

Vision Pontiac

City of Pontiac, Michigan



Acknowledgments

Vision Pontiac was a deeply collaborative effort, and was only made possible due to the generous commitment and authentic passion shared by and for those who call the City of Pontiac home. Sincere appreciation is given to the following community experts, City staff, local leaders, organizations, businesses, and institutions for selflessly sharing their time, skills, and place-based knowledge for the betterment of the City's future:

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Mayor Tim Greimel

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William Carrington – Council President / District 6
Melanie Rutherford – District 1 Council Member
Milanna Jones – District 2 Council Member
Mikal Goodman – District 3 Council Member
Kathalee James – District 4 Council Member
William Parker – District 5 Council Member

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Roland Elam – Elam Barbershop
Corey Chubner – UWM
Jason Ayier – Dogwood Kitchen and Bar
Jeff Hamilton – Auch Construction
Mike Furnari – Fairview Companies
Ahmad Taylor – Pontiac Housing Commission
Bill Chalmers – Cartessa Real Estate
Shaquana Davis-Smith – Ps and Qs Bakery
Dauida Reed – Divine Twenty Six
Torre Brown – Key Stakeholder Representative
Dean Bevacqua – Key Stakeholder Representative

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Tim Shepard – Downtown Property Owner
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Event Venues

Bowens Senior Citizens Center
Carnival Market
Pontiac Harvest Festival
Pontiac High School
Pontiac’s Little Art Theater
Ruth Peterson Center
Welcome Baptist Church

Partners

Michigan Economic Development Corporation
Oakland County Economic Development and GIS Departments

And More

Kristen Nelson – Oakland County Commission
Roland Elam, Jr. – Elam Community Service Agency
Carlton Jones – Talent Development Coalition
Ricky Sherell – Sherell & Sherrell
Anisha Hannah – Pontiac School Board President

We extend our deepest gratitude to the City of Pontiac community members who generously shared their time, insights, and ideas during events and through surveys both online and in person. Your active participation and thoughtful feedback were invaluable in shaping the vision for our city's future. The result, Vision Pontiac, reflects the collective voices of the City, and we thank you for your dedication to this effort of building a brighter Pontiac where all can thrive.



DATE	COMMUNITY MEETINGS AND LOCATIONS VISITED FOR OUTREACH
07/25/2024	District 4 Meeting
8/26/2024	District 6 Meeting
8/27/2024	Golden Opportunity Club
9/5/2024	Rotary Club
9/9/2024	District 7 Meeting
9/12/2024	La Amistad
9/12/2024	District 5 Meeting
9/13/2024	Senior Summit (Welcome Baptist Church)
9/14/2024	Neighbor Associations of District 1
9/30/2024	Downtown Pontiac Business Roundtable
9/30/2024	District 2 City Council Meeting
9/30/2024	District 3 City Council Meeting
10/8/2024	Pontiac Health Forum
10/12/2024	City of Pontiac Harvest Fest
10/18/2024	Oakland County Community Showcase & Development Opportunities
11/1/2024	Carnival Market (Pop Up)
11/2/2024	District 1 CDC Meeting
11/7/2024	Pontiac Landlord Group
11/14/2024	District 5 Meeting
11/21/2024	District 6 Meeting

DATE	VISION PONTIAC OUTREACH MEETINGS HOSTED
7/11/2024	Steering Committee Meeting #1
7/29/2024	Virtual Webinar #1
8/12/2024	Steering Committee Meeting #2
8/28/2024	Community Outreach Meeting #1
9/18/2024	Town Hall Meeting #1
10/3/2024	Community Outreach Meeting #2
10/15/2024	Virtual Webinar #2
10/16/2024	Community Outreach Meeting #3
10/28/2024	Steering Committee Meeting #3
11/14/2024	Town Hall Meeting #2
11/20/2024	Community Outreach Meeting #4

DATE	PUBLIC MEETING PRESENTATIONS
7/23/2024	City Council Meeting
8/7/2024	Planning Commission Meeting
11/6/2024	Planning Commission Meeting
12/10/2024	City Council Meeting
1/22/2025	Planning Commission Meeting

ADDITIONAL OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES:

- Community Survey (Online and Paper, in English and Spanish)
- Online Mapping Tool

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Chapter 0.

Beginning

The City of Pontiac is a mid-sized city located at the northern terminus of Woodward Ave, Michigan's Main Street. Established in 1818 where the Indigenous Saginaw Trail (now Woodward) crossed the Clinton River, Pontiac is Michigan's second inland settlement, and grew to become the county seat of Oakland County with a bustling downtown and large automotive manufacturing plants, such as General Motors' (GM) assembly plant of the famed Pontiac car, which was named after the City. At its peak, the City was a manufacturing powerhouse. The later exodus of GM facilities, demographic shifts, and decades of disinvestment detrimentally impacted Pontiac's economic base and infrastructure.

Today, the City of Pontiac is emerging from a long period of population decline and economic hardship. Over the last several decades, property disinvestment has left large underutilized parcels and surface parking lots and wide streets that create physical barriers between the neighborhoods and Downtown. These spaces serve as chances for innovation and re-imagination by the creative, entrepreneurial spirits who call Pontiac home.

0.1 Vision Pontiac Purpose

The Vision Pontiac Master Plan seeks to capitalize on bountiful opportunity for Pontiac's people and places. Pontiac is the county seat of one of the wealthiest, highest-educated counties in the nation, yet stands in stark contrast with many of its neighboring municipalities with its higher poverty, greater concentration of brownfield sites, lower quality of life and lower life expectancy for Pontiac residents. Despite these challenges, the people of Pontiac are determined to honor the City's past while trailblazing a new path forward for their institutions, their businesses, and their communities.

Pontiac will do better. In the last decade, Pontiac has taken transformative steps to reinvent itself and eliminate legacy hardships, while uplifting community values and investing in an inclusive, forward-looking future for everyone. Leadership in City Hall and Oakland County sees this work as an opportunity to realign priorities and position Pontiac for renewed prosperity going forward

Vision Pontiac, the City of Pontiac's Master Plan, is the preeminent plan to guide future growth and development within the City. This Plan is ambitious and imaginative, strategic and forward-thinking, and reflects the input and insights provided by community members. The Master Plan expresses the City's values, priorities, and goals for future social, economic, and physical development. This Plan will direct clear expectations for the City and chart a path forward.

Authority

This Plan is established by the City and authorized under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended). The MPEA requires each community to review their Master Plan every 5 years. The Act clearly states that a community's Planning Commission shall make and approve a basic plan as a guide for the development of the community. The City of Pontiac last updated their Master Plan in 2014—it is now time for a refreshed vision for our future that reflects the community's current priorities.

Plan Components and Function

Per the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, a Master Plan must address land use and infrastructure issues, and all planning related elements that may be pertinent for the development of that community. Such review, analysis, and projections may extend 10–20 years or more into the future. The Act requires that all zoning ordinances are based on a plan; the Master Plan therefore serves as the basis for zoning regulations to ensure that land use reflects the needs and priorities of the current and future population in Pontiac. In this way, the Master Plan offers guidance and promotes certainty and coordination among City leaders, residents, developers looking to make public investments in projects, programs, and policies that inform Pontiac's future.

During the course of the Master Plan process, Pontiac's City staff have reviewed and analyzed the community's history and current day context and have examined planning focus areas that are of the utmost importance to Pontiac. These planning focus areas, as will be discussed in later chapters, include future land use, housing and neighborhoods, historic preservation, downtown and commercial corridors, workforce development, development and redevelopment, and transportation. The Master Plan paints a vibrant future for Pontiac within and across these focus areas, promising holistic progress for all members of the community.

Past Plan Analysis

Vision Pontiac was designed in response to and in alignment with pre-existing local planning efforts. In particular, this Master Plan builds atop of the contributions and recommendations of the 2015 Pontiac Moving Forward, the 2021-2025 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and Pontiac's 2014 Master Plan.

Pontiac Moving Forward 2015

Pontiac Moving Forward: An Economic Recovery Strategy was established in 2015 as an economic recovery strategy developed through the combined efforts of hundreds of individuals, businesses, community leaders and other stakeholders interested in improving the economic vitality of Pontiac. Pontiac Moving forward sought to document the City's economic landscape, identify and uplift the existing assets within the community, and capture emerging opportunities that have the potential to position Pontiac for continued economic growth.

The following strategies derived from Pontiac Moving Forward were informative in developing recommendations for the Vision Pontiac Plan:

- » Strategy 1: Strengthen Neighborhood and Advocacy Groups
- » Strategy 2: Develop a Marketing Plan
- » Strategy 3: Grow Business Support Services
- » Strategy 4: Expand Business Entrepreneurial and Incubator Services
- » Strategy 5: Establish an Arts Collaborative
- » Strategy 6: Increase Access to Job Skills Training

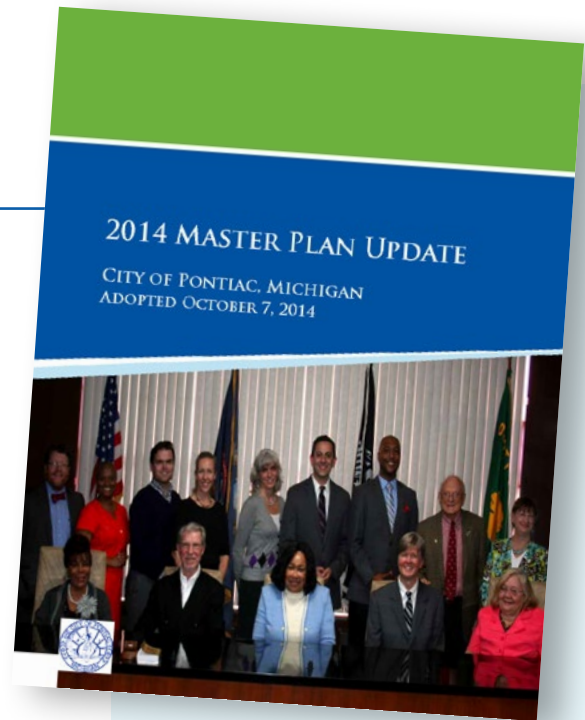


Pontiac Master Plan 2014

The 2014 Master Plan Update was performed as a refresh of the City's 2008 Master Plan. This was the City's first plan to incorporate a Future Land Use mode, a strategy which has been carried forward through the Vision Pontiac Master Plan process. The 2014 Master Plan Update recommended innovative walkable urbanism and expansions to non-motorized transportation and public transit alternatives to driving.

The following strategies from the 2014 Pontiac Master Plan are ongoing, and therefore have provided a firm foundation on which to set the aims of Vision Pontiac:

- » Develop and adopt a transit-oriented development overlay district
- » Create pedestrian-friendly site design standards for all residential, commercial and mixed-use districts
- » Amend the Zoning Ordinance to reflect best practices across definitions, procedures and standards, physical design, and more
- » Adopt a Complete Streets ordinance and associated policies
- » Develop Complete-Streets engineering standards
- » Develop and adopt a city-wide Non-Motorized Plan
- » Complete City-wide sidewalk inventory
- » Develop and produce business attraction and marketing materials
- » Develop a real-time database of re-development opportunities
- » Improve the web presence of Pontiac's economic development opportunities
- » Build on existing partnerships to encourage redevelopment within entrepreneurial districts
- » Partner with MEDC to offer business training
- » Increase the capacity of inexperienced developers and property owners
- » Work with neighborhood groups to develop neighborhood economic development plans

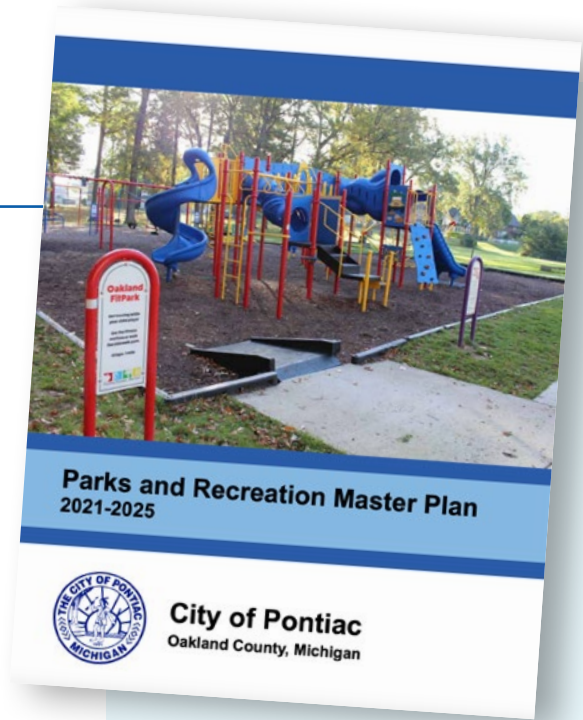


Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2021-2025

Pontiac's 2021-2025 Parks and Recreation Master Plan lays the groundwork for the quality of and access to green spaces and recreational activities for all community members. The Plan was designed in line with MDNR guidelines, making the City eligible for grant funding to support the development of programming and to carry out identified infrastructure improvements.

The following goals from the 2021-2025 Pontiac Parks and Recreation Master Plan are completed or ongoing, and therefore were carefully considered in the Vision Pontiac Master Plan process:

- » Install mile and kilometer meters along walking paths and trails
- » Develop and promote a calendar of events for league sports (including practices), special events, festivals and programs
- » Update web mapping services to include park locations, available amenities, parking locations, photos and hours of operation
- » Develop a Capital Improvement Program for park facilities that considers impact, cost/benefit analyses, and maintenance costs.
- » Prepare site plans for community parks to design park facilities, including the provision of construction cost estimates and identified phasing of improvements
- » Develop a maintenance plan for parks and trails
- » Support MDOT on the design and construction of the Woodward Loop Two-Way Conversion
- » Enhance the overall quality, safety and sustainability of park amenities and recreation facilities and work to remove graffiti, litter, and outdated equipment in a timely manner



0.2

Vision Pontiac Process Summary

Public Involvement

Community engagement is central to any Master Planning process, as a Master Plan should reflect a community's memory and strengths, capture a community's current challenges and needs, and curate a community's collective vision for the future. Vision Pontiac was designed to meet the Pontiac community where they were, and to graciously listen to and honor their stories, knowledge and lived expertise. In this way, the aims of Vision Pontiac's comprehensive public engagement efforts were to:

- » Celebrate Pontiac's rich history and existing community assets
- » Engage and empower a diversity of voices and perspectives
- » Gather community-identified priorities and areas for improvement, across planning, policy, and programs
- » Curate a visionary set of ambitious, shared goals for the future

Relevant input from the public is included throughout this Plan at the beginning of each chapter, under "Findings". Complete summaries and records of all public input are provided in the Appendix of this Plan.



Steering Committees

The Key Stakeholder and three Subcommittees—including the Residential, Commercial, and Downtown Subcommittees—provided key oversight to Vision Pontiac Master Plan process and have carefully and critically reviewed the draft Plan before it was released for public comment. These diverse groups included a variety of community stakeholders who play an important role in the Downtown, neighborhoods, and the Pontiac business community.

The Steering Committee and three Subcommittees met three times throughout the process; The first meeting was centered on issue identification, the second meeting was centered on strategy development, and the third meeting was dedicated to reviewing and refining preliminary Vision Pontiac findings and recommendations.



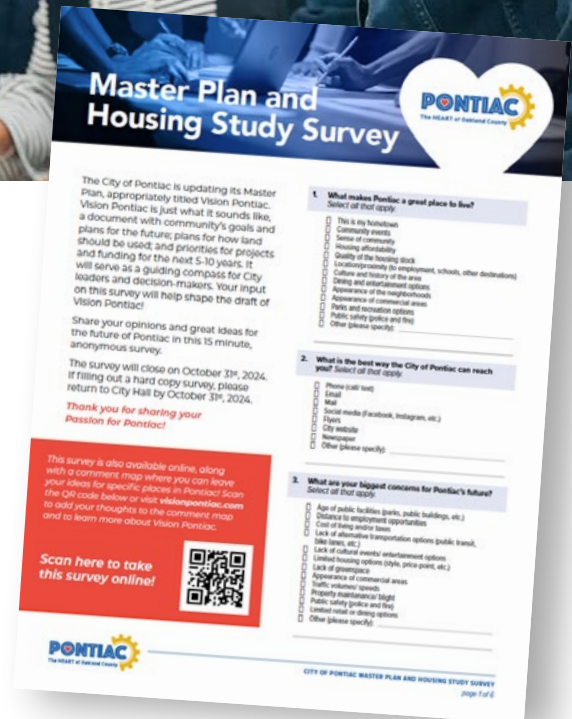
Engagement Opportunities

In addition to close collaboration with these stakeholder committees, Vision Pontiac offered a comprehensive calendar of in-person and virtual engagement opportunities for all of the public, including:

- » An interactive project website with project information and a digital comment mapping activity
- » A bilingual survey offered online and in hard copy
- » 3 Steering Committee and Subcommittee Meetings
- » 3 Virtual Webinars
- » 4 Community Workshops
- » 2 Town Hall Meetings
- » 3 Pop-Up Events
- » Several District, Planning Commission and City Council meetings

The Pontiac community was notified of these opportunities in the following ways:

- » An announcement on the City website directing folks to the Vision Pontiac website
- » Printed flyers handed out at City Hall and at community events and spaces
- » Postcards with project information sent to every household in Pontiac
- » Yard signs with project information placed on properties across the City
- » Posts on City social media pages with links to the Vision Pontiac website
- » Emails to Pontiac's Boards and Commissions, as well as District Leaders
- » A promotional video



Community Survey

Throughout the engagement process, community members were invited to fill out the Community Survey, which requested information about resident demographics as well as lived experiences with Pontiac's strengths and opportunities across housing, transportation, land use, economic development, historic preservation, and more. Promoted through yard signs, postcards, webinars, engagement events, and City Hall, the survey remained open through the summer and fall of 2024, and was offered in both English and Spanish, across both digital and hard copy formats.

A total of 204 residents submitted anonymous survey responses, which directly informed Vision Pontiac's focus areas and recommended objectives. Targeted feedback collected through the Community Survey are included in each chapter of this Plan, and are more thoroughly summarized in the Appendix.

0.3

Vision Pontiac Focus Areas and Action Plans

Vision Pontiac Vision Statement

*The vision for Pontiac is to thrive as the **heart of Oakland County**— a safe, prosperous, resilient, and affordable community where everyone feels welcome and included. We aim to celebrate elements of our rich history while embracing and adapting to modern needs and innovations, fostering a dynamic, innovative, and inclusive environment for all.*

This co-created vision statement served to orient each step of the Master Planning process towards Pontiac’s envisioned future of resiliency, equity, innovation and excellence. In addition to this overarching vision statement, the robust public engagement carried out to inform this Master Plan led to the development of 7 Focus Areas (with a series of associated goals) that represent Pontiac’s prime concerns for future planning and development:

1. Future Land Use
2. Neighborhoods and Housing
3. Historic Preservation
4. Development and Redevelopment
5. Downtown and Commercial Corridors
6. Workforce Development
7. Transportation and Walkability

While many of these Focus Areas have important overlaps, each Focus Area has a dedicated chapter within Vision Pontiac.



Core Finding and Metric

Each chapter includes a core finding and a metric to evaluate the Plan's implementation.

The **core finding** is a one-sentence synthesis of the general consensus message that the City heard from participants in the public engagement process for each Focus Area. The objectives and action items for each chapter represent a more complete picture of the messages, priorities and ideas expressed by the people of Pontiac, while the core finding is a snapshot that captures the overall community sentiment.

To measure progress and align policy with the ideas expressed during the Vision Pontiac Master Plan process, the City has identified a metric that addresses each core finding and can be used as a key performance indicator during Plan implementation. The high-reaching, qualitative and quantitative metrics established in this Master Plan respond to public feedback, concerns, and desires, and give the City clear benchmarks as to their progress towards the goals and visions set out in each of the 7 Focus Areas.

Metrics for this plan are intended to be referred to periodically throughout the lifetime of this plan, and realized by 2040.

Action Plan and Implementation

To bring cutting edge planning research and practices to Pontiac across the identified 7 Focus Areas, the City of Pontiac has designed an Action Plan for each Focus Area that presents new ideas, strategies, and best practices. The Action Plan in each chapter will be used for guidance and reference for staff, appointed, and elected officials throughout the life of the plan. The Action Plan will include goals, objectives, action items, a timeframe for completion, and opportunities for potential collaboration. This allows for accountability and transparent tracking of the Plan's progress.

- » **Visions.** Forward-looking declarations of Pontiac's aspirations and desired future state.
- » **Focus Areas Goals.** General Statements of how to achieve the desired vision.
- » **Objectives.** Specific, measurable steps to achieve the goals. They are actionable and achievable tasks that have been carefully informed by an accumulation of key public engagement, direction from City staff and Committee Members, and planning research findings.
- » **Action Items.** Methods and approaches to accomplish the goals and objectives.
- » **Timeframes.** Timeframes listed for each action are, as follows:
 - **Short-term:** 1-2 years
 - **Medium-term:** 2-5 years
 - **Long-term:** More than 5 years
 - **Ongoing:** To be started (or continued) urgently, and maintained until the policy is revisited.
- » **Collaboration.** A column is added to each chapter's Action Plan which, when marked with an "X", indicates that the project should be a joint planning effort and accomplished with other entities. Examples of collaborating agencies include MDOT, SMART, Oakland County, the Pontiac School District, as well as community organizations and businesses.

