development opportunities, Center Line is a committed and supportive partner in private efforts to create local prosperity.

As the main road in Center Line, Van Dyke Avenue is a state highway with high traffic volumes throughout the day and week. The corridor, from Stephens Road to I-696 is deficient in terms of non-motorized modes of transportation. The establishment of the Iron Belle Trail connection through the City helps to link bicyclists and pedestrians to the broader region on secondary roads, however the integration of non-motorized design support on this main corridor is important.

Opportunities exist for potential redevelopment and growth along the integral corridor. Access management strategies and non motorized provisions will help make this busy roadway safer for pedestrians and motorists. The reimaging of building size, facade weight, and streetscape will make the local character stand-out and help to reshape Center Line's narrative.

This strategy reports on current physical conditions, results of the Business Forum engagement, and existing plans and ordinances. Strategies have been developed from these.

Role of Local Elected Officials in Economic Development

Elected officials should be familiar with the following economic development indicators to be effective leaders:

1. Your local economic strengths and weaknesses. Understanding of the economic profile helps to create realistic vision and strategies.
2. Your community's place in the broader regional economy. Better prepared to partner with other jurisdictions for regional economic success.
3. Your community's economic development vision and goals. Build consensus for a vision and goals and provide clear direction for local economic development.
4. Your community's strategy to attain its goals. A strategy links economic development goals to specific activities, budget allocation, staff resources and measurable outcomes.
5. Connection between economic development and other City policies. Essential to consider how economic development goals affect other City policies such as transportation, housing and staff direction.
6. Your regulatory environment. The regulatory review process should allow for timely, reliable and transparent resolutions.
7. Your local economic development stakeholders and partners. Think strategically on project-by-project basis on who needs to be involved, what resources are brought and how to get them involved.
8. The needs of your local business community. Support growth and expansion by opening lines of communication.
9. Your community's economic development message. Promote a clear, accurate and compelling economic development message.
10. Your economic development staff. Forge strong relationships with staff members to be more effective leaders.

SOURCE: The Role of Local Elected Officials in Economic Development, Center for Research & Innovation, National League of Cities, 2010

CORRIDOR CONDITIONS

Although the signs of age and wear are becoming more obvious, the Van Dyke corridor functions fairly well. To revitalize the activity and the image of the area, however, understanding the areas needs and a commitment to action to make the vision happen is necessary to move forward.

The overall health of the corridor is very important. Recommendations are provided for street improvements (recognizing right-of-way widths, traffic volumes, and speed); development patterns (recognizing current land use, block and parcel sizes); identifying focal points; off-street and on-street parking; and public improvements (landscape, streetscape, and amenities).

Transportation issues for local and regional connections, complete streets, and multi-modal movement and management have also been considered. Mixed use and “flex zoning” options are identified to help promote redevelopment of vacant or under-utilized sites.

A main need for this corridor is capturing investment. A fresh perspective on the land use strategy and policy and identifying new types of industry and investment is vital.

Identifying grant opportunities, assessing code enforcement and maintenance issues, using housing authorities, and crafting design standards for appropriate land uses are methods that have been considered in addressing the local and regional redevelopment challenges.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The public engagement process for this economic strategy has included a Business Forum as part of the State of the City where concepts were presented, interviews were conducted, and data was gathered. The process has yielded valuable information about the needs and desires for the corridors and is integrated into this strategy.

- Four themes that came out of the interviews are:
- Desire to continue “small town atmosphere.”
 - Underutilized property should be used to enhance Center Line’s charm.
 - Better pedestrian accommodations are needed for residents of all ages.
 - “Downtown character” should be more defined.



2 Planning Context

City planning initiatives and plans regarding Van Dyke Avenue and the City of Center Line are relevant to current planning efforts. These initiatives are a catalyst for attracting new investment, promoting economic development, increasing the tax base, and emphasizing the entrances into the City along this important corridor.

Having been recently completed, the master plan and the zoning ordinance set the plan and the policy for land use goals in the City while the Development Plan and the Vision for Service establishes the responsibilities and actions necessary to achieve desired goals. The master plan is a long-range statement of general goals and policies aimed at the unified and coordinated development and the zoning ordinance was enacted for the purpose of promoting and protecting the health, safety, comfort, convenience, and general welfare of its Center Line residents.

The process of reviewing past plans and engaging with the public informs how this strategy has been created and influences recommendations for appropriate City action.

VISION FOR SERVICE

The Vision for Service sets forth long-range vision statements that the City strives to reach. Separated by civic department that has the primary responsibility, seven visions are set forth followed by a set of strategies and actions that will be used to reach the vision.

Related to community development as this department and its activities are under the direction of the city manager, the Community Development and Economic Reinvestment vision relates to commercial and industrial investment. Each department in the City determined its own vision with the single objective of improving the health and safety for residents, businesses, and investors.