The adopted goals, objectives, and action items, which were crafted by Vision Pontiac stakeholders and directly informed by community ideas and feedback, may be detailed or more general, and can be short- or long-term, involving staff, neighborhood associations, community groups, regional agencies, or state or federal departments. Some may be easily achieved within a few months, while others may necessitate careful, incremental progress over a series of years.

Regular reviews and updates on advancements related to the short- and long-term goals should be a priority to ensure that progress continues after the Master Plan has been adopted.

We want YOUR input on the future of the City!
Show your Passion for Pontiac!
visionpontiac.com
(248) 758-2824

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Chapter 1.

Future Land Use

This Chapter, the Future Land Use Plan for the City of Pontiac, is intended to provide a guide to rezoning decisions and land use controls. Pontiac’s Future Land Use Plan provides a vision for how the City feels that specific areas in the community should be developed and should be referenced at every stage of the development process.

The Future Land Use (FLU) Plan describes a vision for how land can be used to promote the goals of residents, business owners, and City administration help to address ongoing barriers.

The FLU Plan begins with the existing conditions analysis, as shown in an Existing Land Use Map and tables. We then review the public’s feedback—discussing their perspectives on existing land uses in the City as well as what they would like to see moving forward.

Based on the analysis of locations and characteristics of existing land use areas in the City, as well as a consolidation of input received from the public, the following section outlines each of the FLU categories that were developed specifically for the City of Pontiac. The Plan makes recommendations for how land can be developed in a way that allows communities to thrive and grow in a way that supports both existing and future City residents and businesses.

Next, the Zoning Plan identifies how properties can be rezoned to reflect the goals of the Future Land Use Map. Multiple Zoning Districts are permitted within each FLU category. Additionally, recommendations are made for potential amendments to the Zoning Ordinance that would support the implementation of Vision Pontiac.

The Action Plan, at the end of this chapter, identifies concrete goals and objectives that can be carried out by local stakeholders to further execute the FLU Plan.

7.1 Findings

Engagement

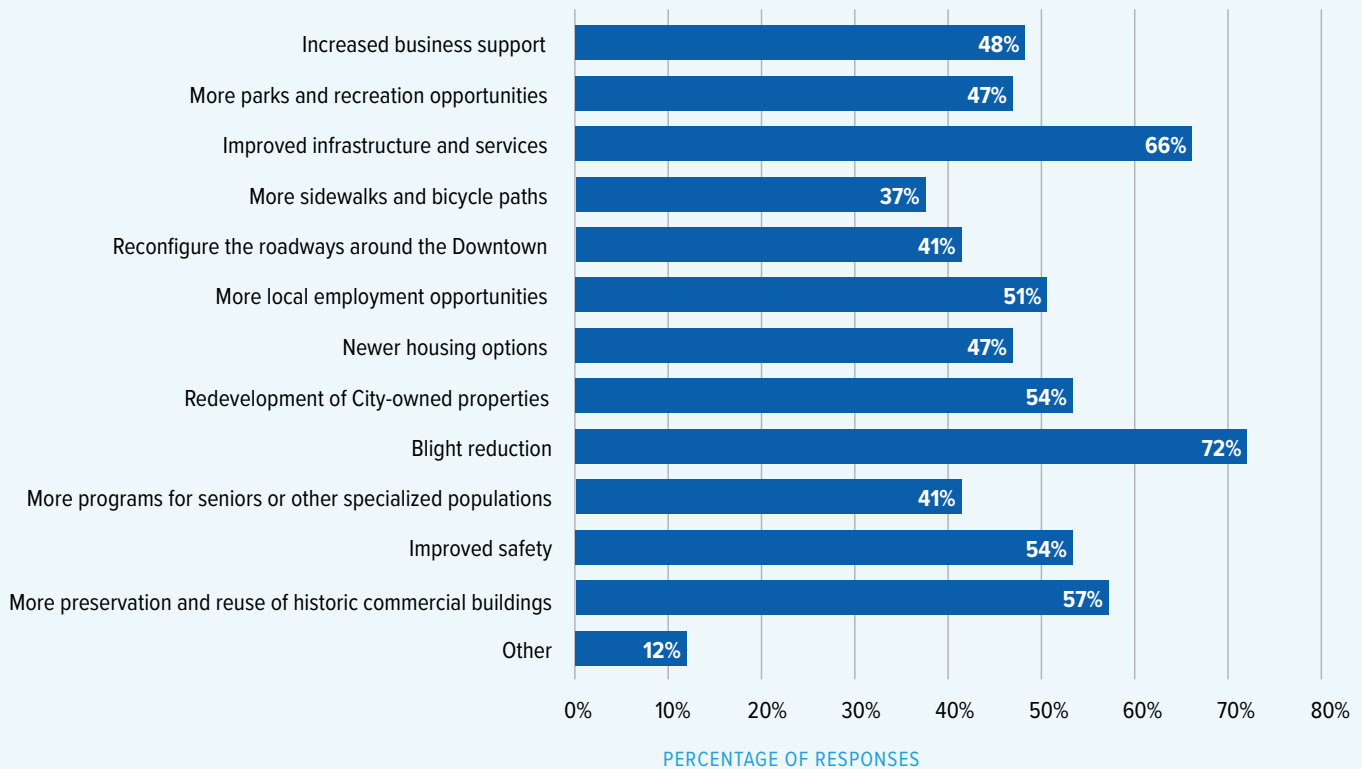
Community Survey Responses

Community engagement was a key step in identifying barriers in how land was currently being used in Pontiac. With regards to future land use, the question below asked respondents to choose as many items as they felt needed to be improved from their existing conditions. This question provided information on how residents and stakeholders felt land should be used in the future.

More than half of people said that these items needed to be improved:

- » Blight reduction (72% - 141 responses)
- » Improved infrastructure and services (66% - 129 responses)
- » More preservation and reuse of historic commercial buildings (57% - 112 responses)
- » Redevelopment of City-owned properties (54% - 105 responses)
- » Improved safety (54% - 105 responses)
- » More local employment opportunities (51% - 100 responses)

In general, what do you think needs to be improved from its current condition in Pontiac?





Vision Pontiac Engagement Event at Pontiac's Little Art Theater

Key Findings: Future Land Use Values

Throughout the Master Plan engagement process, residents expressed both an interest in seeing growth and new investment in the City and concerns about its potential impacts. Below, we outline some of the concerns and ideas that were shared, which informed the creation of the Future Land Use categories in the following section, as well as the other policies and strategies laid out within Vision Pontiac.

Supporting Small-Scale Development

As the City has been hotly pursuing major redevelopment projects and large-scale developments, many residents want to see more energy and resources invested into supporting small-scale development in Pontiac. The Future Land Use Plan offers methods of encouraging new, high-quality construction and investment, prioritized by locals, at a neighborhood scale.

In Pontiac, small-scale, neighborhood developments are just as important to the city's future economic landscape as large-scale development. Without proper design and use guidelines in place, properties are likely to be developed in the most intense manner possible. Residents would like to see changes that will allow new businesses and housing to come into the community, as long as it is designed with care and intentionality.

Multi-Family Uses in Neighborhoods

While the City seeks to support new housing development of all types to strengthen the local housing stock, new buildings must be designed in a similar character and scale to adjacent homes.

Further, long-term residents, especially those in single-family homes, are often wary of multi-family development. Pontiac households value community, aesthetic quality, and respect in their neighborhoods. Multi-family uses are often associated with rental units and short-term residents, which leads to concerns around a lack of neighborhood stability. In reality, renters do not necessarily use properties more intensely than homeowners, but they do not have the same level of investment or control over their properties. Accountable, active, and present landlords can help to ensure that homes stay in good condition and that residents meet the lease obligations for property maintenance, if any.

Advocating for the Future Land Use Plan

Follow-through is critical to the success of the Master Plan, and respondents often asked how the City would ensure that the goals of the Master Plan were met. Residents aren't always sure why some developments get approved over others. Developers and business owners might not always be familiar with the City's Future Land Use strategies, their importance, or understand that they will be expected to uphold the Master Plan in their projects.

A quality FLU Plan that reflects the City's and residents' priorities is a great tool, not only in making decisions, but also to continuously demonstrate the City's goals to the public.

It will be important for the City's decision-makers to continue to reference the Future Land Use Plan at all stages of the development process.

Existing Land Use

Planning for future land uses is made possible through a close examination of the City's existing Zoning Map and land use makeup. This section provides a breakdown of the land area dedicated to each land use category, which is also demonstrated on the Existing Land Use Map. The information presented below utilizes the most recent data available. Information was collected in August of 2023.



Existing conditions on North Saginaw Street in Downtown Pontiac, as shown in 2021 by Google Street View.

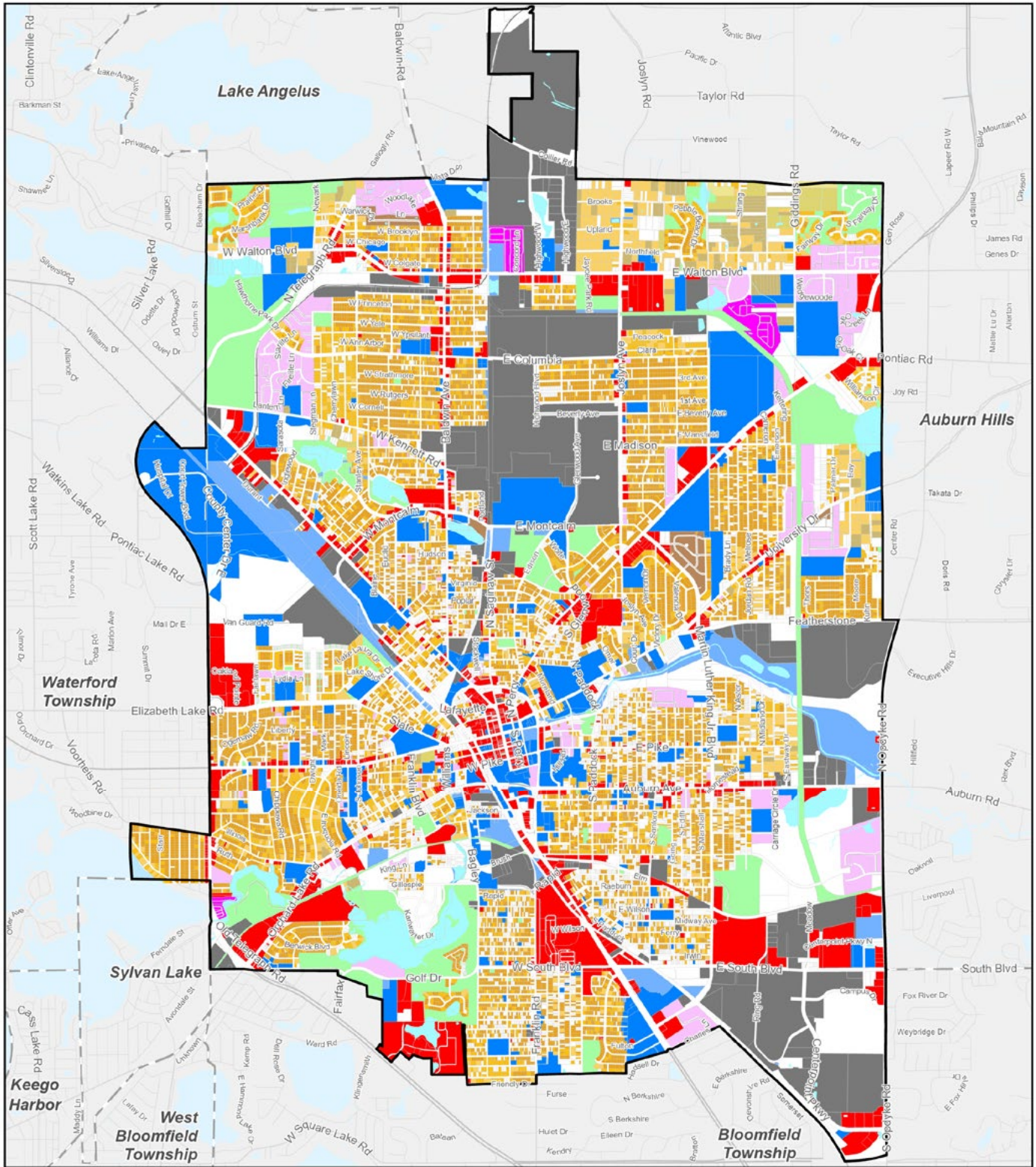
Existing Land Use Summary

LAND USE CLASSIFICATION	ACRES	PERCENTAGE OF LAND USE
RESIDENTIAL		
Single Family Residential	3,091	22.0%
High Density Single Family		
» Multiple Single Family Homes on Lot	42	0.3%
» Lot Size Less than 8,000 SF	1,637	11.6%
» Lot Size 8,000 SF – 14,000 SF	746	5.3%
» Lot Size 14,000 SF – 1 Acre	464	3.3%
» Lot Size 1 – 2.5 Acres	125	0.9%
Low Density Single Family		
» 2.5 – 10 Acres	77	0.5%
Multi-Family	469	3.3%
Mobile Home Park	55	0.4%
NON-RESIDENTIAL		
Industrial	1,671	11.9%
Commercial / Office	984	7.0%
Recreation / Conservation	156	1.1%
OTHER		
Transportation / Utility / Communication	369	2.6%
Road Right-of-Way	2,218	15.8%
Water	329	2.3%
Vacant	1,641	11.7%

Source: Oakland County Land Records, August 2023.

The vacant land category is the most subject to change of all Existing Land Use categories. Properties typically fluctuate between vacant and occupied faster than they would switch between uses.

Generally, there are two types of vacant properties. “Greenfield” properties are those that have never been built on before. “Brownfield” properties are those that have been developed before, and may or may not have buildings or other infrastructure on site already. The goals and strategies for developing or redeveloping a vacant property are highly dependent on the characteristics of the surrounding area, and the unique qualities of the subject site. The Future Land Use category guidelines discuss appropriate uses for both types of vacant property. Additional incentives may be available for developing Brownfields, as discussed in Chapter 3: Development & Redevelopment.



Map 1. Existing Land Use

City of Pontiac, Michigan

January 15, 2025 - Draft

Legend

- Commercial/Office
- Industrial
- Mobile Home Park
- Multiple Family
- Public/Institutional/Parking
- Recreation/Conservation
- SF, More than one unit per acre
- SF, Less than 8,000 sq. ft.
- SF, 8,000 to 13,999 sq. ft.
- SF, 14,000 - 43,559 sq. ft.
- SF, 1 - 2.5 Acres
- SF, 2.5 to 5 acres
- SF, 5 to 10 acres
- Transportation/Utility
- Vacant
- Water
- City Boundary



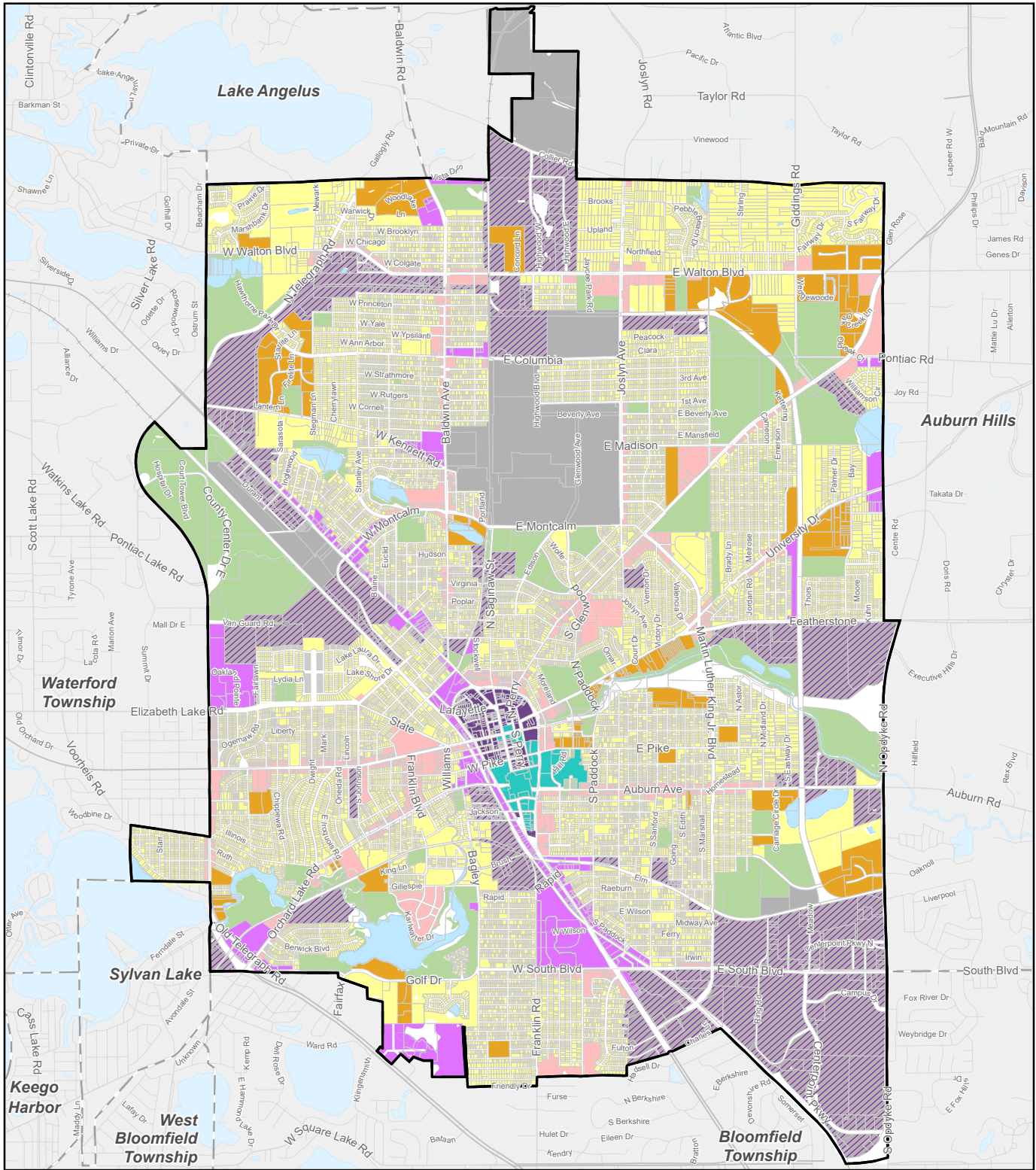
Basemap Source: MCGI, v. 17a.
Data Source: City of Pontiac 2024.
Oakland County GIS 2024.
McKenna 2024.



1.2

Future Land Use Map and Classifications

The Future Land Use Map shows the different future land use classifications being proposed in this Master Plan and how they interact throughout as a whole in the City. Following the Map, each future land use classification is explained in detail, including their intent, appropriate land uses for each classification, and transportation connectivity recommendations for each classification.



Map 2. Future Land Use

City of Pontiac, Michigan

January 3, 2025 - Draft

- Legend**
- Neighborhood Residential
 - Community Residential
 - Neighborhood Mixed Use
 - Corridor Mixed Use
 - Downtown
 - Downtown/Civic/Park/Mixed Use
 - Civics and Parks
 - Research and Development Campus
 - Industrial
 - Right of Way
 - City Boundary



Basemap Source: MCGI, v. 17a.
Data Source: City of Pontiac 2024.
Oakland County GIS 2024.
McKenna 2024.





Neighborhood Residential

Intent

The Neighborhood Residential Future Land Use Category represents Pontiac’s existing residential neighborhoods. This land use category encourages continued maintenance and improvement of existing homes as well as the construction of new homes that can meet the needs of both current and future Pontiac residents. This includes owner-occupied homes and rental units, accessibly designed homes and supportive housing, and a range of housing types and designs.

Appropriate Land Uses

The uses permitted in the Neighborhood Residential District are intended to support the integration of a variety of housing types into neighborhoods, at a pace that supports stability and while promoting prosperity. Both current and future Pontiac residents will be supported in rehabilitating existing homes and building new homes that provide high-quality housing opportunities. Appropriate Land Uses in the Neighborhood Residential District include:

- » Single-Family Detached Homes
- » Accessory Dwelling Units
- » Attached Townhouses
- » Duplex, Triplex, or Quadplex Buildings
- » Bungalow Courts
- » Home Occupations
- » Child Care Homes
- » Local Parks and Civic Uses

Higher densities of housing adjusted to a neighborhood scale, such as small apartment buildings and larger townhomes, may be more appropriate along arterial roads near residential areas.

Home businesses should be encouraged so long as the home continues to be used primarily as a residence. Many, but not all, types of businesses can be scaled down to a residential level by limiting or completely prohibiting employees from outside the home, frequent client visits, and deliveries outside of a normal daily mail schedule. On the outside of the home, a small sign may be appropriate, but otherwise there should be very little external evidence that a business is run from the home.



Single-Family Detached Homes in Pontiac



Example of a neighborhood residential area in Pontiac - different blocks in Pontiac have unique characteristics. In this area, homes share a short front setback and a deep backyard and private garage.

More so than in other FLU categories, the appropriate use within the Neighborhood Residential District is dependent on lot size. When determining appropriate land uses, the following table may be used:

	SMALL LOT: LESS THAN 8,000 SF	STANDARD LOT: 8,000 SF – 14,000 SF	DOUBLE LOT: 14,000 SF – 1 ACRE	LARGE LOT: 1 – 2.5 ACRES	DEVELOPMENT SITE: 2.5 – 5 ACRES
Single-Family	X	X	X	X	
Duplex	X	X	X	X	
Triplex			X	X	
Quadplex			X	X	
Rowhouses			X	X	X
Bungalow Court			X	X	X
Accessory Dwelling Unit	X	X	X	X	
Community Garden	X	X	X		
Neighborhood Park			X	X	
Municipal / Civil Uses			X	X	X

Roads & Connectivity

Neighborhoods should have accessible biking, walking, driving, and transit routes to reach public amenities, such as parks and schools, as well as local commercial nodes in the Neighborhood Mixed Use category.

Where possible, new development along major arterial corridors should be designed in a way that utilizes shared access points and reduces curb cuts.



This community residential neighborhood in Harper Woods features two mid-rise apartment campuses nestled within a single-family residential block.

Community Residential

Intent

The Community Residential Future Land Use category represents mid- to high-density residential areas which are separated from the traditional street grid pattern. The category is intended to improve the transition, connectivity, and relationship between these communities and the Neighborhood Mixed Use and Neighborhood Residential areas.

Appropriate Land Uses

- » Residential communities of at least 15 dwelling units per acre (often rentals, condo complexes, or cooperatives).
 - Low- & Mid-Rise Apartment Buildings
 - Townhouses
 - Bungalow Courts
- » Live-Work Units
 - Offices, Artisan Production
- » Mixed-Use Buildings (Along Major Corridors)
 - Local Retail & Service Businesses



A mid-rise apartment building.

Relationship to other FLU Categories

Development consistent with Neighborhood Mixed Use and Neighborhood Residential may be appropriate along the edges of the Community Residential Future Land Use areas.

Roads & Connectivity

These areas should be accessible through biking, walking, driving, and transit routes, providing connections to local commercial nodes, public services, local institutions, and major employment centers.

Where sufficient access is available via public transportation and biking infrastructure, reduced parking areas may be appropriate. Areas previously used for parking could be better-utilized to provide additional open space or allow for the use of green infrastructure in ways that will reduce long-term maintenance costs.

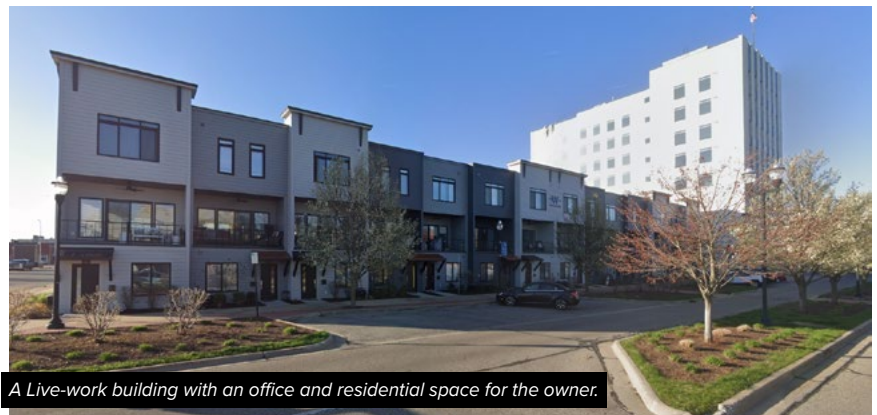


Neighborhood Mixed Use

An example of a neighborhood mixed use area in Ypsilanti with a wide variety of building types and uses.

Intent

The Neighborhood Mixed Use category is intended to allow for some businesses interspersed with existing single-family residences along major corridors. These businesses will primarily serve neighborhood residents around key intersections near primarily residential areas. Development should be context-appropriate in scale and intensity, and encourage a walkable, pedestrian-oriented neighborhood. These areas should also provide a transition, or buffer, between less intensive residential areas and more intensive, auto-focused areas. These areas may also incorporate residential development at higher densities, primarily in the form of mixed use buildings with residences on upper floors or along the back of a property, in order to free up storefronts for retail, service, and office uses. Small apartment buildings are also appropriate in these areas as long as they are designed to maintain a continuous, walkable streetscape and are constructed in a way that is compatible with the neighborhood.



A Live-work building with an office and residential space for the owner.

Appropriate Land Uses

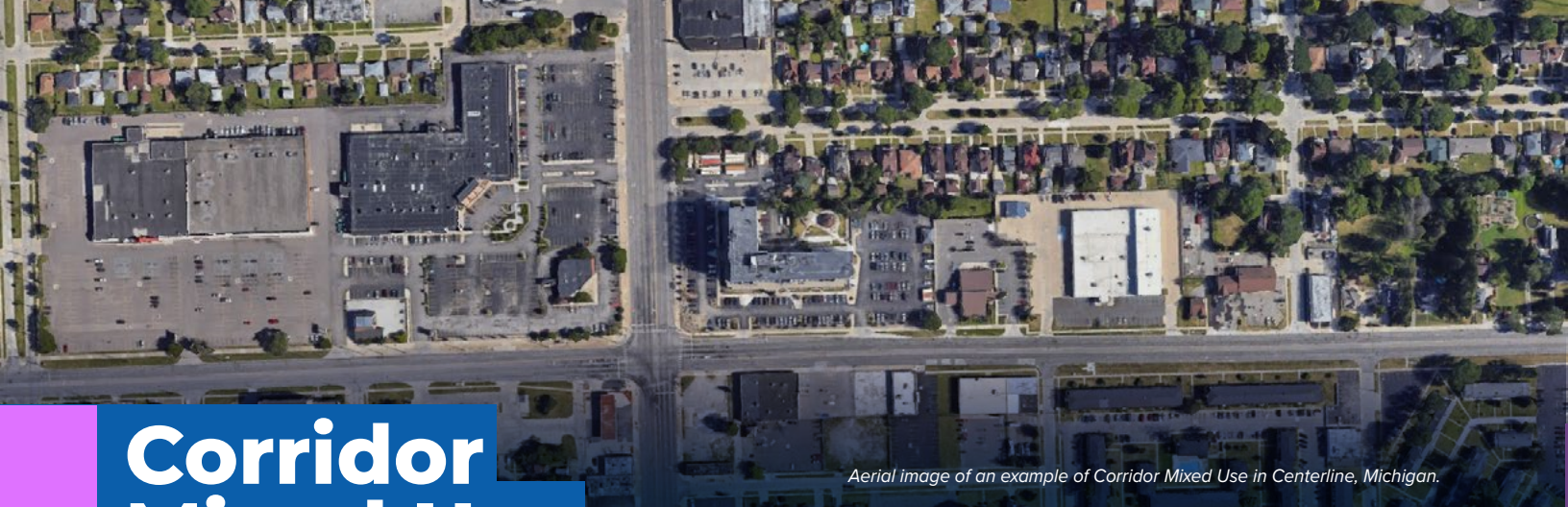
- » Mixed Use Buildings
 - Restaurants/Food Service
 - Retail
 - Health & Personal Services
 - Public Facing Offices
 - Apartments & Lofts
 - Health & Personal Services
 - Retail (with entrance in the front)
 - Live-Work Communities

Roads & Connectivity

Neighborhood Mixed Use areas are often located at intersections of major streets, or may be found as a buffer between commercial uses and single family residential zones of the City. These types of housing units are often a more affordable housing choice for local workers than single family residential. Improved crosswalks will encourage people to visit businesses on both sides of the street and provide greater safety for pedestrians. While a new four-way stop light may not be appropriate along all busy streets, there are other alternatives that slow traffic and protect pedestrians without significantly inconveniencing drivers.

Narrowing a street can be a way to encourage drivers to slow down and look for pedestrians. It also frees up space for wider sidewalks, street parking, or bike lanes. Building a boulevard in the middle of the street serves to slow down drivers, beautify the street, and provide a “refuge island” for pedestrians crossing multi-lane traffic.

Additionally, curb cuts into major throughways should be minimized by using shared parking and access via side streets. Buildings should have main public entrances which face the street, not the parking lot. Shared parking areas between businesses are highly encouraged, and parking requirements should be flexible based on the availability of public transit, as well as the hours of operation of businesses.



Aerial image of an example of Corridor Mixed Use in Centerline, Michigan.

Corridor Mixed Use

Intent

The Corridor Mixed Use category is intended for businesses with a regional draw, auto-oriented uses, and mid- to high-density housing types. Located along major thoroughways, these areas are imagined along the way to Downtown Pontiac, major employment centers, and into the City’s neighborhoods.

Appropriate Land Uses

Land uses within the Corridor Mixed Use Future Land Use category include the broadest range of commercial and residential uses. This includes large-scale retail, such as grocery stores, as well as, shared commercial spaces, mixed use buildings, and apartment buildings.

Roads & Connectivity

While traditionally these areas have typically been built with drivers in mind, new development along these corridors should also be retrofitted to provide a safe walking and biking environment for non-motorized travelers.

New developments should extend sidewalks and contribute to additional streetscape improvements whenever possible.



A mixed use building designed with variety along the ground-floor façade and upper-floor residences with access to plenty of natural light and private outdoor areas.



Downtown

Aerial image of East Huron Street in Downtown Pontiac.

Intent

The Downtown Future Land Use category encompasses Downtown Pontiac and is intended to promote this space as a major regional center, serving to stimulate Pontiac's economy. Much of Downtown Pontiac is designated as a Historic District. New buildings within Downtown should be designed to complement the existing historic character of the surrounding area. This doesn't mean just imitating historic structures – rather, the footprints, facades, and overall exterior design of new construction should be designed to maintain the existing scale, proportions of the block. This area is home to Pontiac's oldest and most iconic structures – this tradition should continue and new construction should be proposed with the intention to stand for over 100 years. Downtown Pontiac will be home to uses that provide jobs, residences, and entertainment opportunities in order to reactivate Downtown.



View of N. Saginaw Street from the Former Phoenix Center.

Appropriate Land Uses

Downtown should serve and provide amenities for Pontiac residents while attracting visitors from the broader area. Appropriate Land Uses in the Downtown District include:

- » Mixed Use Residential/Commercial/Office
- » Ground Floor Uses:
 - Restaurants/Food Services
 - Retail
 - Health & Personal Services
 - Public-Facing Offices
- » Upper Floor Uses
 - Apartments
 - Offices
 - Health & Personal Services
 - Retail (with entrance in the front)
- » Civic & Institutional Uses
 - Municipal Services
 - Small Parks, Public Art, & Monuments
 - Community Gathering Spaces & Event Venues

Automotive-oriented uses such as gas stations, auto repair, or drive-through facilities are not appropriate in this Future Land Use category.

Roads & Connectivity

Downtown Pontiac should serve as the nucleus of the City, and must be well connected to every other neighborhood to ensure that all residents can equitably enjoy its growth and success. While it should be easy to get in and out of Downtown, it is also important for traffic to slow within and around Downtown Pontiac in order to provide safety for pedestrians and to encourage people to patron local businesses. Major corridors connect Downtown Pontiac to surrounding neighborhoods, and safe access via walking paths, biking routes, and public transit stops should be made widely available.

Downtown Pontiac is surrounded by the “Woodward Loop” which circumnavigates the Downtown. This route has limited access points for vehicles, and even worse access for pedestrians and non-motorized traffic. This discourages people from entering Downtown and also makes it difficult to travel within the City. By reconnecting the Woodward Loop to S. Saginaw Street, and reimagining the Loop’s configuration and construction, the City’s street system will provide safer, more accessible routes for all modes of travel.

Designated or protected bike lanes are critical on Downtown Streets in order to allow bicycles to safely avoid sidewalks in heavy pedestrian areas.

Walkability is a critical element of having a safe and inviting Downtown. Frequent crosswalks encourages visitors to use both sides of the street. Wide sidewalks allow for heavy foot traffic, and also provide spaces for outdoor seating and displays to benefit local businesses and create more activity on the street.

Downtown is connected to a major non-motorized trail network via the Downtown Pontiac Spur of the Clinton River Trail, located along designated sidewalks. The Clinton River Trail runs from Sylvan Lake, through southern Pontiac, and then runs northwest through Auburn Hills to the City of Rochester. Connection to this trail system is a major asset for Downtown Pontiac. Promoting upgrades to the trail and providing additional amenities along the trail to support long distance travelers, such as bike pump stations, drinking fountains, and restrooms, would increase use of the trail and encourage visitors to Downtown Pontiac.

On-street Parking

On-street parking in the Downtown area should be preserved and expanded where feasible. Off-street parking should be located on the side, or in the rear of buildings when on an arterial street. Shared parking between adjacent uses is highly preferred to allow for efficient use of space to avoid excessive parking areas.

Activated Alleyways

Most of the blocks in Downtown Pontiac include alleyways. An alleyway can serve as a convenient shortcut if it feels safe to go through. Many of Pontiac’s alleys are poorly-lit and isolated. The act of activating an alley is to redesign it so that it is more visible, and encourages more frequent use by the general public. Fun, activated alleyways can encourage visitors to take new routes, helping them to discover more of the Downtown. By beautifying and maintaining active alleyways, people are more likely discover new things and find new reasons to return to the Downtown for more. Art, lighting, seating, and landscaping can be return to the Downtown to liven up these corridors.

Building Design Standards

Development in this Future Land Use category should maintain an appropriate level of intensity for a major city, supporting taller buildings with block-size footprints. Courtyard uses can be provided along the front of buildings, including outdoor seating, patios, display areas, or art installations.

New construction should use high-quality materials, such as brick, stone, and concrete, and be designed with a development horizon of 100 years or more. Architecture should be attractive and intentional, designed to provide unique visual interest.

Connections to the Clinton River

The City of Pontiac was built around the Clinton River, but today, the river can be hard to find. In the early 1960s, underground tunnels were constructed to bury the river 20 feet beneath the surface of Downtown. In recent decades there have been multiple initiatives to evaluate strategies to daylight, or partially excavate, the river. Even if daylighting the river is deemed too costly or environmentally infeasible, the City should continue to utilize opportunities to further explore and implement initiatives that will further connect Pontiac residents to this natural resource and other water features in the community.



Birdseye view of Downtown Pontiac.

Downtown/Civic/ Park/Mixed Use

Intent

The Downtown/Civic/Park/Mixed Use Future Land Use category is intended help create more active and accessible public spaces in and around Downtown, inclusive of the County and City civic campuses. The sites outlined—predominantly on the south and east side of the Downtown—offer the unique opportunity to blend civic buildings with placemaking, landscape urbanism, non-motorized accessibility, and pocket mixed-use developments. These areas include several surface parking areas that are envisioned to be redeveloped as mixed-use buildings with some civic, entertainment, and cultural uses. This area also includes several sites that have the best opportunity to showcase the historic pathway of the Clinton River, whether through daylighting or through another form of public space creation.

Appropriate Land Uses

- » Landscaping, Sculpture, & Public Art
- » Green Spaces, Parks, & Public Spaces
- » Mixed Use Residential/Commercial/Office
- » Entertainment Facilities, Museums & Music/ Performance Spaces
- » Civic and Municipal Uses



Pontiac City Hall faces Woodward Avenue. While City Hall hosts numerous community events on its grounds, including the Pontiac Harvest Festival, City Hall can become more connected and accessible to its constituents and surroundings.

Roads & Connectivity

The Downtown/Civic/Park/Mixed Use classification is a pedestrian-first priority area. While this area must be accessible by multi-modal forms of transportation, including public transit, all modes should be considered subsidiary to pedestrian comfort and safety.

Pedestrian crossings should be designed with high visibility markings and materials. Entryways, pass throughs, and walkways should be well lit and created with durable and attractive everyday infrastructure, including benches, lighting, interpretive signing, and waste receptacles.

Bicycle parking, transit stops, and vehicle parking should be accommodated. However, design considerations shall be placed to minimize the impact on the quality of the pedestrian experience. Access control decisions can be utilized to encourage vehicles to park just once, allowing people to walk to multiple destinations from their parking spot.



An aerial of a park and school in Ypsilanti shows how public amenities can be connected to neighborhood corridors.

Civics & Parks

Intent

The Civics & Parks Future Land Use category is intended to guide the protection and enhancement of the City's natural and recreational assets, as well as to provide for quality community spaces and services. Accessing and appreciating local lakes, rivers, and creeks provides a major improvement to residents' quality of life. Preservation of natural areas within the City provides a refuge from the highly constructed environment of a city. Access to natural outdoor areas has been shown to provide better health outcomes and higher quality of life for residents. Any currently open waterfront should be sparingly developed to preserve the City's natural assets.

Appropriate Land Uses

- » Community Parks, Parks, Play Equipment, & Playfields
- » Paved and Unpaved Pathways
- » Preservation Areas
- » Civic and Municipal Uses



Pontiac Oaks Park

Roads & Connectivity

It is vital to improve connectivity between the City's parks and its neighborhoods. Parks must be accessible by multi-modal forms of transportation, including public transit.

In order to access parks from major thoroughways, multi-modal connections should be made where adjacent roadways and pathways intersect a park area.

Sufficient off-street parking, including bike parking should be provided for parks and public uses which generate a high number of visitors, in order to limit impacts on surrounding neighbors.



An example of an industrial campus in Sterling Heights that balances industrial and office uses with open space and walking paths.

Research & Development

Intent

The Research & Development Campus Future Land Use Category focuses on developing the City’s major employment centers. This category makes up some of the areas which are already developed as research, office, and industrial campuses, and outlines how they should be enhanced or changed as time passes. It also establishes guidelines for bringing some of the City’s more intensive heavy industrial uses down to less intensive uses, which will have fewer impacts on Pontiac residents. Expansion of land dedicated to industrial and research campus uses should be discouraged, and instead, existing brownfields and vacant properties should be utilized for new campus developments. Areas within this Future Land Use category are most appropriate where contamination or other site characteristics make the area undesirable or unsafe for full-time residents.

Appropriate Land Uses

The Research & Development category supports light manufacturing, office, research, warehousing, and similar uses. Heavy industrial uses which have the potential for noxious odors, noise, heavy vehicle traffic and pose the risk of negative air, soil, and water quality impacts are not included in this category. Appropriate Land Uses in the Research & Development Campus District include:

- » Low-impact Manufacturing
- » Offices
- » Medical Services
- » Research & Technology Facilities
- » Institutions of Higher Education

Outdoor storage may be appropriate in certain limited instances where the outdoor component is shielded and where the use will not generate any negative impacts on nearby residential neighborhoods or major streets.



A modern research and industrial campus.

Roads & Connectivity

In the future, the City should encourage more cohesion with and connection between these campuses and the rest of the City.

While these locations are physically separated from the rest of the City in some ways, it is essential for these major employment centers to be well-connected to the City’s residential nodes through key corridors. Public transportation providers should be encouraged to provide simple routes from neighborhoods to these locations when possible.



An example of Industrial development in Dearborn. Some open space is provided and greenery provides a buffer from adjacent residential uses. Solar panels are mounted on some buildings.

Industrial

Intent

The Industrial Future Land Use Category provides for the City's most intensive industrial sites. These types of uses are a major contributor to the City's economy, but need to be carefully designed and considered in order to mitigate potential harms. Because these areas have historically accommodated these high-intensity uses, they are often still the best place for similar development in the future—though this is not the case when adjacent to pre-existing neighborhoods or sensitive sites. This category outlines the development and redevelopment of properties that are still appropriate for heavy industrial activities.

Appropriate Land Uses

This category is intended for the highest intensity industrial uses, which have the highest potential for harmful environmental impacts. As such, new heavy manufacturing should be located on existing vacant or brownfield sites, not greenfield properties. These heavy industrial uses, like concrete crushing, which have the potential for noxious odors, noise, heavy vehicle traffic, and the risk of negative air, soil, and water quality impacts, should be limited to select areas and very intentionally separated from all residential areas, across single-family and multi-family units.



Pontiac Assembly, the former home factory of General Motors. The plant was demolished in 2014.

Roads & Connectivity

Heavy industrial sites are major economic centers and need to be directly accessible to major arterial roads and broader regional transportation systems. These sites must be capable of accommodating heavy truck traffic.

While these locations are physically separated from the rest of the City in some ways, it is essential for these major employment centers to be well-connected to the City's residential nodes through key corridors. Public transportation providers should be encouraged to provide simple routes from neighborhoods to these locations when possible.

1.3

Zoning Plan

The Zoning Ordinance is the City’s main tool for implementing the Future Land Use Map and other land use goals described in the Master Plan. While the Master Plan is a policy document, the Zoning Ordinance is the law. The Zoning Ordinance enforces requirements for land use, building dimensions, minimum parking standards, and landscaping, to name a few, for almost all new construction or redevelopment in the City. The Zoning Ordinance enacts the desired development strategies which are outlined in the Master Plan.

The Existing Zoning Map and the Future Land Use Map

The categories demonstrated on the Future Land Use Map and the corresponding descriptions of each classification from Section 1.2 form the basis for evaluation of future land uses and the corresponding development associated with those uses. Not all of the Future Land Use categories will match up directly with the current location or regulations of their corresponding districts. Zoning Ordinance text amendments, Zoning Map amendments, or new or consolidated zoning districts may be necessary in order to implement the Future Land Use Plan. The key recommended revisions to the Zoning Ordinance are provided in the following section.