Not only this single vision, but the broader document focuses efforts on the use of

comprehensive programs to promote and secure reinvestment on Van Dyke Avenue and throughout the City.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND TAX INCREMENT FINANCING PLAN

The mission of the Center Line Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is to encourage sustainable commercial development of the Downtown Development District by helping current businesses grow and encouraging the development of new businesses through physical improvements, financial incentives, and marketing, specifically south of Engleman Street.

The Development Plan provides guidance to the DDA, including strategies for the revitalization of underutilized properties, rehabilitation of building facades, and nurturing of the entrepreneurial spirit through targeted marketing and financial incentives.

The Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Plan provides the legal foundation for funding these improvements within the districts. The goal is to eliminate property value deterioration and to promote economic growth and revitalization, and ultimately to create an aesthetically pleasing, accessible, and vibrant Van Dyke and Ten Mile Corridor.

CITY MASTER PLAN

As the long-range statement of general goals and policies, the City Master Plan identifies that access, connectivity, and convenient parking are major challenges for sites along Van Dyke and Ten Mile Road. Strip development and similar uses are very segregated and there is little internal connection among parcels.

Highlights of the Master Plan related to this economic strategy include recommendations to establish Van Dyke and Ten Mile as a place for reinvestment through entrepreneurship,

incubators for startups and quality development.

The recent Master Plan recommends a major change from the previous master plan, the establishment of the Corridor Mixed-Use area along Van Dyke Avenue and Ten Mile Road. The Corridor Mixed-Use land use category encourages commercial, office, retail, and mixed-use residential development.

The plan promotes that special consideration will be given to redevelopment and mixed-use projects, which contain commercial/office/retail uses on lower floors with residential and office uses on upper floors or rear facades.

The Future Land Use Map indicates that commercial/office/retail/mixed-use development is concentrated along the Van Dyke corridor. A wide spectrum of retail and service businesses are located within these corridors. The Plan carefully regulates the boundaries of the Corridor Mixed-Use area and provides for a well-defined potential Corridor Mixed-Use Expansion area.

The Expansion Area provides for parking uses as well as innovative landscaping and screening areas. The Expansion Area replaces the former Transitional Parking District on the previous Future Land Use Map and aims to provide a seamless transition of adjoining, traditional single-family residential neighborhoods that are adjacent to these corridors.

Large redevelopment opportunities may be present in future years with the Balkan Hall and Rinke Buick sites at the south end of Van Dyke Avenue and Ten Mile intersection. These areas represent prime opportunities for incorporation of mixed-use development and/or planned unit developments, which could spawn economic revitalization in that area of the corridor.

The Land Use Plan does not recommend any new shopping centers or strip malls; however, such developments would be possible if the incorporation of mixed-uses was proposed on larger development sites. The Plan encourages the assembly of smaller parcels into larger development sites in strategically located areas.

CITY ZONING ORDINANCE

Following the Master Plan update, the Zoning Ordinance was amended to include important changes to the commercial district on Van Dyke Avenue and to provide enhanced site design guidelines.

From the former B-3 General Business three specific, characteristic identifying districts were created. These three mixed-use districts help to give a clearer understanding of the types of commercial land uses are permitted.

B-1A City Center Redevelopment District

Created to foster a business friendly redevelopment climate, encourage pedestrian use, and connect to the adjacent neighborhoods.

B-1B Van Dyke Corridor District

Designed to cater to the needs of a larger consumer population with a greater reliance on passerby traffic yet also considers connections important to long-term viability.

B-2 Ten Mile Corridor District

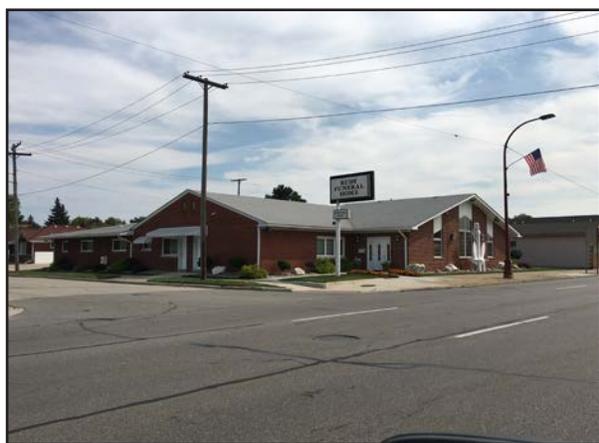
Established to provide sites for more diversified business types incompatible with pedestrian traffic, specifically for automobile-related facilities and other uses incompatible with pedestrian oriented character and scale.

Additionally, the City is in process of rewriting the B-1A district as a form-based style ordinance that will be used to enhance the character and desired style of the downtown corridor.



3 Corridor Characteristics

Examining the current conditions of the corridor and all of the players that contribute to it has been an important tool in developing the observations that this strategy is based from. Having previously connected with the individuals that make up the fabric of Center Line, the photo inventory of the physical landscape provides a visual understanding of the challenges and assets that have been considered in this process. Maps and graphics included provide the illustration of how the character shifts south of Engleman Avenue and a more dense, downtown environment develops as characterized by lot size and access points.