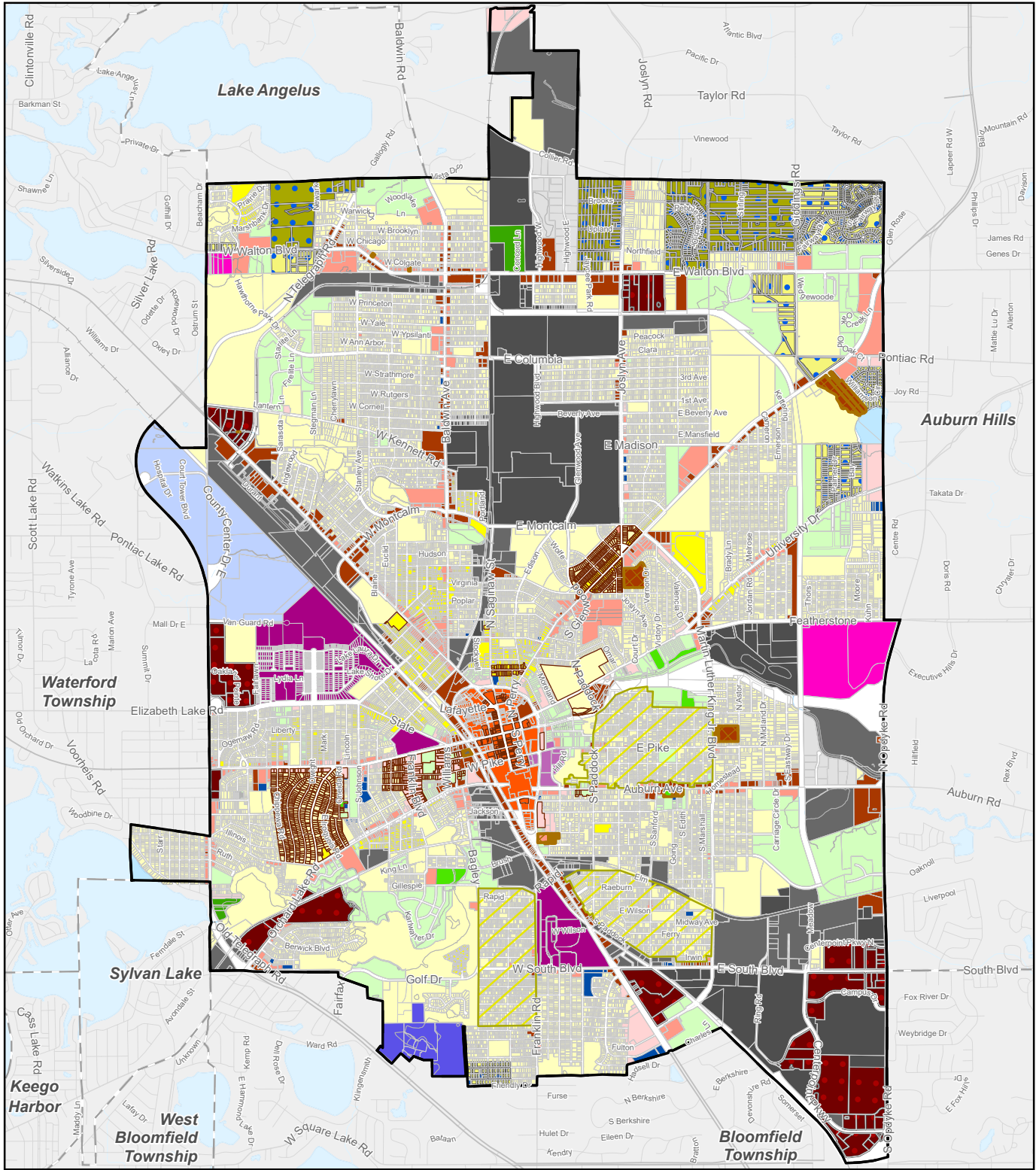
The following table represents Pontiac’s current zoning districts, as applied to the proposed Future Land Use categories within this Plan.

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORY	APPROPRIATE ZONING DISTRICTS
Neighborhood Residential	R-1: One-Family Dwelling R-1a: Medium Lot One Family Dwelling R-1b: Large Lot One Family Dwelling R-2: Two Family and Terrace Family Dwelling R-3: Multiple Family Dwelling C-0: Residential Office District R-0: Recreation Open Space District RIOD: Residential Infill Overlay District PURD: Planned Unit Residential District
Community Residential	R-2: Two Family and Terrace Family Dwelling R-3: Multiple Family Dwelling PURD: Planned Unit Residential District R-0: Recreation Open Space District
Neighborhood Mixed Use	C-0: Residential Office District C-1: Local Business/Residential Mixed Use District R-3: Multiple Family Dwelling C-C: Civic Center District
Corridor Mixed Use	C-3: Corridor Commercial Mixed Use District C-4: Suburban Business District TC: Town Center District R-4: Multiple Family Dwelling Elevator Apartment
Downtown	C-2: Downtown Mixed Use District C-C: Civic Center District R-4: Multiple Family Dwelling Elevator Apartment
Downtown/Civic/Park/Mixed Use	C-2: Downtown Mixed Use District C-C: Civic Center District G-O-T: Governmental, Office, Technology District C-C: Civic Center District R-0: Recreation Open Space District R-4: Multiple Family Dwelling Elevator Apartment
Civics & Parks	G-O-T: Governmental, Office, Technology District C-C: Civic Center District R-0: Recreation Open Space District
Research & Development	G-O-T: Governmental, Office, Technology District IP-1: Industrial Park District M-1: Limited Industrial District
Industrial	IP-1: Industrial Park District M-1: Limited Industrial District M-2: General Industrial District

* Not all uses permitted within this district are appropriate within the MUD. MUD could fit in multiple land use classifications based on the proposal and the surrounding environment.

** Medical Marijuana Overlay District, Adult Use Marijuana Overlay District and Mobile Food Truck Parklet Overlay District locations are not specifically modified based on the FLU plan recommendations.

*** R-5 (Mobile Home Parks) is not mentioned in the above land use categories, but could fit in multiple land use classifications based on the proposal and surrounding environment.



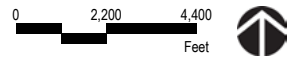
Map 3. Zoning Map

City of Pontiac, Michigan

January 3, 2025 - Draft

Legend

- R-1, One Family Dwelling
- R-1a, Medium Lot One Family Dwelling
- R-1b, Large Lot One Family Dwelling
- R-2, Two Family and Terrace Family Dwelling
- R-3, Multiple Family Dwelling
- R-4, Multiple Family Dwelling Elevator Apartment
- R-5, Trailer Coach Park
- C-0, Office Business
- C-1, Local Business
- C-2, Downtown
- C-3, Corridor Commercial
- C-4, Suburban Business
- CC, Civic Center
- T-C, Town Center
- MUD, Mixed Use District
- GOT, Government Office Technical District
- IP-1, Industrial Park
- M-1, Light Manufacturing
- M-2, Heavy Manufacturing
- P-1, Parking
- SP, Special Purpose
- Conditional Rezoning
- Historic District
- Residential Infill Overlay District
- City Boundary



Basemap Source: MCGI, v. 17a.
Data Source: City of Pontiac 2024.
Oakland County GIS 2024.
McKenna 2024.



Considerations for Zoning Ordinance Amendments

- 1. Allow more housing types by-right in neighborhood and mixed use districts.** Permit middle housing types by-right within all residential and mixed use districts in the City of Pontiac. Additionally, work to remove barriers to small-scale development of middle housing as defined in Chapter 2 by adopting easy-to-understand standards, developing pre-approval and other application checklists, creating a pre-approved site plan catalog, and reevaluating zoning procedures.
- 2. Consider developing form-based district requirements for Downtown and other mixed use districts.** A form-based zoning code is focused on building type and form, with less of an emphasis on land use. These form-based districts would be located in areas where the City would like to see significant investment while maintaining a suitable form and a high visual standard that matches the existing community character. This effort should be targeted towards specific commercial and mixed use districts, so as to limit impacts on residential use.
- 3. Develop guidelines within open space for the Civic Center District.** The C-C: Civic Center Zoning District should be updated to set high standards for the development of municipal service buildings. Projects undertaken by public agencies should be exemplary of sound planning and design principles outlined in this Plan. New buildings should be designed at a scale that is consistent with the surrounding environment, with high-quality materials built to stand the test of time.
- 4. Consolidate and eliminate some zoning districts to align with the Vision Pontiac recommendations.** Over time, Zoning Ordinances are usually updated to keep up as new best practices, community values, and information emerges. As this happens, certain sections or zoning districts become repetitive, include contradictory ideas or requirements, or are no longer relevant. The City should update its zoning districts so that they closely relate to the Future Land Use map. This will help to establish clear guidelines for rezoning and Special Land Use procedures.
- 5. Develop Historic District and Code Enforcement Guidelines to align with architectural and dimensional requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.** There are five official Historic Districts within the City of Pontiac. The City and local stakeholders should work to ensure that there is cohesion between the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, the Property Maintenance Code, and the actual built environment of these Historic Districts. Considerations should be made as to whether buildings in these districts comply with existing dimensional and architectural standards in the Zoning Ordinance.



Steering committee meeting

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1.4

Future Land Use Action Plan

Core Finding and Metric

As a concrete means to create opportunities for people to use and improve their neighborhoods, improve public health, and to create generational wealth, the following core finding was developed and validated by the Pontiac community:

Core Finding: Include space for small-site redevelopment and neighborhood leadership in economic development priorities.

Based on this core finding, success in the Future Land Use Plan will be measured by the following metric:

Metric: By 2040, the City will partner to create 120 Pontiac resident owned, small-scale redevelopments, and give current residents prioritized access to purchase publicly-owned land.

Action Plan

There are a number of strategies that can be implemented in order to promote small-scale development in order to achieve the goal stated above. There are a number of approaches that can be taken that will incentivize, promote, and maintain support for infill and other small-scale development projects. Many entrepreneurial people want to start a business, own a rental property, or build their own home - they just need to be in the right environment and know what steps to take. This Action Plan provides ways for stakeholders from different backgrounds to contribute to healthy growth in the future. The Action Plan requires the cooperation of the following key stakeholders:

- » **City Leadership and Administration:** City Council (CC); Planning Commission (PC); City Staff (CS)
- » **Private Entities:** Business Owners (BO), Residential Property Owners / Landlords (RO); Nonprofit entities (NP)
- » **State & Regional Entities:** State of Michigan (MI), Oakland County (OC), Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SG), SMART Bus Transit (SB)
- » **Residents (R)**

Each goal statement and objective was developed through input from the general public, City staff and officials, and local business-owners. Many of the objectives involve the continuation or expansion of ongoing work, or are based off of programs that have been successful in other similar communities.

The objectives are in order of priority, highest to lowest, based on input received from the November Open House. Below each objective are action items with a recommended timeline: It consists of short-term (1-2 years), medium-term (3-5 years), and long-term (5+ years).

Goal Statement for Future Land Use

Create opportunities for people to use and improve their neighborhoods, for improved public health, and for creating generational wealth.

Objectives and Action Items Table

To accomplish the goal stated above, the following objectives and corresponding action items should be pursued:

OBJECTIVES AND ACTION ITEMS	TIMEFRAME	COLLABORATION
Objective A – Update zoning districts and requirements to be more adaptive and supportive of entrepreneurial spirits, encourage complementary uses that incorporate measures to prevent contamination of sensitive areas and surrounding uses, and encourage affordable housing.		
1) Transition heavy industrial uses to research, warehousing, storage, and other less intensive uses.	Short-term	X
2) Re-evaluate zoning buffer requirements of industrial uses in proximity to residential areas.	Short-term	X
3) Re-evaluate PUD requirements to be more useful in facilitating innovative and adaptive re-use projects as well as non-traditional affordable and senior-oriented housing projects.	Short-term	X
4) Permit Accessory Dwelling Units and other accessory uses/development for additional dwelling units, live-work units, and home occupations.	Short-term	X
5) Encourage live-work units in multi-family developments.	Short-term	X
6) Evaluate parking requirements and incorporate flexible reductions or remove minimum requirements for uses where parking is not required by the end user, site context, or site design to facilitate walkable developments.	Short-term	X
Objective B – Preserve, protect, and uplift sensitive natural resources (with a specific emphasis on the Clinton River).		
1) Address invasive species prevalent in the City and its parkland.	Ongoing	X
2) Incorporate water quality, stormwater management, and low impact development standards in City policies, practices, operating budget, and zoning regulations.	Short-term	X
3) Open up access to the Clinton River in future developments and land use designations.	Medium- to Long-term	X
4) Allow for recreational (public and privately-invested) opportunities adjacent to natural features, particularly water features.	Short-term	X
Objective C – Establish strategic growth areas and corridors that—with the support of Ordinance amendments, policies, and programs—will yield denser, more walkable developments and housing types throughout the City.		
1) Identify priority redevelopment areas along major thoroughfares, existing commercial corridors, and fringe areas of traditional residential neighborhoods that can accommodate higher density development, mixed use, and other housing typologies. (For more information, please refer to Chapter 3: Development and Redevelopment)	Medium-term	X
2) Connect strategic growth areas to transit corridors with expanded public transportation routes.	Medium-term	X

OBJECTIVES AND ACTION ITEMS	TIMEFRAME	COLLABORATION
Objective D – Communicate and highlight the future land use map and goals with developers, entrepreneurs, business owners, administration, elected and appointed officials, residents and other local stakeholders		
1) Publish the future land use map in an easily accessible and apparent location on the City’s website.	Short-term	X
2) Create informational materials, fliers, and digital content to inform applicants of the future vision of the City, development processes, and resources available to promote cohesive and desirable development.	Short-term	X
3) Host regular trainings for the Planning Commission, City Council, Zoning Board of Appeals, City Council, and other relevant Boards and Commissions that include topics related to the Future Land Use Map and concepts brought forth in the Master Plan.	Ongoing	X
Objective E – Create sub-area plans that align with the Neighborhood Needs Interested to uplift and address unique assets, needs, and growth opportunities within each District.		
1) Create a sub-area plan that addresses each of the following as well as the unique needs and opportunities within the area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Key infill housing sites and pre-approve new housing types suitable to the area » Densification opportunities or ‘growth areas’ » Recreational amenities and needs, such as youth-oriented equipment, community vegetable gardens or pollinator gardens, other active and nonactive assets, etc. » Services to support residents » Improved transit routes » Non-motorized trailway and commuter opportunities, such as improved crosswalks, traffic calming priority areas, etc. » Vital infrastructure upgrades » Other items deemed necessary by District residents and leadership 	Medium- to Long-term	X



Housing in the Seminole Hills Historic District

Chapter 2.

Housing and Neighborhoods

As the quintessential foundation for a vibrant and resilient community, amenity-rich neighborhoods and quality housing create a distinct identity for a city, encourage community members to put down deep roots, and attract new residents to do the same. The following chapter analyzes community engagement and demographic data that, together, paints a picture of existing housing barriers and innovative opportunities in the City of Pontiac, uplifts existing housing initiatives and resources, and recommends best practices as Pontiac looks to improve their housing stock and neighborhood amenities for generations of Pontiac residents to come.

2.1 Findings

Engagement

When people are looking for housing, they not only think about the physical characteristics of the home, but also the amenities available in the neighborhood. This was reflected in many of the responses received from participants during the multiple community engagement events hosted by the City of Pontiac and McKenna.

At the Town Hall hosted on September 19th, 2024, participants were presented with a Housing Choice activity as well as a Housing Survey, through which they were asked to identify the top things they considered when looking for a place to live. The figure below shows the factors that participants prioritized:

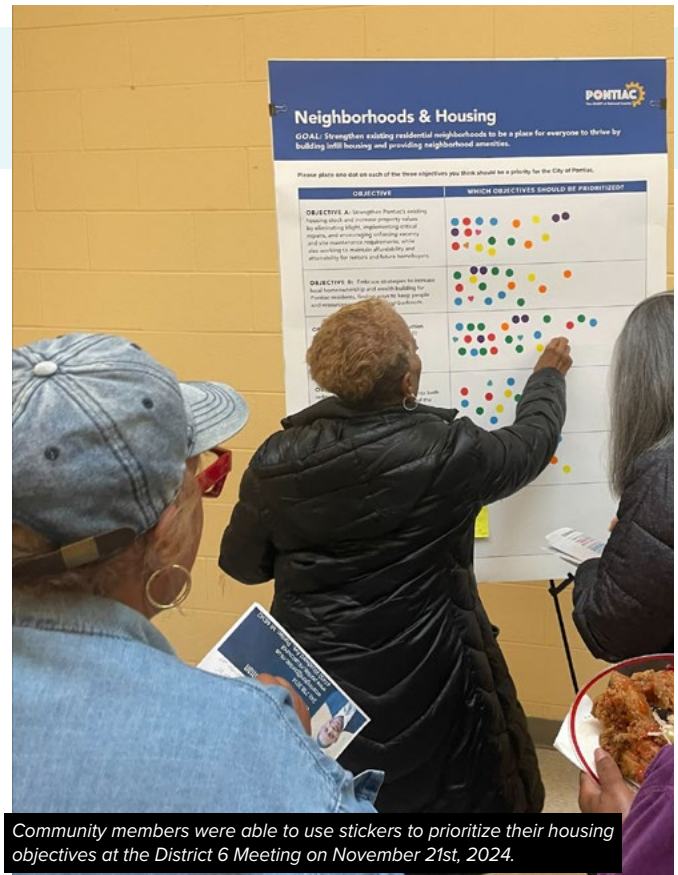
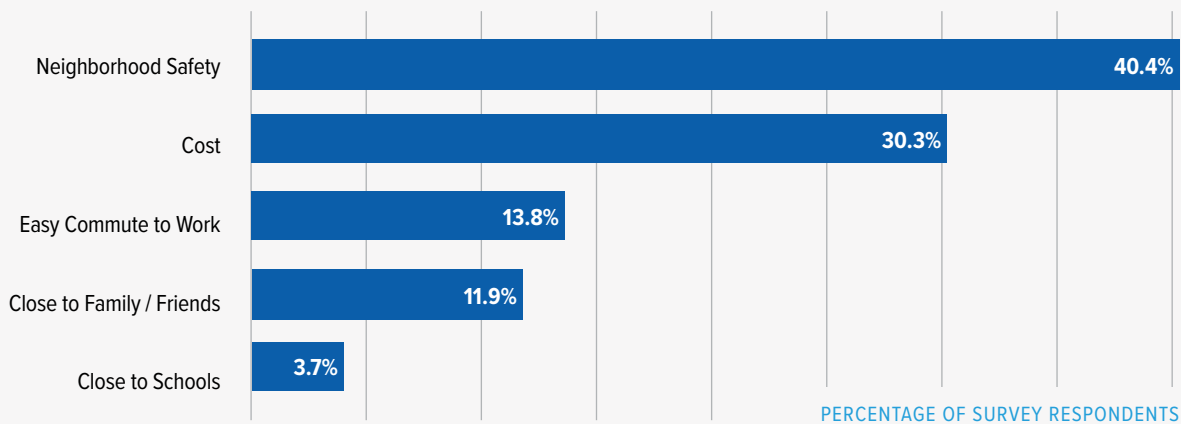
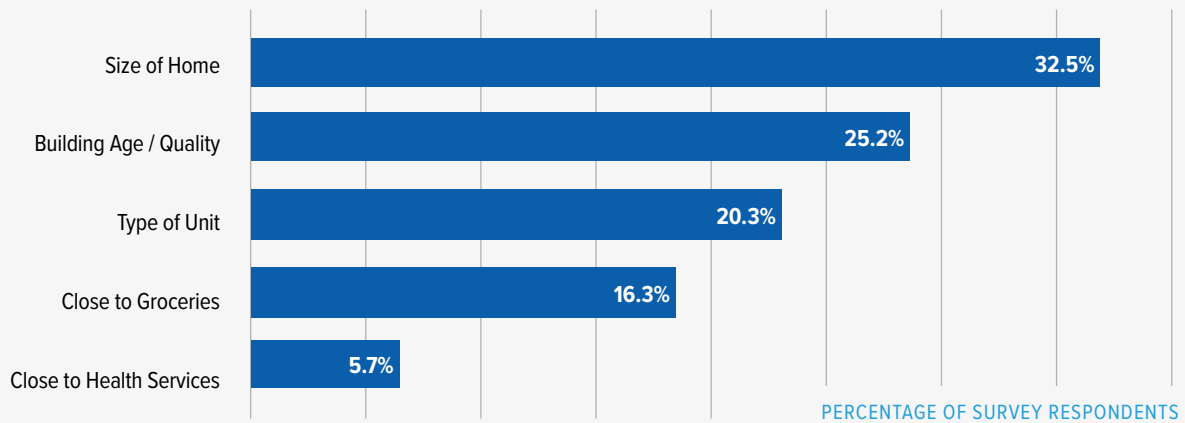


Figure 1. Housing Choice Factors



Out of the factors provided, the majority of participants ranked neighborhood safety as their top priority (44 votes). Cost was the second-highest ranked factor (33 votes). When given the opportunity to provide open-ended comments related to this question, participants provided other factors not included in the initial answer choices provided. For example, another participant noted that the aesthetics of the house were an important, but easily overlooked, factor that people often considered when looking for a place to live.

Figure 2. Physical Housing Factors



Unlike the factors related to housing and neighborhood choice, participants appeared to consider physical housing factors more evenly. 40 participants listed the size of the home as their top factor, while 31 participants prioritized the age and quality of the building, and 25 participants considered the type of unit (e.g. whether the home was an apartment versus a single-family home or other type of housing unit). People are typically less flexible in these factors when looking for a home, as the size of one’s family, income levels, and accessibility needs often dictate these physical housing factors. The 2025 Housing Study and Needs Assessment completed in conjunction with this Master Plan provides greater detail on the types of housing being demanded in the City and throughout the region, and how the City can expand housing supply for housing types in high demand.



The Unity Park neighborhood, constructed in 2011, required collaboration between multiple non-profit housing developers to more housing opportunities for Pontiac residents. Source: unityparkpontiac.com

The Housing Choice Survey also asked participants to identify where different housing types would be most appropriate in the City of Pontiac. The housing options provided to participants are as follows:

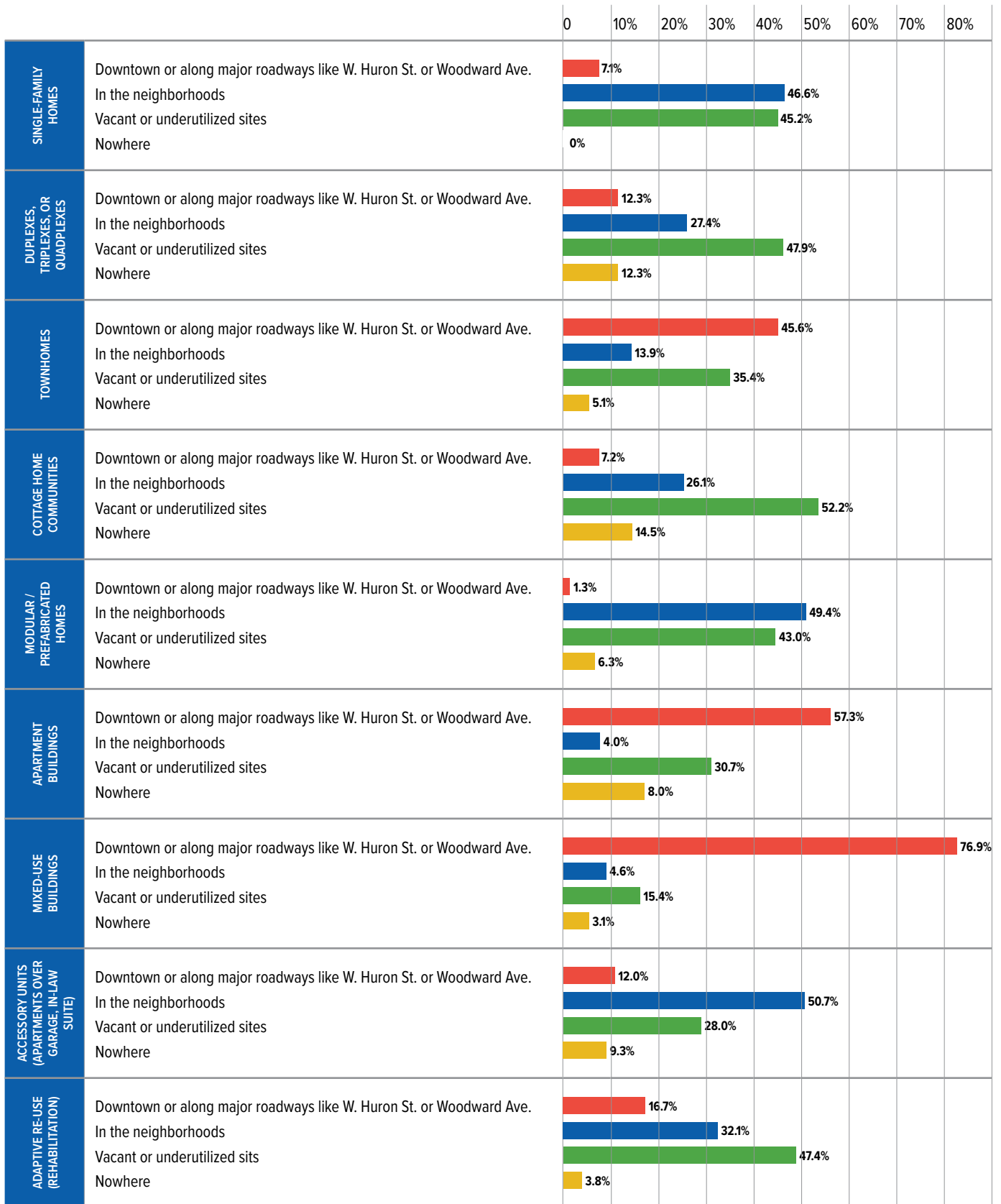
- » **Single-Family Homes.** This housing type is a traditional one-unit home on a single lot, representing a majority of Pontiac's existing housing stock.
- » **Duplexes, Triplexes, or Quadplexes.** These housing types represent different types of workforce housing, a concept described in detail later in this Chapter. These types can gently increase density while still fitting in single-family neighborhoods, since these housing types are often the same style as single-family homes.
- » **Townhomes.** Townhomes are single-unit homes attached in rows, often with smaller yard spaces. These are typically included in workforce housing types. Townhomes are often a part of a townhome or condominium association with shared common spaces. Because of the reduced maintenance associated with shared common spaces and smaller yards, townhomes are a good option for first-time homebuyers or seniors looking to move into a lower-maintenance housing option as they age.
- » **Cottage Home Communities.** Cottage home communities are clusters of smaller homes, typically with footprints between 800 and 1,500 square feet with a shared open space or courtyard. The building style of these homes often mimic traditional cottage-style architecture. Homes in these types of communities are often more affordable in purchase price and maintenance due to their smaller footprints and shared open space, making them another good option for first-time homebuyers, seniors, and other residents looking for a lower-maintenance housing type.
- » **Modular/Prefabricated Homes.** Modular/prefabricated homes encompass many different types of housing and rather refer to the construction process. Modular/prefabricated homes are built in factories, transported to the site in pieces, and then assembled on site. Modular/prefabricated homes must follow standard building and local codes, unlike manufactured housing, which follows U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regulations.
- » **Apartment Buildings.** This housing type includes any multi-unit housing type larger than a quadplex, including small and large apartment buildings.
- » **Mixed-Use Buildings.** Mixed-use buildings typically include a commercial use, such as retail or office space, on the ground floor of a building, with residential units on upper floors. These types of uses are seen more frequently in Downtown areas or other higher-density areas with strong commercial activity.
- » **Accessory Dwelling Units (Apartments Over Garage, In-Law Suites).** Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are small units with their own kitchen, bathroom, and bedrooms that are included on the same lot as an existing single-family home. These units can be attached or detached from the existing single-family structure. These have grown in popularity as people have been interested in having a housing option for family members on their own property.
- » **Adaptive Reuse (Rehabilitation).** Adaptive reuse describes the process of rehabilitating a vacant building for a different purpose than it was originally built. An example of this may be rehabilitating a vacant school building into a multi-family apartment building. These types of projects may involve zoning change if the proposed use is not permitted in the existing zoning district. While these projects are often complicated, they are a worthwhile endeavor to revitalize underutilized space and add additional housing units that otherwise would not exist.



Single Family Home in the Unity Park Neighborhood

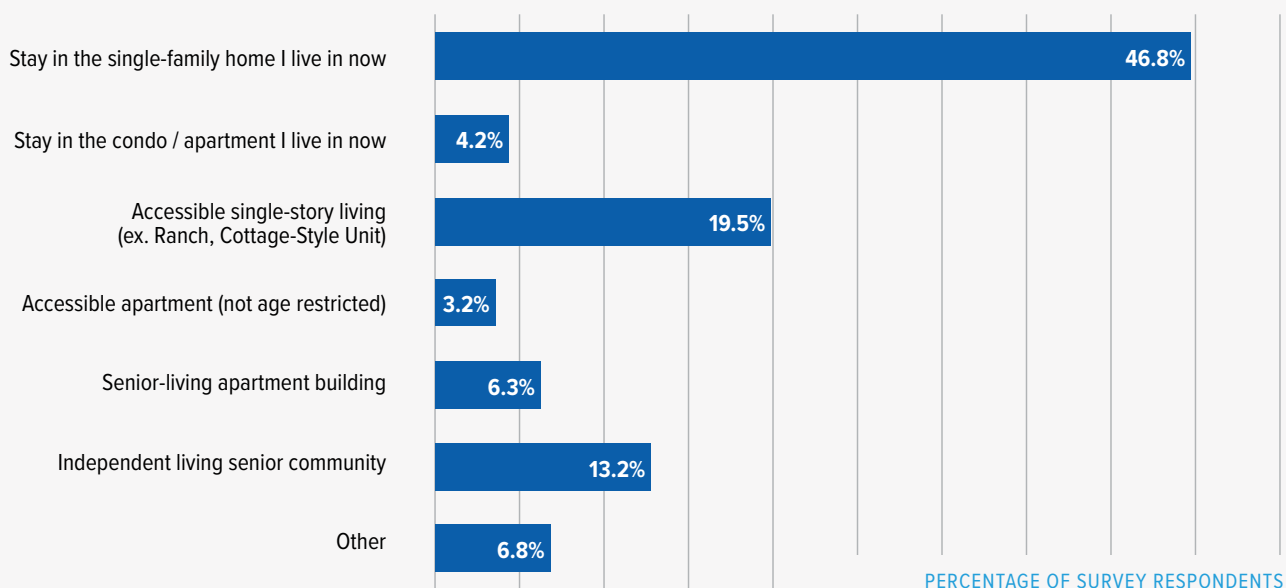
The **Figure 3** shows where Housing Choice Survey participants felt these different types of housing may be appropriate, or not appropriate, in the City of Pontiac. Percentages are based off of the number of responses for each housing type, rather the number of total responses to the question, as some respondents did not select a choice for each housing type presented.

Figure 3. Where does this housing fit in Pontiac?



Participants felt that single-family homes (40 votes), modular or prefabricated homes (39 votes), and accessory dwelling units (ADUs) (38 votes) fit best in the context of their existing neighborhoods. For Downtown and prominent commercial corridors, participants believed that mixed-used buildings (50 votes), apartment buildings (43 votes), and townhomes (36 votes) were most appropriate. Very few participants thought that any single housing type should not be allowed anywhere in the City. However, 10 participants believe cottage home communities were not appropriate anywhere in the City, while nine participants felt duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes were not appropriate anywhere. One participant thought that duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes should be located in their own unique neighborhood, highlighting participants' desire to see new homes fit the existing context of each neighborhood in the City. Overall, this question revealed residents' desire for housing diversity throughout the City to ensure the housing needs of current and future residents are met.

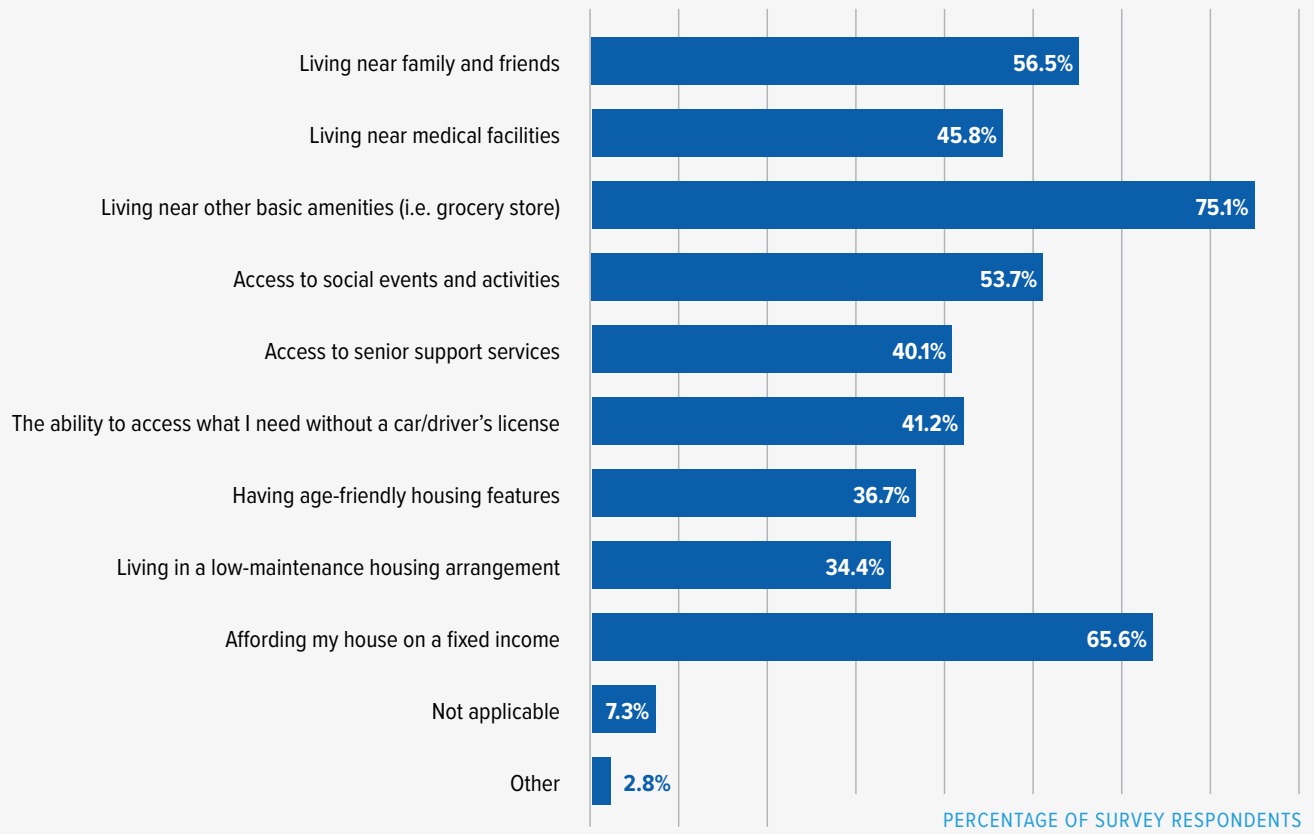
Figure 4. What type of retirement housing do you hope for?



In addition to the housing-focused Town Hall discussions and Open House stations, the Community Survey asked respondents multiple questions related to housing. Many people have shifting housing needs as they age, highlighting the need for housing choices that allow people to age in place when possible. When asked what type of housing they hoped to retire in, 46.8% of respondents (89 responses) expressed wanting to stay in the single-family home they currently live in. This highlights the need for resources to help Pontiac homeowners retrofit their homes to accommodate aging in place strategies, like walk-in showers, entrance ramps, and first floor access. Building off this point, 19.5% of respondents hoped to live in an accessible single-story unit, such as a ranch or cottage-style unit. Overall, accessibility and privacy appear to be important considerations as people decide what type of home to live in when they retire.

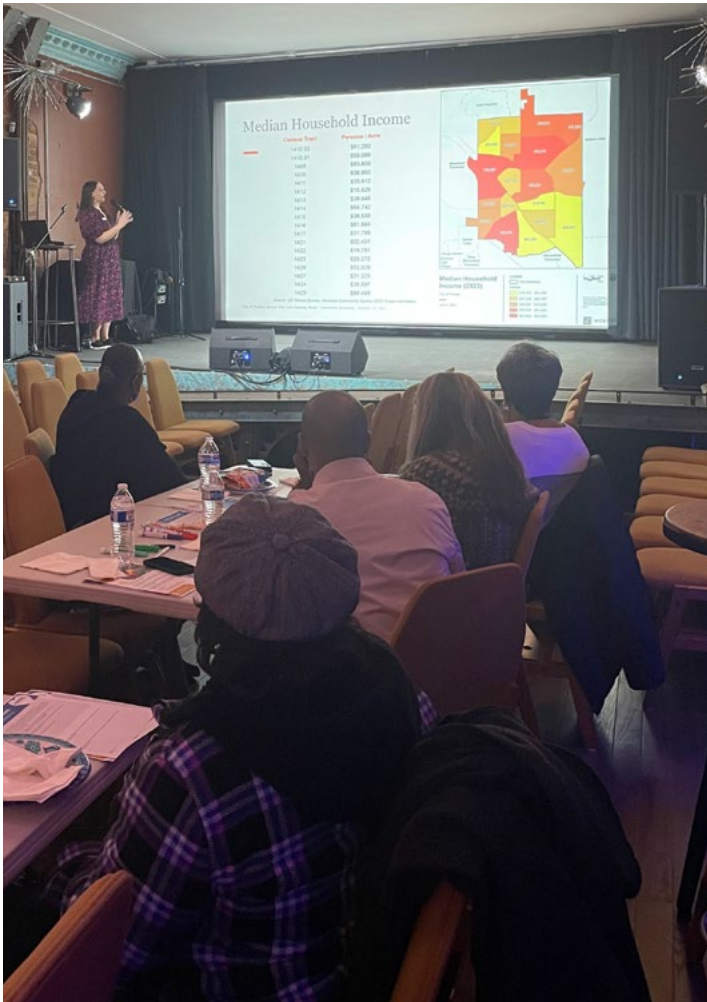
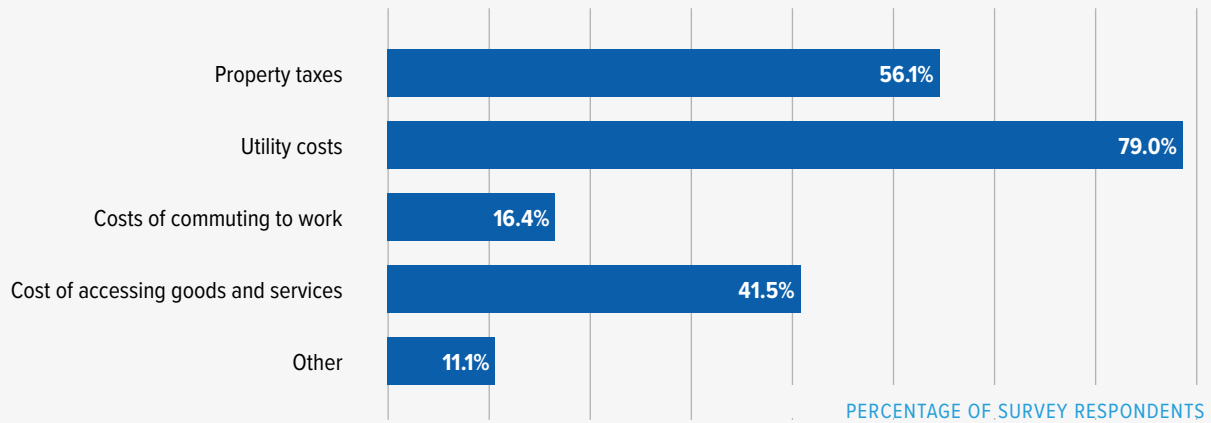


Figure 5. What is important to you as you grow older in Pontiac?



In addition to accessible home features, accessible amenities within the neighborhood was indicated as a priority for residents hoping to age in place. 150 respondents (75.1%) indicated that living near basic amenities, such as a grocery store, was important as they age. Another 110 respondents (56.5%) wanted a home that was near family and friends. Finally, cost was also a big factor for respondents, with 127 respondents (65.5%) selecting “Affording my housing on a fixed income” as a key factor. A neighborhood's connectivity to resources and personal supports, as well as its affordability to those who are no longer in the workforce, are things the City should consider as they work to improve access and amenities in neighborhoods.

Figure 6. Other than monthly rent or mortgage costs, what costs exist that drive up housing costs for yourself and your family?



Utility costs were considered to be the most burdensome housing cost (79.0%, 150 respondents), followed closely by property taxes (56.1%, 103 respondents). When given the ability to list an additional expense, some respondents noted the effects of car and homeowners insurance costs on their ability to afford their homes. A number of other respondents also noted the high cost of repairs for older or historic homes and discussed the difficulties with finding contractors that are able to perform the maintenance and repairs in older or historic homes.

Existing Conditions

Demographics of Existing Households

Average household sizes in Pontiac are important to help determine what types of housing have historically been in demand by residents of the City, and how that demand might change moving forward. For example, a two-person household is more likely to demand a one- or two- bedroom home over a four-bedroom or larger home. **Table 1** shows the change in average household size for the City of Pontiac from 2010 to 2020 and compares that with the average household size in Oakland County.

Table 1: Average Household Size, 2010-2020

	2010	2020	CHANGE
City of Pontiac	2.57	2.45	-0.12
Oakland County	2.47	2.44	-0.03

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2006-2010, 2016-2020

Overall, Pontiac has a small average household size, which has declined slightly between 2010 and 2020. The average household size is similar, although slightly larger, than that of Oakland County as a whole. This suggests that there may be a strong market for one- and two-bedroom housing types of a variety of forms and housing tenures—from condominiums, tiny homes, and townhouses to more traditional apartment buildings and single-unit detached homes.