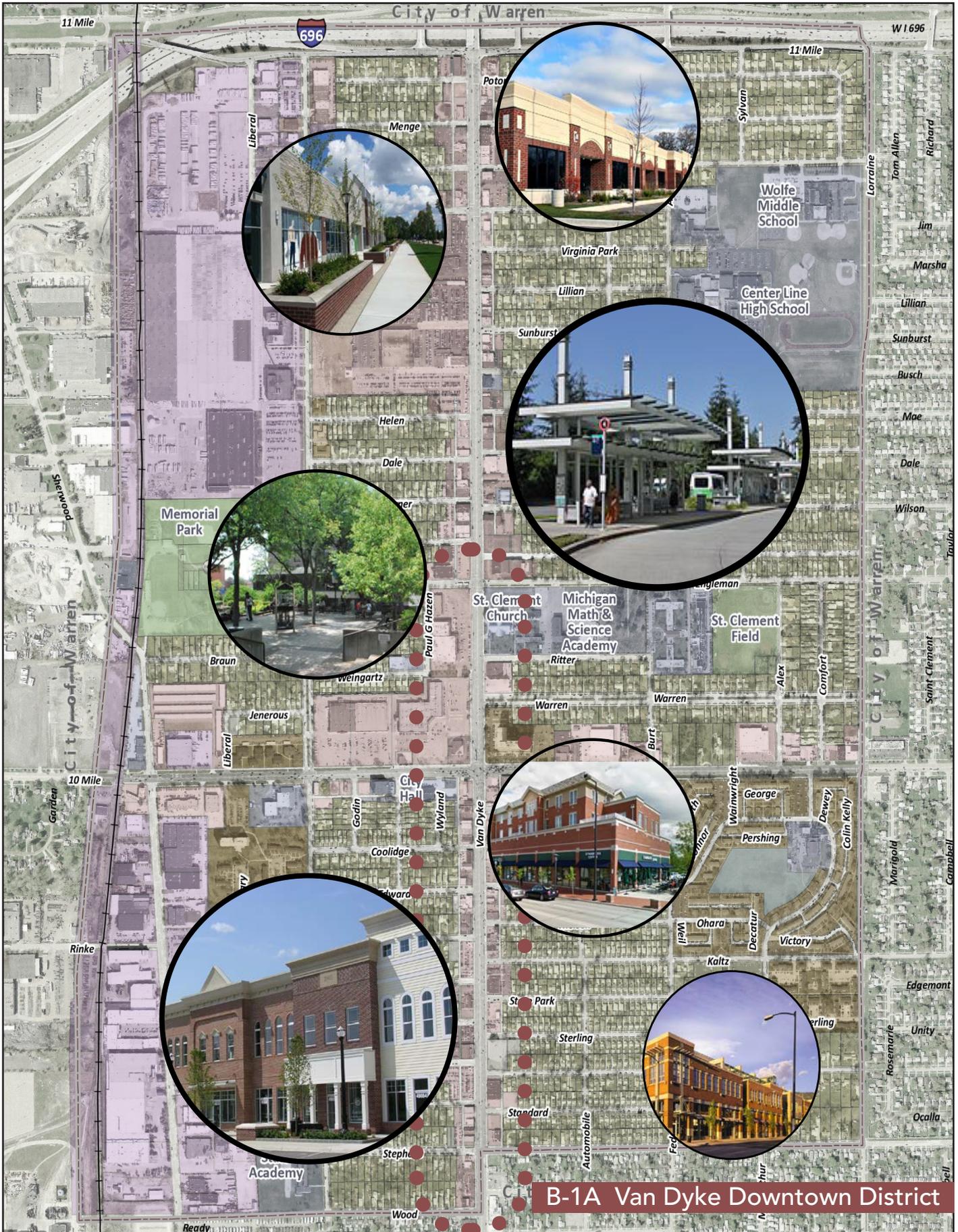


CURRENT ENVIRONMENT:

- Van Dyke has three through travel lanes in each direction with a center turn lane.
- Older commercial corridor with some vacancies and functionally obsolete buildings.
- Many individually developed stand-alone commercial or office businesses.
- Shallow commercial frontage and smaller individual commercial buildings with some larger shopping centers.
- Height of buildings generally one story throughout the corridor.
- Small parking lots with individual drives limit effect of landscape treatment beyond road curb.
- Many curb cuts, individual parking lots and minimal connectivity.
- Minimal pedestrian amenities.
- Shopping, restaurants, a bank, churches, nearby community center and residential neighborhoods are sited on both sides of Van Dyke. Safe and enjoyable connections bridging both sides are needed.
- Vacant, unused or under-utilized parcels scattered throughout the corridor.

DESIGN TOOLS:

- Mixed-use, multi-story buildings.
- Transit oriented design and upgraded transit stops and surrounding areas.
- Urban park characteristics including additional green space, pathways, attractions.
- Enhanced streetscape.