Average household sizes often times correlate to whether people are owning or renting, but not always. For example, younger, smaller households who are just starting out typically rent while saving money and deciding if that particular community will become their long-term home, while larger, more established families tend to be homeowners.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of housing tenure, or owner- versus renter-occupied households, in the City of Pontiac and similarly economically-situated communities in 2022.

Table 2: Housing Tenure – City of Pontiac and Comparison Communities, 2022

HOUSING TENURE	PONTIAC		WARREN		DEARBORN		FLINT	
Owner-Occupied	10,721	42.3%	38,734	71.1%	26,025	71.0%	18,883	54.0%
Renter-Occupied	14,622	57.7%	15,749	28.9%	10,631	29.0%	16,105	46.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2022 5-year estimates, Table DP04

Pontiac is currently a majority-renter city, with 57.7% of houses being renter-occupied and 42.3% of houses being owner-occupied. Amongst similarly situated communities, Pontiac is the only community that is majority renter. In Warren and Dearborn, approximately 71% of houses are owner-occupied, and in the City of Flint, approximately 54% of houses are owner-occupied. In the 2025 Housing Study and Needs Assessment, we learned that many more Pontiac residents would like to be homeowners, but these housing opportunities are often unavailable. This Master Plan and the 2025 Housing Study explore policies and strategies that can assist the City in meeting this unmet demand.



Physical Housing Characteristics

The following tables provide information about the existing state of Pontiac’s housing stock, including its age and form. This information is important in determining what types of housing units are currently unavailable, and if programs are needed to assist residents in maintaining their homes. **Table 3** outlines the age of occupied homes in Pontiac in 2022.

Table 3: Age of Occupied Homes – City of Pontiac, 2022

YEAR HOME BUILT	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Built 2020 or later	191*	0.1%
Built 2010 to 2019	412	1.6%
Built 2000 to 2009	2,294	9.1%
Built 1980 to 1999	3,395	13.4%
Built 1960 to 1979	6,900	27.2%
Built 1940 to 1959	6,985	27.6%
Built 1939 or earlier	5,336	21.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2022 5-year estimates, Table S2504

* In addition to the number of homes built after 2020 provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, the City has approved approximately 149 building permits between 2019 and 2023 for new construction single-unit, duplex, and apartment buildings, representing approximately 0.7% of Pontiac’s existing occupied housing stock.” Then sentence can be removed as the last sentence of that paragraph

Like many communities throughout Southeast Michigan, Pontiac has an aging housing stock. Over 75% of the City’s housing stock was built before 1980. An aging housing stock often comes with higher maintenance costs and energy inefficiencies, representing an additional financial burden for homeowners and renters through these high maintenance costs and higher utility bills. The Action Plan discussed later in this chapter aims to address this burden by advocating for programs that offer financial assistance for homeowners and renters struggling to deal with these costs and that provide residents information on the responsibilities of homeownership. Additionally, the City is currently working on increasing the amount of new construction homes available.

Table 4 provides the number of units in each housing structure in the City of Pontiac in 2022.

Table 4: Number of Units in Housing Structure – City of Pontiac, 2022

UNITS IN STRUCTURE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
1-unit detached	15,290	60.3%
1-unit attached	1,024	4.0%
2 apartments	1,173	4.6%
3 or 4 apartments	1,285	5.1%
5 to 9 apartments	1,829	7.2%
10 or more apartments	4,270	16.8%
Mobile home or other type of housing	472	1.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2022 5-year estimates, Table S2504

Pontiac consists of largely single-family detached housing, which represents 60.3% of their housing stock. Pontiac also has a sizeable amount of apartment buildings with 10 or more apartments, which represent 16.8% of their housing stock. This data shows that Pontiac lacks many middle housing types, or housing types in between single-family homes and large apartment buildings. The community benefits of workforce housing types, the community engagement conducted on workforce housing types, as well as a series of incentives that can support the development of these housing types are discussed in detail in the next section.

Middle Housing

What is Middle Housing?

Middle housing, often referred to as “missing middle housing” includes a range of medium-density housing types that fill a void in many Midwestern communities. Typically consisting of housing types like duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, and bungalow courts, workforce housing fell out of favor during a post-war period of rapid suburban expansion. Today however, with an understanding of the critical nature of the housing crisis, where many people are struggling to find an adequate home in their price range, middle housing has experienced a resurgence. Middle housing can create housing opportunities for all income levels. Middle housing can be a great opportunity for workforce housing and housing for those making between 80% to 120% of the area median income by improving affordability through density. Middle housing also provides better access for working people to daily amenities by improving neighborhood walkability through locating more residential units close to mixed-use centers and transit. Luxury middle housing options can also be developed for higher income levels in the City.

According to public input obtained throughout the Pontiac Master Plan process, Pontiac residents are largely supportive of adding more middle housing types. 32 attendees at the September 19th Town Hall supported the use of middle housing types as a strategy to activate vacant or underutilized sites. Additionally, at the November 14th Town Hall, some attendees added the following comments that supported adding more workforce housing in Pontiac:

“Mix housing opportunities.”

“So many homes are in disrepair, lifting the city and adding infill homes to match existing neighborhoods is much more cost effective. Putting together more creative solutions is better for community.”

“Make sure that includes a mix of large, medium, and small homes. Unique homes—not just cookie cutter designs.”

Middle housing addresses some of the public input received related to housing and neighborhoods by diversifying the housing mix and utilizing creative housing solutions.

Employer-Supported Housing

Pontiac should consider collaborating with local employers to increase the supply of housing in the City. Potential collaborations could include those with United Wholesale Mortgage, Amazon, Oakland County, McLaren Oakland Hospital, and local universities and community colleges. Employers in Pontiac have an incentive to support housing initiatives in the City, as having a variety of high-quality housing options for all incomes can help employers attract workers and stabilize their workforce over a long period of time.

Strategies Pontiac could employ to collaborate with employers could include creating an Employer Housing Council. This Council can advocate for policy change that benefits their employees on a state-wide level, could contribute gap financing to help housing developers build attainable housing for all income levels, and identify local barriers that make it more difficult for their employees to live in the City. Sonoma County, California currently has a Employer Housing Council, which works closely with local jurisdictions throughout the County and assists in evaluating housing projects that apply for funding through the Housing Trust Fund of Silicon Valley.

As part of the City's 2025 Housing Study and Needs Assessment, employees at United Wholesale Mortgage were interviewed to learn more about their housing needs, and factors that would encourage them to live in Pontiac. While other local employers were also engaged to take the survey, the City was not able to get responses from these employers. Pontiac should analyze the results of this survey to identify gaps in housing that are preventing employees of large local employers from living in the City and increase collaboration with employers to address those gaps. For more information and analysis on this employee survey, please review the 2025 Housing Study and Needs Assessment.



Housing Opportunities for Downtown Pontiac

Pontiac aims to increase the number of housing opportunities in Downtown Pontiac, supporting its vibrancy through the inclusion of mixed uses and housing diversity while respecting the historic character of the City's existing buildings. The following section overviews opportunities to expand or renovate buildings to increase housing in Downtown Pontiac.

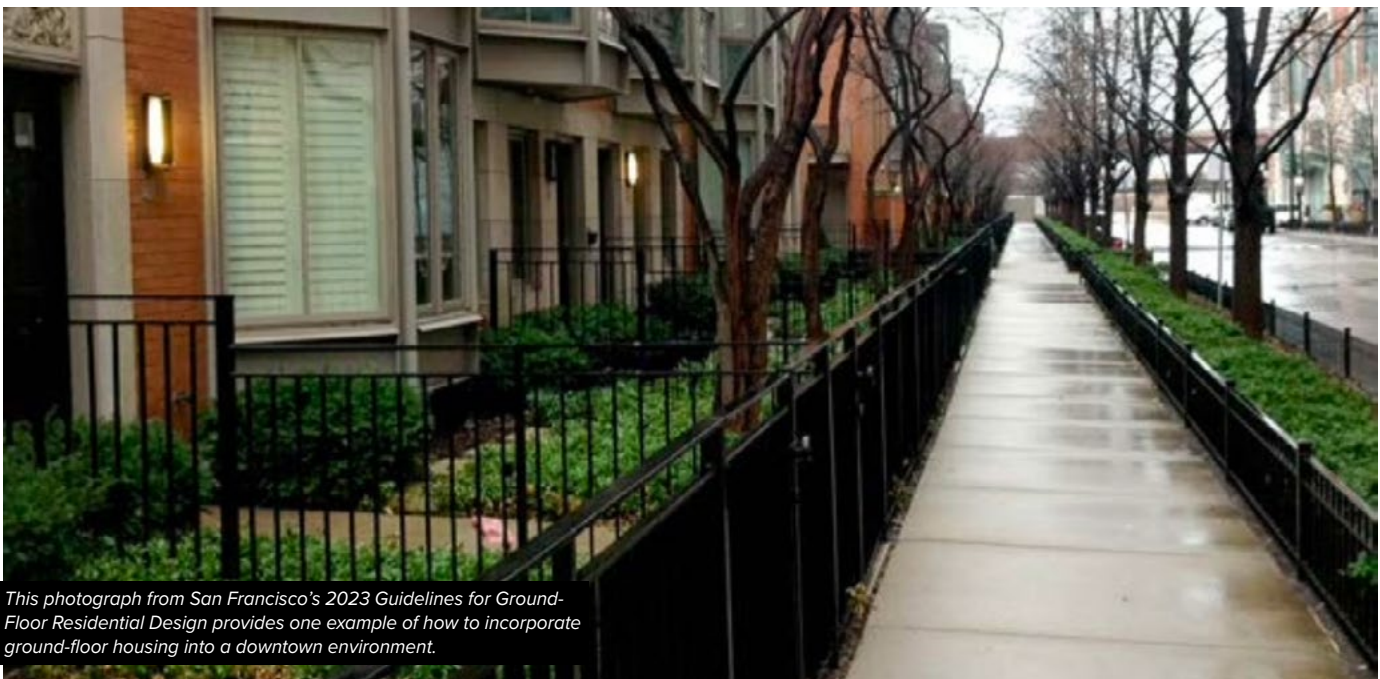
Chapter 5: Downtown and Commercial Corridors provides a market analysis that outlines residential and commercial opportunity in Downtown Pontiac. This market analysis revealed that there were currently 350 housing units in Pontiac, consisting of multi-unit buildings, with a vacancy rate of 5.8%. Furthermore, the market analysis notes a 14.5% vacancy rate for retail businesses. These vacancy rates highlight the opportunity residential development has in Downtown Pontiac. Furthermore, Pontiac has many potential employers, such as McLaren Hospital, in the heart of Downtown. Increasing dynamic, high-quality housing opportunities Downtown may help the City attract young working professionals interested in living near where they work.

Retrofitting vacant retail spaces into housing represents one strategy for increasing the housing supply in Downtown Pontiac. In Grand Rapids, the City amended its zoning ordinance to allow ground floor-residential uses in certain commercial districts, creating more flexibility to help fill long-vacant retail spaces. To preserve the privacy of residents while maintaining an energetic downtown environment, design guidelines for ground-floor

residential uses should be encouraged, including raised or recessed entries for residential uses and landscaped screening elements.

Another strategy to increase downtown residential housing supply is through pre-approved housing designs for Downtown, taking into account historic preservation and existing architectural styles. This can decrease the barrier to entry for Pontiac residents looking to get involved in development of their City while ensuring designs match the architectural standards that currently exist in Downtown Pontiac. Additionally, Pontiac can develop pre-approved plans for the housing types Pontiac residents found most appropriate for Downtown as discussed earlier in this chapter, including townhomes, apartments, and mixed-use buildings. Fayetteville, Arkansas has experienced some success in implementing pre-approved plans for their Downtown, offering a multitude of designs from single-unit homes, workforce housing types, and townhome developments. These designs can be expanded to accommodate innovative residential uses, such as live/work and co-living arrangements, placing Pontiac on the forefront of innovative Downtown residential design.

As conditions fluctuate in Downtown Pontiac, the City can take advantage of opportunities to support its Downtown while increasing housing supply. By implementing zoning changes and innovative policies, the City can make Downtown an environment where more residents can live, work, and thrive.



This photograph from San Francisco's 2023 Guidelines for Ground-Floor Residential Design provides one example of how to incorporate ground-floor housing into a downtown environment.

Incentives

The State of Michigan, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) currently offer several incentive programs that municipalities can apply locally to increase homeownership opportunities, support the growth of workforce housing, and help property owners rehabilitate their properties. The following section outlines these opportunities and their benefits, and provides some recommendations for the City to utilize these programs effectively. Some of these incentives, specifically Neighborhood Enterprise Zones and Payment In Lieu of Taxes Agreements, are discussed in further detail in the 2025 Housing Study and Needs Assessment, which was carried out in conjunction with this Master Plan to analyze the state of existing housing in Pontiac and opportunities for improving and expanding housing in the City for current and future residents.

Neighborhood Enterprise Zones (NEZ)

In August 2024, the City of Pontiac adopted a resolution to establish a Neighborhood Enterprise Zone (NEZ) program. This program provides significant property tax incentives for up to 15 years for the new construction or substantial rehabilitation of certain residential structures. The NEZ is a great tool to encourage construction and rehabilitation of both rental and owner-occupied homes, as well as both single-family and workhouse housing. A city can designate up to 15% of its properties as part of the NEZ, with the requirement that the primary use be residential after rehabilitation and construction is completed. To utilize the program, those who own properties in the NEZ must apply for a NEZ certificate through the City.

The NEZ program can assist those that live in the NEZ by providing a financial incentive for the rehabilitation of their homes. Additionally, the NEZ can help residential infill in vacant parcels through this tax incentive for new residential construction. Pontiac's NEZ is included in the Home Creation Opportunities Map, which is displayed and discussed later in this chapter.

There are examples of NEZ programs in other cities throughout Southeast Michigan that Pontiac can look to as a model, as it implements its own NEZ. The City of Detroit's NEZ is one example of a successful implementation of a NEZ. Initially adopted in 2006, Detroit revised the boundaries of its NEZ Homestead program in 2021 to encompass the changing conditions of residential areas in the City. The NEZ Homestead program provided a tax abatement by reducing the City of Detroit and Wayne County's Operating Millage by 50% for owner-occupied homes purchased after 1996 in NEZ Homestead Zones. This typically resulted in a 15 to 20% savings in property taxes for most homeowners in the Zone. By adopting a NEZ, Pontiac has provided property owners with a tool to improve their properties and to build wealth, and has created an avenue to improve the City's tax base over time.



Incentive Programs to Support Income-Based Housing Development

Incentive programs, such as Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) and Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) exist to support the development of income-based housing. PILOTs allow or require:

- » The developer of a property to pay a service charge instead of property taxes.
- » Developers to receive necessary funding from MSHDA.

Meanwhile, LIHTC is a federal funding program that provides different percentages of tax credits for different types of income-based attainable housing construction projects. LIHTC:

- » Allows for tax credits to be purchased from developers by investors through a process called syndication, which creates equity for the development.
- » Provides credits to developers through a competitive scoring process called the Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) which is released by MSHDA every two years.

The City's 2025 Housing Study and Needs Assessment offers some criteria to consider when determining if a project should be considered for a PILOT, and recommends that the City consider adopting a PILOT ordinance that provides standards for when and how the City will issue PILOTs. For LIHTC, Pontiac can collaborate with MSHDA to ensure their housing needs are reflected in the scoring items listed in the QAP. Additionally, the Housing Study provides more information on federal, regional, and state programs like LIHTC and how the City should utilize these programs to create a diversity of attainable housing.

Brownfield Tax Increment Financing (TIFs)

In 2023, Michigan amended the Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act of 1996 to include certain housing development activities as eligible for brownfield tax increment financing. This tool provides additional funding to help Michigan address its ongoing housing crisis. Brownfield tax increment financing works by 'freezing' property taxes at a specified base year and capturing incremental increases in property taxes received after this base year.

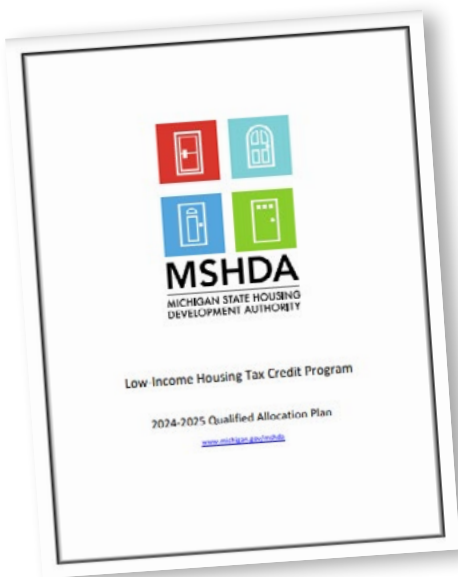
To utilize this funding tool for eligible housing development activities, Pontiac should continue to utilize the Oakland County BRA to submit a workplan to MSHDA that contains all the information required by MSHDA. MSHDA then reviews this workplan against local housing needs assessments and market studies, the Michigan Statewide Housing Plan and the region's adopted Regional Housing Plan, and other considerations.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) are offered through MSHDA and provide funding to eligible municipalities for projects that have an objective economic impact. In 2024, Pontiac released its draft Consolidation Plan that outlines activities for its CDBG funding. CDBG activities related to Neighborhoods and Housing include:

- » Downpayment assistance for first time homebuyers
- » Assisting low- and moderate-income Pontiac homeowners with home repair
- » Development of attainable, income-based housing
- » Development of vacant and commercial properties
- » Demolition of blighted properties

These activities will have a strong positive economic impact on Pontiac by increasing homeownership rates in the City, improving property values through home improvement and demolition of blighted structures, and providing new housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents.



The Michigan State Housing Development Authority's Qualified Allocation Plan weights different categories to award funding to income-based housing development construction.

Homeownership Support

Homeownership is often key for individuals and families in building generational wealth and stabilizing neighborhoods in the City. The following programs exist to support residents in becoming homeowners and maintaining their homes.

MSHDA Homeownership Support

Downpayment and Home Loan Assistance

Currently, MSHDA offers a number of resources aimed to support first-time and experienced homebuyers. The MSHDA MI Home Loan Program is available for first-time homebuyers throughout the State of Michigan and for repeat homebuyers in qualified areas. The sales price limit for a home is \$224,500, qualifying many homes in the City of Pontiac. A minimum credit score of 640 is required, highlighting the importance of credit repair and education programs in preparation for receiving this assistance.

Additionally, the MI 10K Downpayment Assistance Program provides an interest-free, up to \$10,000 loan state-wide for a down payment, closing costs, or pre-paid expenses. To qualify, homebuyers must take an approved homebuyer education course and combine the assistance with the MSHDA MI Home Loan. This is an especially great resource for first-time homebuyers, who often have difficulty securing enough savings for a down payment and associated costs.

Lastly, the City is finishing and creating a City-led program for downpayment assistance in Spring 2025. The City should promote this program to residents as an accessible way for homeownership support.

Home Repair Resources

Oakland County Home Improvement Program

This program assists qualified homeowners with up to \$23,000 of interest-free loans to make necessary home repairs such as barrier-free access and energy-efficiency upgrades. The program covers exclusively owner-occupied households, and the gross household income limits set by the federal government must be met in order to qualify. While there are no monthly payments to pay back the loan required as part of the program, the loan must be paid back in full when the home is sold.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

Considering the age of Pontiac's housing stock, both owner-occupied and renter-occupied households struggle to afford monthly utility costs. To help fund repair programs that can help households make their homes more energy-efficient, the City should explore LIHEAP, a Health and Human Services program which provides support to eligible low-income households for heating and cooling energy costs, bill payments, energy crisis interventions, weatherization and energy-related home repairs. While this program currently provides critical assistance for many families, funding is often limited. Funding is only provided during the winter season beginning October 1st, and has a service cap of \$500 for natural gas, wood, wood pellet, and electrical heating systems.

State Emergency Relief (SER)

This program through the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) provides funding for energy-related repairs, such as furnace repairs or replacements, with a lifetime maximum of \$4,000 per family. The program also assists with some non-energy related repairs on items such as hot water heaters and septic systems, with a lifetime maximum of \$1,500 of assistance per family.

Home Repair Program

The Pontiac Home Repair Program, funded from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), helps low-income homeowners in Pontiac improve the safety and quality of their homes. The Pontiac Home Repair Program is a grant program that offers up to \$25,000 per household for critical repairs like plumbing, HVAC, roofing, and waterproofing, prioritizing health and safety. Eligible residents must own and live in the home, meet income limits and be current on mortgage and property tax payments.

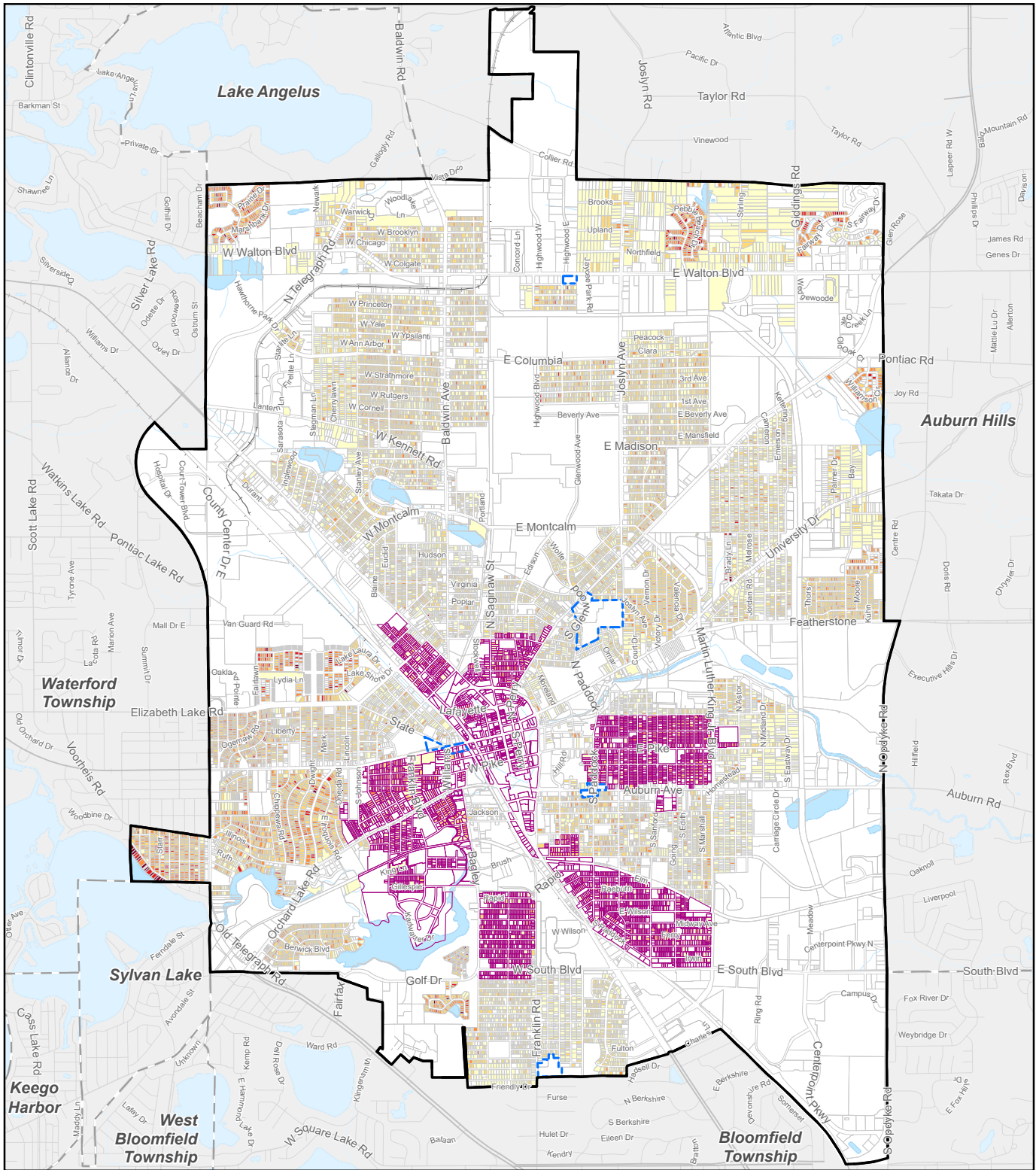
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Home Creation Opportunities Map

Throughout the community engagement conducted during this Master Planning process, multiple participants expressed a desire for an increase in homeownership opportunities for Pontiac residents. Additionally, data on housing tenure indicates that the majority of Pontiac households are renting. This represents an opportunity for the City to better support the housing needs of its residents and attract future residents through expanding opportunities for homeownership.

Map 4 provides areas of the City where expanding homeownership opportunities may be the most feasible.

The Home Creation Opportunities Map shows residential taxable values per acre, as well as the City's recently adopted Neighborhood Enterprise Zone. In areas where residential taxable values are low, the barrier to entry for homeownership is lower because sales prices for homes in these areas are typically lower. Additionally, for neighborhoods that are in the NEZ, there is a tax incentive to renovate the property you purchase, as explained earlier in this chapter. Over time, as homeowners utilize the NEZ to help renovate their properties, the residential taxable values of the property, and the neighborhood as a whole, will increase. This builds wealth within the neighborhood and helps the City increase its residential tax base over time. Finally, this map includes the areas encompassing the Neighborhood Mixed-Use Area Plans, outlined in blue. These mixed-use areas offer additional opportunities to add housing with neighborhood services, like grocery stores, pharmacies, retail stores, and other businesses offering daily neighborhood services. Chapter 3 describes these Neighborhood Mixed-Use Areas in greater detail and includes target housing counts for these areas.



Map 4. Home Creation Opportunities

City of Pontiac, Michigan

January 3, 2025 - Draft

2.3

Housing Action Plan

The ideas brought forth throughout Vision Pontiac should prepare the City to implement an innovative vision for housing and neighborhoods for the next 20 years. To address some of the housing barriers identified through the existing conditions analysis and community engagement discussed earlier in this chapter, City staff and McKenna developed the following Action Plan. The Action Plan consists of a big picture goal that provides a vision for the City's future in relation to housing, a metric to help the City measure success, objectives that dive deeper on how to achieve the Action Plan goal and metric, and strategies that connect to existing local, County, and State resources with urban planning best practices to provide actionable items the City can begin on immediately to provide high-quality and attainable housing for current and future residents.

Core Finding and Metric

The following core finding was developed based on the existing conditions analysis and feedback gathered during community engagement:

Core Finding: Pontiac needs not just affordable housing, but great housing for all income levels.

Success within housing and neighborhoods will be judged by the following 2040 metric:

Metric: Create 5,000 new homes or units with workforce housing design standards and high-quality materials.

Action Plan

To achieve the visions of the Pontiac community, the overarching goal statement for Neighborhoods and Housing will be approached through use of a strategic action plan, including a series of objectives and the action items that correlated to each objective. Accompanying each action item is a recommended timeline, which correlates with the priority level of each task. It consists of short-term (1-2 years), medium-term (3-5 years), and long-term (5+). To align with the City's goals, emerging trends, and input received from the public thus far, the goal, objectives, and action items have been created with the following priorities in mind:

- » Improve Pontiac's existing housing stock by addressing blight and enforcing building codes.
- » Promote ways to improve housing availability and choice, especially within neighborhoods, including homes which are both high-quality and attainably priced.
- » Expand and better-advertise services for local residents to address their wide range of housing needs.
- » Find ways to support Pontiac residents while also encouraging new residents to move to Pontiac.
- » Provide more ways for residents to build wealth and maintain their neighborhoods.

Goal Statement for Housing and Neighborhoods

Strengthen residential neighborhoods with infill housing and new amenities to be a place for everyone to thrive.

Objectives and Action Items Table

To accomplish the goal stated above, the following objectives and corresponding action items should be pursued:

OBJECTIVES AND ACTION ITEMS	TIMEFRAME	COLLABORATION
Objective A – Strengthen Pontiac’s existing housing stock and increase property values by eliminating blight, implementing critical repairs, and encouraging enforcing vacancy and site maintenance requirements, while also working to maintain affordability and attainability for renters and future homebuyers.		
1) Allow all Pontiac residents the “right of first refusal” for the auction of County-owned property and develop a policy for when the City will acquire County-owned property. Prioritize the present homeowner of the home at auction for the first opportunity to buy, followed by any other Pontiac resident who would like to develop the property.	Medium-term	X
2) Facilitate rehabilitation of existing single-family and owner-occupied multi-family homes, using public and private funding and incentives when available (e.g. CDBG, HUD, MSHDA, MEDC grants, Brownfield TIF).	Short- to Medium-term	X
3) Promote the rental inspection process to landlords and tenants so that it can be effectively utilized, and regularly release public reports to increase accountability. Limit the effects of single-room occupancies in neighborhoods.	Medium-term	
4) Encourage the development of high quality subsidized or publicly supported housing that can demonstrate a long-term strategy for success. Adopt standardized qualifications that the City can use to determine eligibility for incentives for publicly supported housing developments, such as TIFs, PILOTs, and other programs to ensure the community benefits of a project cover the financial costs of implementing these programs.	Short- to Medium-term	X
5) Provide public and private financing and incentives where available to assist homeowners and local rental property owners in need of home repair assistance, paired with requirements and/ or incentives to prevent or limit increasing rents from improved units. Establish criteria to ensure financing is being used by responsible landlords maintaining properties at a high standard.	Long-term	X
6) Continue to invest in staff and tools to support the enforcement of City Building and Property Maintenance Codes, Rental Registration and Inspection, the Vacant Property Maintenance Ordinance, and general blight removal standards.	Short-term	
Objective B – Embrace strategies to increase local homeownership and wealth building for Pontiac residents to find ways to keep people and resources rooted to the neighborhoods.		
1) Partner with local organizations to provide education and access to funding for the process of buying a home or purchasing a rental property and maintaining that property for the first time, in order to increase opportunities for wealth building by Pontiac residents.	Short-term	X
2) Explore the feasibility of rent-to-own programs, or incentivize landlords who offer these programs, to provide a direct avenue from renter to homeowner.	Medium-term	
3) Utilize and promote the Neighborhood Enterprise Zone (NEZ) passed in August 2024 to encourage home improvement in select areas of the City, and to provide tax abatements for making improvements to owner-occupied properties.	Short- to Medium-term	
4) Allow and minimize the permitting process for building an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU), tiny home communities, as well as other creative uses of land that allow residents to invest and grow in their community while fitting within a residential context, such as live-work spaces, unit conversions, and home occupations.	Long-term	
5) Identify ways for the City to streamline the development process for homeowners to improve their properties.	Short-term	
6) Provide free classes for Pontiac residents about homeownership and credit repair, as well as basic home maintenance and advice for current homeowners.	Short- to Medium-term	X

OBJECTIVES AND ACTION ITEMS	TIMEFRAME	COLLABORATION
Objective C – Facilitate the construction of a wide variety of housing options to fill the gaps in Pontiac’s housing market and provide quality, attainable, and affordable housing options to residents with a range of interests, demands, and needs.		
1) Promote and educate developers as well as the public about aging-in-place and universal design standards.	Short-term	X
2) Develop standards to allow for workforce housing in neighborhoods and throughout the City, at scales that are context-appropriate based on the values laid out in the Future Land Use plan.	Short- to Medium-term	
3) Encourage the development of new housing developments and communities intended to support those 55-and-up who are interested in downsizing, to increase availability of family homes for new residents.	Medium-term	X
4) Support and allow for the creation of alternative homeownership and rental models, including low-equity cooperatives and community land trusts.	Medium-term	X
5) Create a program to utilize City- and County- Owned lots for the development of attainable housing.	Short- to Long-term, Ongoing	X
6) Continue to support and add Spanish-language documentation for easier access to Building Permits and related development material.	Short-term	
Objective D – Ensure that residential redevelopment and new infill developments both complement and enhance the character of the existing neighborhoods and incorporate quality infrastructure and construction techniques, including the most recent stormwater regulations, to have a positive effect on property values.		
1) Develop pre-approved building plans with expedited approval processes for a range of housing types that encourage compatible, attractive infill housing development in the City’s neighborhoods.	Medium-term	
2) Update the City’s stormwater regulations to ensure properties are managing stormwater onsite and utilizing low impact development standards.	Medium-term	
3) Explore incentives and programs to promote the use of small-scale onsite stormwater management to encourage resiliency and property maintenance.	Medium-term	
4) Develop a permitting process for utilizing modular home construction to establish a quicker process to create high quality infill housing and limit disruption of neighboring properties.	Medium-term	
5) Encourage new construction of workforce housing, rather than the conversion of existing large single-family homes into multi-unit dwellings to preserve large single-family homes for larger or growing households.	Short-term	X
6) Minimize the effects of industrial and high-intensity commercial development on the City’s neighborhoods.	Long-term	
Objective E – Provide community spaces and resources throughout neighborhoods in order to reach residents, provide resources and services, and facilitate community building, as well as to provide for continued maintenance and upkeep.		
1) Created Neighborhood Hubs through the repurposing of existing obsolete school buildings and other structures, in order to provide services to youth, seniors, and other resident groups, within a 15-minute walk of every home in Pontiac. These spaces would offer active indoor recreation, educational programming, and access to information regarding available services.	Medium-term	X
2) Complete a 2025 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update, to ensure eligibility for MDNR grant funding.	Medium-term	
3) Begin repairing and redeveloping existing parks that have not been upkeep over the last 15 years often due to Emergency Management to support neighborhoods.	Short-term	X
4) Complete funding and construct McCarroll as a Youth Recreation Center.	Long-term	X
5) Partner with local schools and service providers to integrate opportunities for youth to participate in local community impact work.	Short- to Medium-term	X

OBJECTIVES AND ACTION ITEMS	TIMEFRAME	COLLABORATION
Objective F – Improve neighborhood infrastructure by incorporating updated stormwater regulations and improving lighting, roads, transportation, green spaces, and utilities to promote a better quality of life and heightened community resilience.		
1) Remove all lead service lines within the City of Pontiac’s water utility system.	Ongoing	
2) Allow the development of community solar and wind projects that can reduce or eliminate electricity costs for residents.	Medium- to Long-term	
3) Remove zoning barriers to rooftop solar and other green infrastructure on residential properties as part of the establishing a new Zoning Ordinance.	Short-term	
4) Provide public and private support for weatherization and the installation of solar and other green infrastructure that improve energy efficiency, reduce long-term costs, and enhances sustainability and resiliency.	Medium-term	X
5) Partner with Oakland County, the Water Resource Commission, the Clinton River Watershed Council, or other local groups to establish a RainSmart Rebate program for Pontiac residents.	Medium-term	X
Objective G – Provide for healthy living in Pontiac’s neighborhoods through improved air quality, tree cover, walkability, among additional improvements to support the health and wellbeing of residents.		
1) Conduct a vulnerability study of Pontiac’s housing stock and population to prepare for extreme heat, freezing, and other weather events, and prioritize locations to establish emergency shelters and provide additional support.	Short-term	
2) Educate homeowners and residential developers on the benefits of energy efficient construction and renovation strategies, such as Passive Housing and Zero Energy Ready Homes, that can help property owners reduce long-term utility costs and adapt housing to a changing climate.	Long-term	
3) Partner with the County or a local organization to establish a “Free Tree” public tree planting program to expand the City’s tree canopy in the neighborhoods.	Medium-term	X
4) Maintain sidewalks and promote walkable connections between neighborhoods and major transit corridors.	Short- to Medium-term	
5) Identify strategies and partnerships with the Clinton River Watershed Council and other agencies to improve the public’s knowledge of, relationship to, and access to the Clinton River.	Short- to Medium-term	X
6) Evaluate barriers to providing community health resources near neighborhoods and encourage mixed-use developments that incorporate health uses.	Medium-term	
7) Secure annual funding for Neighborhood Beautification Program to support adding signage and landscaping in strategic locations.	Short- to Medium-term	X



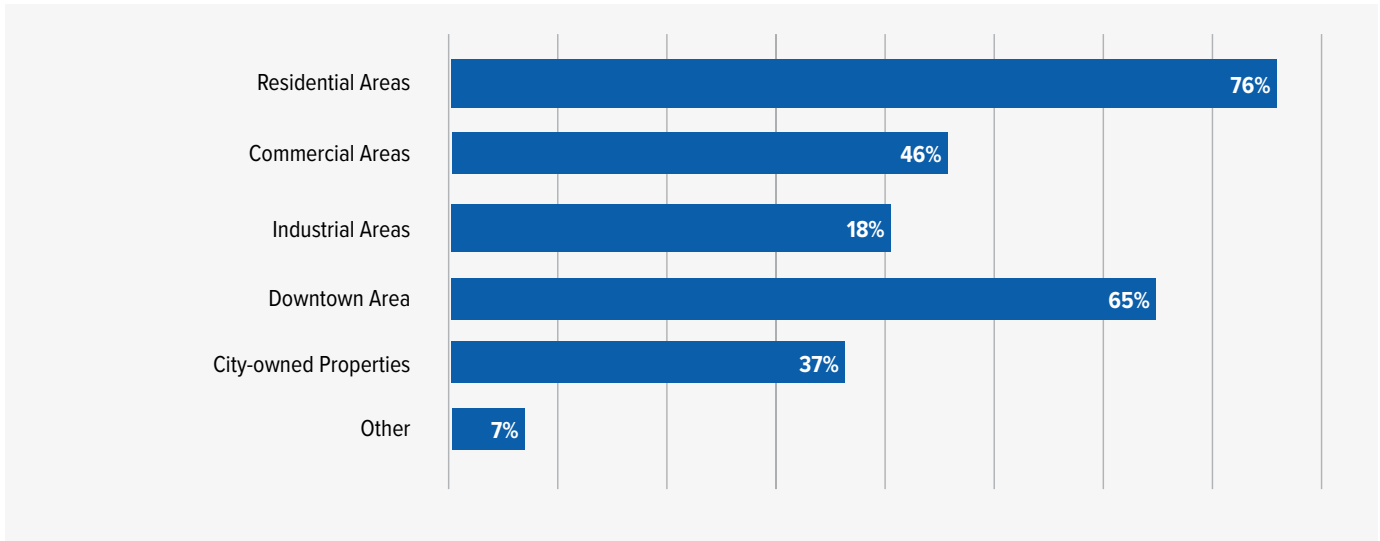
Chapter 3.

Development & Redevelopment

Pontiac deserves spaces and places that reflect the best characteristics of its people: spirited, uplifting, innovative, and resilient. Development and redevelopment is about translating a community's priorities into design, land use policies, and equitable reinvestment to make those spaces and places a reality.

This chapter lays the groundwork for City-wide revitalization within commercial corridors, public spaces, and neighborhoods, using ideas and strategies informed directly by City staff and the people of Pontiac.

Figure 8. In what areas should the City focus investment and new construction? (Select as many as desired)



What concerns do you have regarding development in Pontiac?

Downtown. The #1 response from residents across the community survey and public engagement events includes a desire to see Downtown Pontiac built up as a center of business, culture, and life for the City. Residents would like to see vacant buildings filled and more businesses and activity throughout the area. Wherever possible, residents want historic structures and forms to be preserved, but building safety and attractiveness are also of high concern.

Phoenix Center. Many residents also commented that they would like to see the Phoenix Center redeveloped. This was once a major destination that brought visitors to Pontiac on a regular basis. Oakland County is in the process of redeveloping this site as its new County headquarters, with demolition set to begin in January of 2025. This development will result in hundreds more employees and visitors coming to Downtown Pontiac every day.

Parks and Public Buildings, Youth Facilities.

A range of comments centered on the redevelopment of parks, redevelopment of parks, as well as other facilities for young people. While local schools offer some activities and after-school programming for young people, many respondents were concerned that there has not been enough investment in facilities and programming that provides a safe, indoor space for young people to be in community.

Vacant School Buildings. Many of Pontiac's public schools, which once served as major anchoring points for each neighborhood, have been closed over the years, leaving behind empty buildings. Vacant school buildings were frequently mentioned as places that people want to see refurbished or redeveloped. Most people were supportive of preserving original school buildings whenever feasible. These spaces pose an opportunity for the provision of additional public spaces and amenities. The redevelopment of these vacant buildings should provide a beneficial use or service that makes sense within the neighborhood's context.

Vacant Properties FAQ

Question:
Who decides what happens to a vacant property?

What is legally allowed to be built on a property is based on:

1. The **current zoning district** of a property, which lays out what uses are immediately permitted to be built there.
2. The **Future Land Use Plan**, which lays out potential future uses that might not be permitted within the current zoning district, depending on factors such as adjacent uses, site size, and more. This is directly influenced by the input received through the Master Plan Engagement Process.
3. The **current property owner's interests and limitations**, which will influence how a site will inevitably be developed. An owner's perception of the best way to develop a property for a return on investment, as well as the owner's willingness to invest further, will guide what gets built.

Planning & Zoning Division

Question:
What is the City doing to remediate blighted, vacant, and abandoned properties?

1. **Locating Violations.** Code Enforcement Officers are dispatched to respond to complaints. These officers are also assigned Districts to patrol and locate property maintenance code violations.
2. **Contacting Property Owners.** When an Officer witnesses a potential code violation, they will take a picture and attempt to speak with someone on the site about the issue. They will also send an Official Warning Notice letter to the property owner, which will outline what the problem is and how long the owner has to correct the problem. The Officer will follow up and determine if the issue has been corrected. If it has not, they will issue a citation.
3. **Issuing Tickets.** Tickets may be written for each day the offense is not corrected (Offense #1 = \$100; Offense #2 = \$300; Offense #3 and Beyond = \$500). An appearance at the 50th District Court will be required if the citation is not resolved.