B-1A Van Dyke Downtown District

4 Van Dyke Avenue Economic Vision

VISION:

Van Dyke Avenue will accommodate large and small retail businesses, smaller offices, business incubators, mixed commercial and residential buildings, and entrepreneurial enterprises. Mixed use districts, B-1A (Van Dyke Downtown District) and B-1B (Van Dyke Corridor District), will help to provide access and connectivity while roads, sidewalks, adjacent residential neighborhoods, and landscaped areas will be maintained to support a positive vision of the City. The difference in character and building type, lot size, and development pattern in the B-1A and B-1B districts, adds to the distinction of the north and south sides of Engleman Street. This separation of zoning districts is the physical identification of the vision the City has for the future of Van Dyke Avenue.



TAX INCENTIVE STRATEGIES

Use tax exemption incentives for projects having direct positive effects on area tax values, provide job generation and improve the image of the City.

DISCUSSION: Granting tax exemptions should be confined to projects directly benefitting the tax base, property values of the surrounding area, generating jobs and adding pedestrian friendly features. Criteria for minimum job generation and financial investment are recommended. The downside of tax exemption or abatement programs is budget reduction.

STRATEGIES:

- Add selection criteria to the tax incentive applications that contribute to a pedestrian-friendly area and strengthen the City's regional image.
- Add selection criteria to tax incentive applications that require tree planting, violation free property maintenance contributes to a pedestrian-friendly area and strengthen the City's regional image.

Incent adjacent residences to make home improvements.

DISCUSSION: Downtowns are not strictly defined by retail, commercial and office uses. They are enhanced by the people that use them. The common image of a downtown is a dense collection of multi-story mixed-use buildings. Center Line strives for these but the market is not immediately present. Center Line has

strong single-family neighborhoods adjacent to the commercial frontage. These neighborhoods should be maintained in good condition and attract families that want to live in a downtown.

STRATEGY:

- Consider the use of a Neighborhood Rehabilitation District to stimulate improvements in surrounding residential neighborhoods.

MASTER PLAN AND ZONING ORDINANCE STRATEGIES

Assemble smaller parcels into larger development sites in strategically located areas.

DISCUSSION: Large redevelopment opportunities may be present in future years with the former Balkan Hall and Rinke Buick sites at the south end of Van Dyke Avenue. These areas represent prime opportunities for incorporation of mixed-use development and/or planned unit developments, which could spawn economic revitalization in that area of the corridor.

STRATEGIES:

- Require design standards and proven urban design principles to be followed.
- Adopt form-based code to establish design standard in district.

DESIGN AND TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

Enhance design of the Van Dyke Avenue to welcome residents and visitors into Center Line.

DISCUSSION: Enhanced tree, shrub and lighting placement and defined crosswalk treatments can create a welcoming entry. Examples are included in the Image Portfolio at the end of this report to show possible design treatments.

STRATEGIES:

- Continue to use the DDA site improvement grant.
- Secure funding assistance through an MDOT enhancement grant and local business donations to construct the improvement.
- Seek services of local businesses to adopt and maintain the entries.

Reduce the risk of traffic accidents.

DISCUSSION: Van Dyke is heavily travelled with fast speeds and a high volume of truck traffic. Traffic accidents can be reduced through better street and access design.

STRATEGIES:

- Design and adopt pedestrian crossing and nonmotorized transportation solutions.
- Post design solutions and construction progress on the City's website.
- Adopt access management standards.

Create and implement non-motorized transportation opportunities.

DISCUSSION: Local residents and vulnerable populations need safer road crossings and non-motorized options within this highly motorized corridor.

STRATEGIES:

- Conduct walkability study for connection opportunities from neighborhoods to commerce and regional system.
- Adopt complete streets ordinance.
- Use wayfinding design to connect Iron Belle Trail loop to the Van Dyke business district.

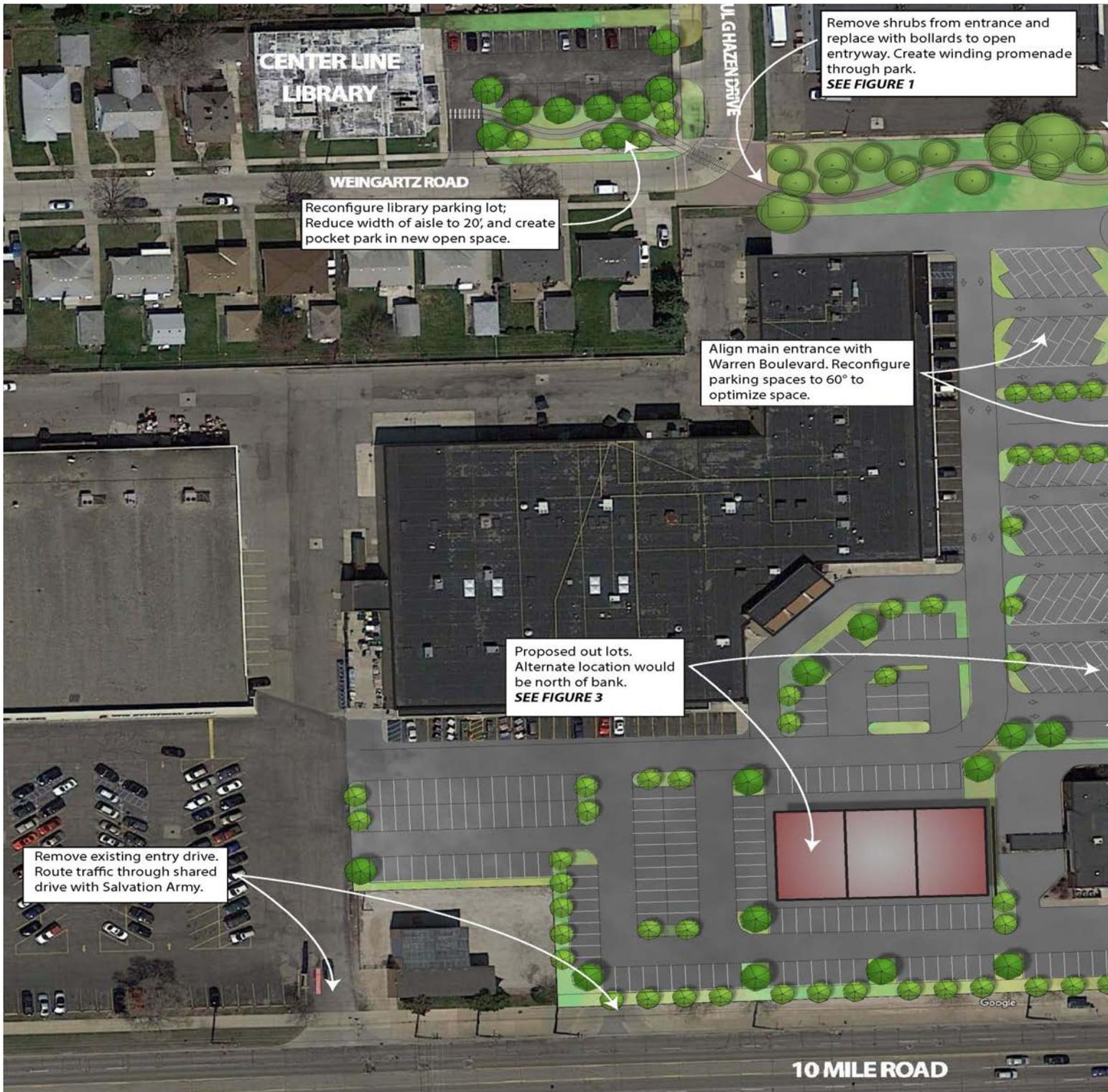
Enhance mass-transit opportunities for Van Dyke Avenue and Ten Mile Road.

DISCUSSION: Van Dyke and Ten Mile are primary transit connections within the regional network.

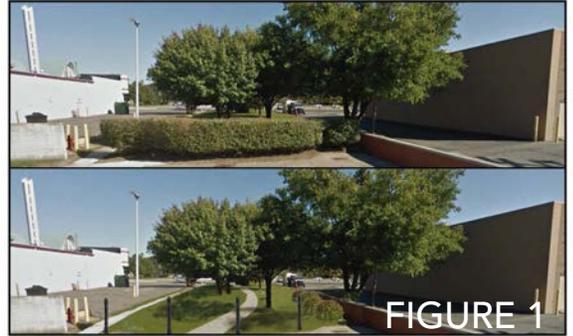
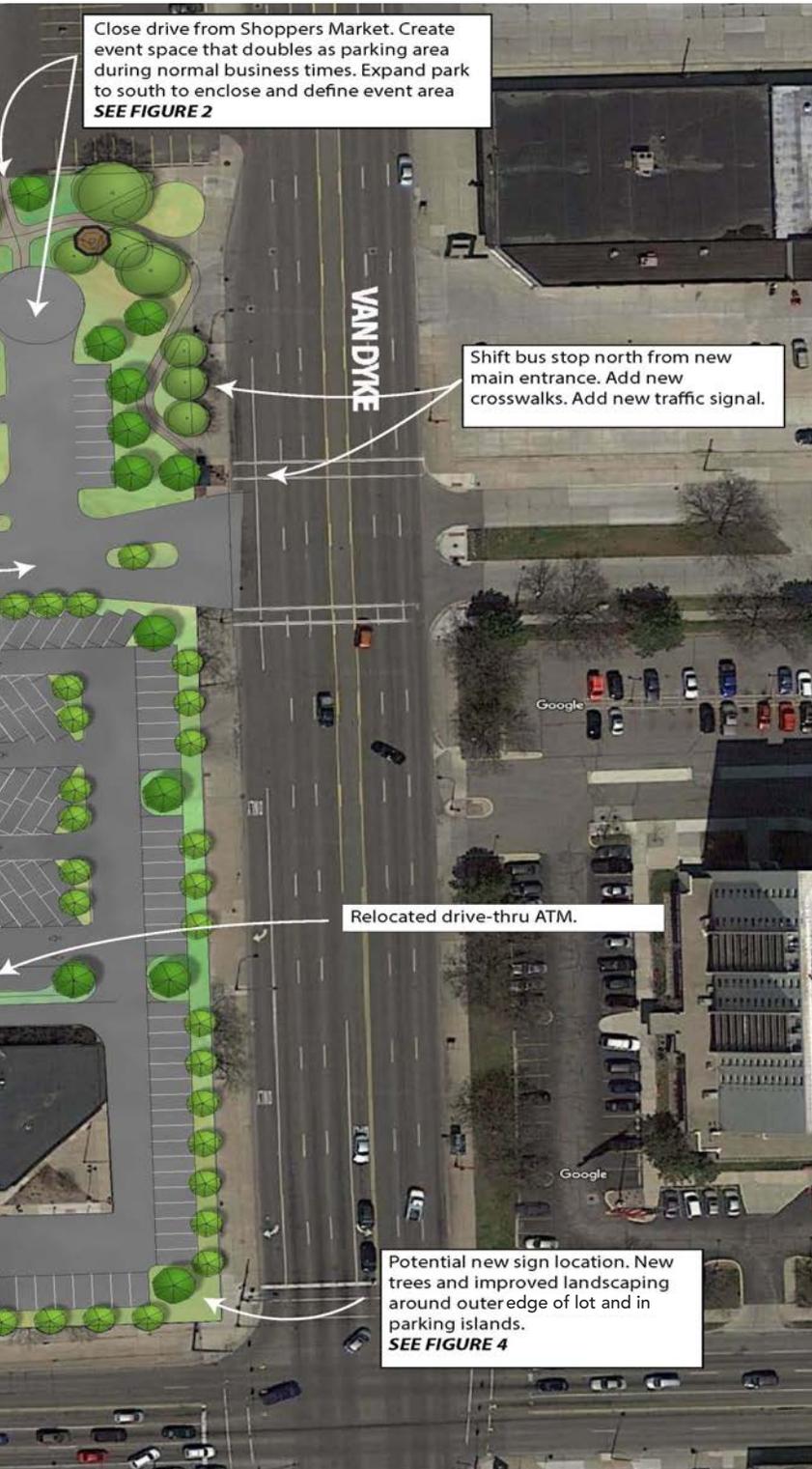
STRATEGIES:

- Work with SMART and MDOT to further identify local needs and opportunities to enhance route, access, schedule, and facilities.
- Stay informed of regional and inter-community designs and programs for improvements and changes.

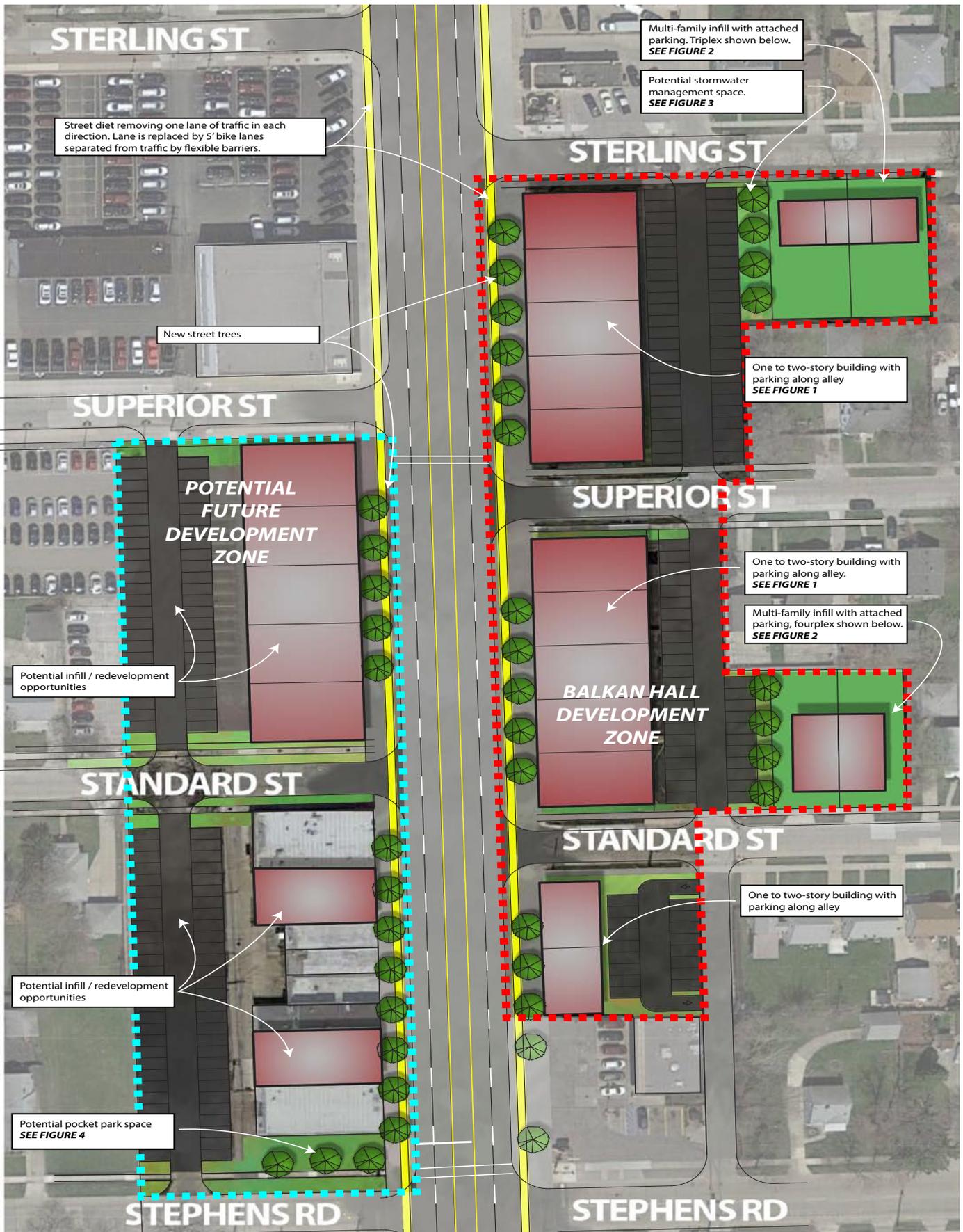
Design Concept Plan - Ten Mile Road and Van Dyke Commercial Center



Envisioned in Spring 2017, this shopping center concept plan is an illustrative example of best practice commercial development. The design connects the corner to the interior of the site using built outlots, active landscaping, and shared space design and programming to activate a valuable and important space. The City of Center Line is currently (Spring 2018) reviewing a site plan with similar design concepts.



Design Concept Plan - Balkan Hall and Rinke Dealership Sites



Also envisioned in Spring 2017, this concept plan of the Balkan Hall and Rinke dealership sites gives a visual image of what best practice commercial and mixed-use development could look like in this environment. The design showcases redevelopment opportunity zones, stormwater management best practices, enhanced landscaping and streetscape, and infill housing to further diversify the potential uses of the property.



Figure 1: Infill Buildings

The project calls for one to two-story buildings along Van Dyke. New buildings should be of high quality, with architectural features such as awnings, recesses, lighting, or columns which add visual appeal. Ground floor retail should have large windows fronting Van Dyke to attract customers. Parking will be accommodated along the alleyways to the rear of the buildings.

24408 Van Dyke is a good example of the suggested building form.



Figure 2: Multi-family Housing

Vacant parcels on Sterling and Standard Streets present the opportunity to introduce multi-family housing. Parking at or below grade level supplements on-street parking. Setbacks comply with adjacent R-2 zoned housing requirements to ensure a uniform residential appearance.

The properties are large enough to accommodate up to a two-story fourplex.



Figure 3: Stormwater Management

Redevelopment will require adherence to Center Line ordinances regarding setbacks and buffers between residential and commercial zones. These setbacks present an opportunity to introduce stormwater management features such as rain gardens or bioswales. These relatively low maintenance features reduce the burden on traditional stormwater infrastructure and as a result can help to reduce infrastructure costs.

If properly designed, rain gardens and bioswales can become a community asset, providing appealing green space for a crowded neighborhood.



Figure 4: Pocket Park

The narrow space at the southwest corner of Stephens and Van Dyke presents an opportunity for development of a small pocket park or green space. Providing a green space with seating would increase the visibility of retail establishments and encourage pedestrian activity. The park could also incorporate features such as small rain gardens to help manage stormwater.

5 Administration and Incentives

There are several internal operations that can provide a bigger boost in redevelopment than the master plan and zoning ordinance. Policies for enacting economic development programs are included by reference in this section.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRATEGIES

Monitor the needs of property owners, of corridor health and of market trends.

DISCUSSION: The City has taken an important stride in creating a business association.

STRATEGIES:

- Share important information with the public using the City website and e-mail blasts.
- Create a list of business and property owners e-mail addresses to share information.
- Dedicate a section of the City's website to development news, including a for-lease or for-sale page for commercial and industrial properties.



Start a vacant property registration program.

DISCUSSION: Vacant property registration is an effective tool to offset City costs to maintain and secure vacant buildings and properties. A monthly, semi-annual or annual fee is charged. The fee offsets expenses for enforcement and administration linked to property maintenance and security. Several cities in metropolitan Detroit use this technique to maintain healthy and safe places.

STRATEGIES:

- Create a program for notifying and maintaining vacant property.
- Establish an ordinance and fee schedule by City Council action.

Administer a comprehensive approach to street design.

DISCUSSION: Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School are two State of Michigan initiatives encouraging street design improvements benefitting the non-motorized residents, visitors and school students. Each program supports the walkable style community, may have funding for improvements and meet Redevelopment Ready Community best practices. This strategy integrates residential neighborhoods with the business corridors and impacts the whole City to a greater extent.

STRATEGIES:

- Prepare street design standards allowing convenient movement for pedestrian, bicycle and other non-motorized types of transportation.
- Coordinate with local school district and the State's regional representative. The regional representative can be located at saferoutesmichigan.org/contact.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES

The State of Michigan offers development incentive programs that may be relevant and of interest to the City. Discussion focuses on tax exemptions and special assessment options. It does not focus on tax increment financing programs as Center Line has a long-standing DDA that was established in the mid 1990's. The DDA has been active in promoting redevelopment through offering site, building and sign grants. Its development and tax increment finance plan was rewritten in 2015. This plan of action should be continued as it is an integral part of the Van Dyke corridor strategy.

One exception is the use of a Neighborhood Improvement Authority to distribute taxes for public improvements in residential neighborhoods. This program is an option to improve adjacent neighborhoods to the Van Dyke frontage. It is not widely used as the monetary capture is often not significant enough for major change and administrative costs.

The City has also been active in offering tax exemptions in recent years using the Commercial Redevelopment Act to stimulate expansion of two vehicle dealerships. This Act along with the Commercial Rehabilitation Act and Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act are the most viable options to layer with the DDA tax increment capture. Layering must be thoroughly thought-through on a case-by-case basis as tax exemptions conflict with short-term tax capture inherent in tax increment financing.

INCENTIVES DEFINED:

Commercial Redevelopment District: Public Act 255 of 1978 encourages the replacement, restoration and new construction of commercial property by abating the property taxes generated from new investment for a period up to 12 years. Mixed-use developments may be eligible, but the abatement will only apply to the commercial portion of the property. Land and personal property are not eligible for abatement under this act.

Commercial Rehabilitation District: The Commercial Rehabilitation Act, PA 210 of 2005, as amended, affords a tax incentive for the rehabilitation of commercial property for the primary purpose and use of a commercial business or multi-family residential facility. The property must be located within an established Commercial Rehabilitation District. Exemptions are approved for a term of 1-10 years. The State Tax Commission (STC) is responsible for final approval and issuance of certificates.

Business Improvement District: Public Act 120 of 1961 may be created to develop a more successful and profitable business climate in a defined area, and to collect revenues, levy special assessments and issue bonds to pay for its activities. The greatest financial benefit of a BID is the ability to spread the cost of development of the public improvements of a business improvement district among all participants in the district.

Neighborhood Improvement Authority: Public Act 61 of 2007 may be established to fund residential and economic growth in residential neighborhoods. An authority may also issue bonds to finance improvements of public facilities such as housing, a street, plaza, pedestrian mall, parking facility, recreational facility, right-of-way structure, utility line or pipe or building, including access routes designed and dedicated to use by the public generally, or used by a public agency.



Redevelopment Ready Communities Certification

6

The Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) Program is a state-wide certification program that supports communities to become development ready and competitive in today's economy.

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) states that high-performing Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRCs) distinguish themselves from others by having a clear strategy that describes how they intend to attract investment, build tax base and create jobs.

Rooted in relevant community planning documents, they execute deliberate initiatives that encourage investment while eliminating development and redevelopment obstacles. An economic development strategy is required and should be utilized as the community's elevator speech that plainly describes the vision and the steps planned to attract investment, stimulate development and help local businesses grow.

Six components are evaluated:

1. Community Plans and Public Outreach
2. Zoning Policy and Regulations
3. Development Review Process
4. Education and Training
5. Redevelopment Ready Sites
6. Community Prosperity

Each component is rated and considered against the actions, plans, and strategies that have been implemented in each interested community.

This strategy seeks to forward the City of Center Line's efforts in consideration as a Redevelopment Ready Community. The following list provides insight into how Center Line's efforts meet the RRC best practices.

Best Practice 1.1 - When adopted, this plan will serve as the downtown plan for the Van Dyke corridor.

Best Practice 1.2 - A business forum was held to capture the visions and ideas of additional business leaders in the commercial district.

Best Practice 2.1 - A zoning ordinance was adopted in 2016 following the master planning process. Significant amendments were made in general commercial district categories to better identify preferred types and forms of development and to allow multiple-story mixed-use buildings and in neighborhood transition areas to ease the impacts of the commercial/residential borders..

Best Practice 3.1 - Site plan and development review procedures are handled professionally by hired consultants however the need for more clearly outlined review processes through a development guide is recommended.

Best Practice 3.2 - Recommendations include internal process review and review of development applications and available information and resources.

Best Practice 4.1 & 4.2 - Orientation packets, and roles and responsibility expectations can be better clarified for incoming and current elected and appointed officials.

Best Practice 5.1 - This strategy identifies larger sites that are prime for redevelopment in the community. This summary can be used with other recommendations to market the sites.

Best Practice 6.1 - Economic development programs available to Center Line are identified. A chart matches the program with a specific area. Benefits of tax increment financing, tax exemptions, and special assessments are combined to assist City Council in setting policy.

This strategy will be used to follow-through on the recommendations to further the process of the RRC application and certification. The City is working towards a self-evaluation where more focus will be put on the efforts and responsibilities of City departments and planning products used to develop a case for Redevelopment Ready certification.

Examples of Mixed Use Architecture





Examples of Streetscape and Transit Stops