Code Enforcement Division

3.2

Supporting Quality Development and Redevelopment

City / County Land Transfer Guidelines

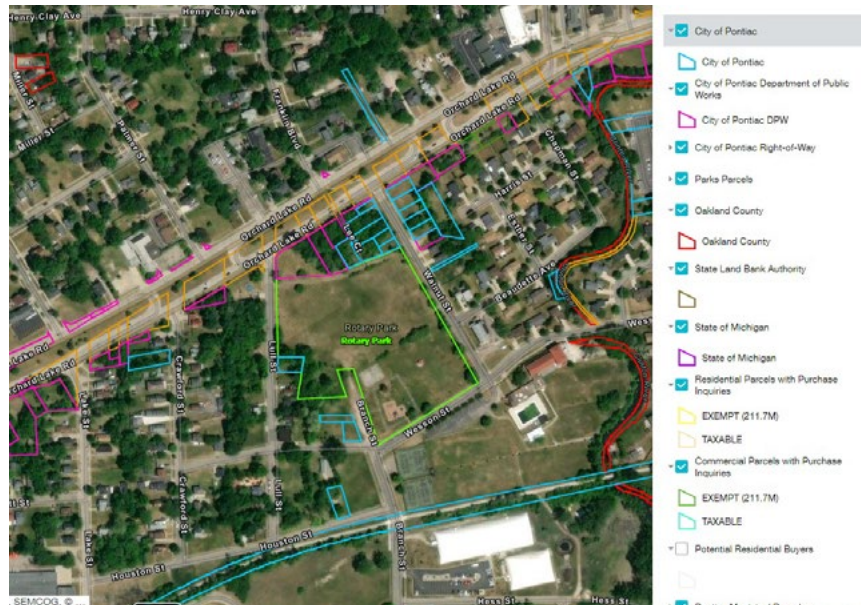
The City and County own hundreds of vacant or abandoned properties. These properties create the perfect opportunity to support equitable wealth building for City residents, activate disused properties, and stabilize neighborhoods. However, local governments have limited control over how properties can be developed, unless they are publicly owned.

Throughout the engagement process, publicly-owned properties—and who gets to buy them—were a major point of discussion. When a property is foreclosed on and seized by the City or County, the government has some ability to influence how this land is developed or who can purchase the property. By creating Transfer Guidelines that reinforce the objectives of the Master Plan, the City can support local wealth-building and work to reduce displacement.

Existing Efforts

Pontiac's Community Development Department accepts applications for the purchase of Residential and Commercial Redevelopment Lots. Further, the Vacant Side Lot purchase program allows residents to purchase vacant lots directly adjacent to their residence. Publicly-owned properties are visible on an interactive map, which allows developers to identify potential redevelopment opportunities in partnership with the City.

On the following page, we outline recommended priorities for land transfer opportunities based on feedback received during the public engagement process and discussion with local stakeholders.



A portion of the City's interactive map, *Government-Owned Properties in Pontiac*, available on the Community Development Department's webpage.

Recommended Land Transfer Priorities

Evaluation of all properties will be influenced by the context of the site, and different, tailored Transfer Guidelines should be applied to properties. The City of Pontiac's Real Estate Disposition Policy sets eligibility criteria for prospective purchasers of city-owned properties for six different types of lots. In the implementation of this policy, the overall context of the site and the status of surrounding properties may also impact decisions on the sale of publicly-owned properties. The following table outlines important considerations for vacant properties in residential areas based on the size of the property, which will impact how it can be developed.

PRIORITIES FOR PUBLICLY OWNED LAND	
Vacant Neighborhood Properties – Vacant properties within neighborhoods have great potential to generate wealth for City residents. Wherever possible, existing City of Pontiac residents should have priority for the purchase of publicly-owned property.	
Large Lots, Contiguous Parcels	Locations that feature a concentration of vacant, publicly-owned parcels offer a unique opportunity to provide workforce. The City may consider applications to purchase multiple properties for the development of a large workforce housing development, when all properties are already vacant and empty. Ideally, contiguous small vacant parcels should be reserved for consolidation into larger developments. RFPs should seek experienced developers for 20 to 30 units per acre developments, based on the size of the property and the appropriate context for the site.
Medium Lots	Standard or slightly larger vacant properties should be developed between 12 and 20 dwelling units per acre, based on the size of the property and surrounding character.
Small, Non-Contiguous Lots	Based on the context of the property in question, different solutions may be appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Wealth Building & Revitalization. Publicly-owned properties which remain vacant over an extended period of time should be considered for Vacant Lot Revitalization. The City should target small-scale developers or residents seeking land to build their own homes. Development agreements should require construction within 2 years of purchase in order to prevent speculation and to ensure that investment is immediately employed. Pre-approved site plans may be an effective tool to create a more accessible process. City residents who seek to occupy the homes should have highest preference, followed by those who seek to maintain ownership as a rental property, and later followed by all other interested buyers. » Side Lot Program. Neighbors directly adjacent to a vacant lot should have the right of first refusal if they are willing to commit to utilize the lot to add capacity for more housing units, or to otherwise add significant value to the property. The side lot program should activate side lots for more productive uses, not just grant property owners additional yard space. For example, on single-family properties, side lots can be utilized to install an ADU or a duplex addition, while an existing quadplex could use a new side yard to provide shared garden space for residents or incorporate additional parking.

Tax Incentive Districts

Tax Incentive Districts reduce or eliminate property taxes for specific types of development or redevelopment projects over a specified period of time. The City utilizes these Districts to reduce costs for businesses and to encourage them to operate in Pontiac. Tax Incentive Districts can be a great tool for initiating investment in new construction, but they are limited in their ability to support long-term growth. This model assumes that the benefits provided by businesses which receive the tax abatements are greater than the potential lost tax revenue. However, once significant growth is achieved, the City should work closely with businesses to ensure that they are prepared for their tax rates to return to their “normal” level so that they stay in the City after incentives lapse.

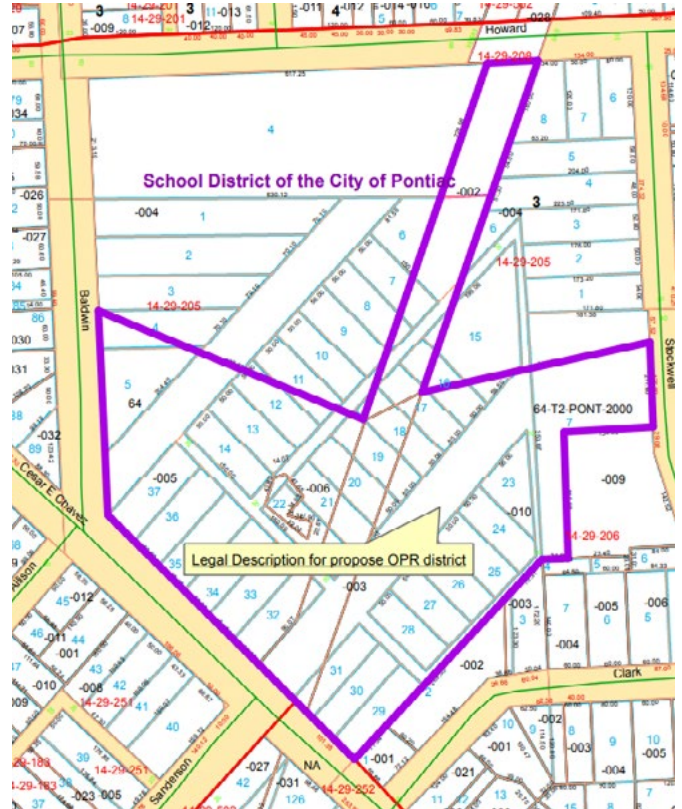
Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act (OPRA) District

This incentive program encourages the significant rehabilitation of commercial facilities that are contaminated, blighted, or functionally obsolete; with the goal of transforming them into new commercial and mixed-use projects. This program offers a tax abatement to eligible projects that essentially freezes the taxable value of a facility for up to 12 years, reducing early operating costs. The figures below show the boundaries for the two OPRA districts in the City.



Industrial Development District (IDD)

Similar to OPRA, the Industrial Property Tax Abatement is available in IDs established by the City for qualifying development projects. This program is designed to incentivize manufacturers to build new plants, expand existing plants, renovate aging plants, add new machinery and equipment, or support “high-technology activity”, according to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). This program has existed since 1974, and Pontiac’s first IDD was established in 1977. There are now a total of 16 established IDs in the City.



Sources: Industrial Property Tax Abatement Fact Sheet. Michigan Economic Development Corporation, 2018. Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act Fact Sheet. Michigan Economic Development Corporation, 2023.

Funding Strategies

Pontiac can utilize a wide range of tools to raise the funds necessary to invest in infrastructure and provide grants, incentives, and programming to support economic development within the City. The following strategies can be used to help finance efforts to further the goals of the master plan without increasing local property taxes.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and Downtown Development Authority (DDA)

TIF Districts allow the City to capture year-to-year growth in property values (and therefore, property taxes) in a designated District. TIF allows municipalities to direct this captured revenue to engage in specific economic development programs without raising local property taxes. Simply stated, TIF Districts are all about growth in tax revenue. When utilizing a TIF District, the City's General Fund still receives the same amount of tax revenue as before the District was created. The only change is that the anticipated growth or increase in from the growth in property values within the District will be directed toward the financing of a targeted project.

DDA and TIF

The 1975 Downtown Development Authority Act authorized the use of TIF to correct and prevent the deterioration of downtown areas in the State of Michigan. TIF allows DDAs to be self-sustaining: as a DDA invests in the District, property values increase above the baseline value (usually the value at the time the District was established). As property values increase over time, the DDA captures more funding and is able to do more projects. Meanwhile, the City continues to collect the same amount of tax revenue as they were prior to initiating the District.

Should Pontiac Establish a DDA?

While the City does not currently have a DDA, there are multiple organizations and associations dedicated to advocating for investment and improvements to Downtown Pontiac.

In Favor:

- » If successful, a DDA would provide a self-sustaining source of revenue for improvements to Downtown Pontiac.
- » Adjustments can be made to redirect a portion of captured revenues back into the City's General Fund, so that some of the new growth revenues continue to support the City as a whole.
- » The DDA structure creates a formal public body that is dedicated to the improvement of the Downtown Area.

Against:

- » The effectiveness of TIF may be reduced in areas that are also designated as OPRA districts, like Downtown Pontiac, where property tax revenues are already lower.
- » TIF Districts capture tax revenues that could be directed into the General Fund.
- » There are existing non-profit and private groups which are already advocating for Downtown Pontiac.

Conclusion

A Downtown Development Authority could provide a new avenue to fund public projects that serve to revitalize Pontiac's Downtown. While there are existing groups that work to advocate for Downtown investment, there is no public source of funding that is exclusively dedicated to these efforts. Additionally, DDAs have access to grants and other programming from the State of Michigan that other groups might not, and also have higher requirements for public transparency and accountability. However, the financial tools used by DDAs might be in conflict with existing Tax Incentive Districts being utilized in Downtown Pontiac at this time.

3.3

Neighborhood Mixed-Use Area Plans

The Neighborhood Mixed Use Area Plans illustrate that the City's efforts to build capacity, improve services, and improve the tax base go hand-in-hand with efforts to provide more and better housing opportunities for Pontiac's current and future residents. These plans represent the type of development that is encouraged in the City's Neighborhood Mixed Use Future Land Use Classification.

This analysis focuses on the potential number of homes developed, number of people served, and overall tax benefits resulting from these proposed Neighborhood Mixed Use Area Plans. All of the focus areas were discussed with members of the public as well as City staff. All of the areas have clusters of vacant publicly-owned properties, vacant privately-owned properties, and are proximate to neighborhoods that could benefit from new commercial services.

The summary table below shows that these Neighborhood Mixed Use Areas have the potential to result in more than \$6 million in new annual tax revenue for the City, including 1,224 new homes for 3,097 people, and 59 new small businesses offering approximately 25 new jobs.

Table 5: City-wide Neighborhood Mixed Use Area Summary

NEIGHBORHOOD MIXED USE AREAS	HOMES / BUSINESSES	PEOPLE SERVED	TAX BENEFIT
Residential Homes, 2.53 per unit	1,224	3,097	\$14,625,220
Commercial/Civic Spaces, 5.5 jobs per space	59	325	\$1,670,777
Total	1,750	3,421	\$16,295,997

In addition to the plans on the following pages, there are correlating infrastructure improvements discussed in section 5.3: Commercial Corridors Redevelopment, for each of these identified areas. Exhibits 1a through 6a show potential cross sections and building massing diagrams that illustrate corridor reconfiguration and show how each of these areas can be holistically revitalized.



Auburn and Paddock

The four corners at Auburn and Paddock represent approximately 2 acres of redevelopment potential, with approximately half of an acre on each corner. The two southern corners are currently vacant. The northwest corner is a two-story mixed use building with first floor retail, and the northeast corner is a retail strip center that is 100% occupied. The proposed redevelopment concept integrates middle housing opportunities on the south side of Auburn and retains and expands on the existing building footprints on the north side to create an active and vibrant neighborhood center.

The plan proposes expanding the mixed use building frontage on the northwest corner and adding three small bungalow units on the west side of Paddock. On the northeast corner, the retail center is shown with an expansion toward Auburn to create a forecourt (or courtyard) frontage. This site is proposed to integrate a shared parking area with the businesses to the east. The southwest corner is designed to create townhomes, a duplex and nine bungalow court units. This site also features a liner retail building which could offer small suites to start-up retail tenants and a space for a neighborhood grocer or similar neighborhood service-oriented retail. The southwest corner is a mixed use apartment building which could also provide additional first floor commercial tenant spaces or child care.

Finally, the Plan shows a lane reduction from four lanes to three lanes on Auburn Road, which will improve pedestrian safety and create more local access to businesses along the corridor. The speed limit on Auburn road is currently 35 miles per hour, and while the SEMCOG traffic counts are in need of updating, the 2004 count west of Opdyke was 4,851 AADT (Annual Average Daily Traffic), well under industry best practices for consideration of a four lane to three lane conversion. Reducing the lanes on Auburn will create opportunities to formalize on street parking, create bump-outs, add street trees, improve crossings, and create small medians to slow traffic and provide pedestrian refuge areas at key intersections, like the crossing at Paddock Street.

The summary table below shows that the Auburn and Paddock Neighborhood Mixed Use Area would result in more than \$630,000 in new annual tax revenue for the City, including 39 new homes for 99 people, and 6 new small businesses offering approximately 33 new jobs.

Table 6: Auburn and Paddock Neighborhood Mixed Use Area Summary

AUBURN AND PADDOCK	HOMES / BUSINESSES	PEOPLE SERVED	TAX BENEFIT
Residential Homes, 2.53 per unit	39	99	\$455,569
Commercial/Civic Spaces, 5.5 jobs per space	6	33	\$179,036
Total	45	132	\$634,694

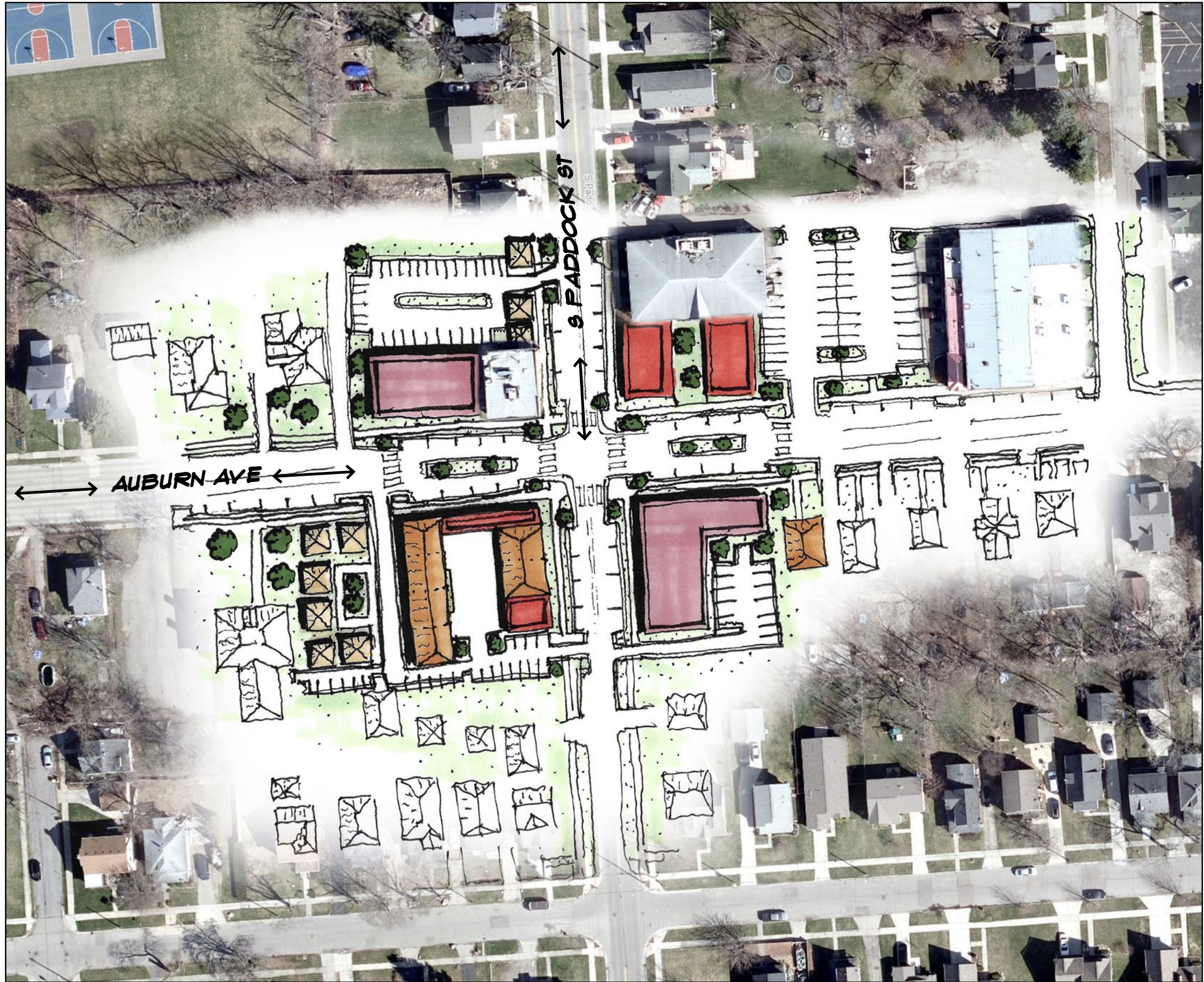


Exhibit 1. Auburn Boulevard & Paddock Avenue

City of Pontiac, Michigan

Program Details

BUILDING TYPE	NO OF BUILDINGS	NO OF DWELLING UNITS
Duplexes	1	2
Bungalow Court	9	9
Townhouses	1	4
ADUs	–	–
Mixed Use	2	–
» Residential	2 Floors	24 Units
» Commercial	1 Floor	3 Spaces
Apartments	–	–
Civic	–	–
Commercial / Retail	3	3

Note: Dwelling units are calculated as 900 sq. ft. each.

Total new commercial/retail space proposed here stands at 16,200 sq. ft. across 6 buildings.

LEGEND

- Commercial/Retail
- Multi-Family Residential
- Bungalow Court Residential
- Mixed Use Buildings



Basemap Source: Michigan Geographic Framework, 2017.
Data Source: City of Kalamazoo, 2018, McKenna, 2018

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Franklin Elementary School Site

The Franklin Elementary School site, located on the southern edge of Pontiac, is surrounded by major residential developments, with Jefferson Middle School situated just two blocks to the west. The site encompasses approximately 8.5 acres, with its southern boundary marking the jurisdictional divide between Pontiac and Bloomfield Township.

The development concept builds upon the residential character of the area by incorporating a mix of housing types on interior blocks, and also introduces commercial space in mixed-use buildings along Franklin Road. The plan realigns Fern Avenue and Fern Street to create an east-to-west connection, forming a cohesive block structure extending from Franklin Road to Highland Avenue. The commercial uses on Franklin Road would provide additional retail and services that could be accessed safely with or without a vehicle.

The footprint of the former elementary school is repurposed for a low-rise, two-story apartment building featuring 60 units. Six townhome structures, comprised of a total of 22 units, are strategically placed near existing houses and at key entry points to the site. Three, three-story mixed-use buildings provide 18 more apartment units – these spaces could alternatively be used for more commercial space, depending on demand. A central green space is included to serve as a communal gathering area for residents. These homes would have a comfortable, neighborhood feel while still being conveniently located for people who work Downtown as well as those who need to access major commuting routes.

Approximately 10,800 square feet of commercial space is proposed across 3 buildings, which could support as many as six businesses – though the space could also accommodate fewer larger businesses, depending potential tenants. The neighborhood scale of the businesses would be a stark and welcoming contrast to the auto-oriented development along Telegraph Road, less than half a mile away. These storefronts would also be highly visible to anyone driving into the City via this major route, while also providing businesses and services to nearby residents. These buildings should have main entrances and signage oriented toward Franklin Street to provide visibility from the roadway and encourage pedestrian access. Separated off-street parking for commercial users would reduce pressures on parking availability and through-traffic in the abutting residential area.

South of the newly aligned Fern Avenue, the development incorporates 25 cottage court homes, each designed with pocket open spaces to foster a single-family community environment. This approach balances affordability with a sense of ownership, offering a more accessible alternative to traditional single-family homes.

The summary table below shows that the Franklin Elementary Neighborhood Mixed Use Area would result in more than \$1.3 million in new annual tax revenue for the City, including 107 new homes with 271 people living in them and 15 new businesses with approximately 83 new jobs.

Table 7: Franklin Elementary Neighborhood Mixed Use Area Summary

FRANKLIN ELEMENTARY SITE	HOMES / BUSINESSES	PEOPLE SERVED	TAX BENEFIT
Residential Homes, 2.53 per unit	125	317	\$ 1,250,141
Commercial/Civic Spaces, 5.5 jobs per space	6	33	\$ 119,357
Total	131	350	\$ 1,369,498

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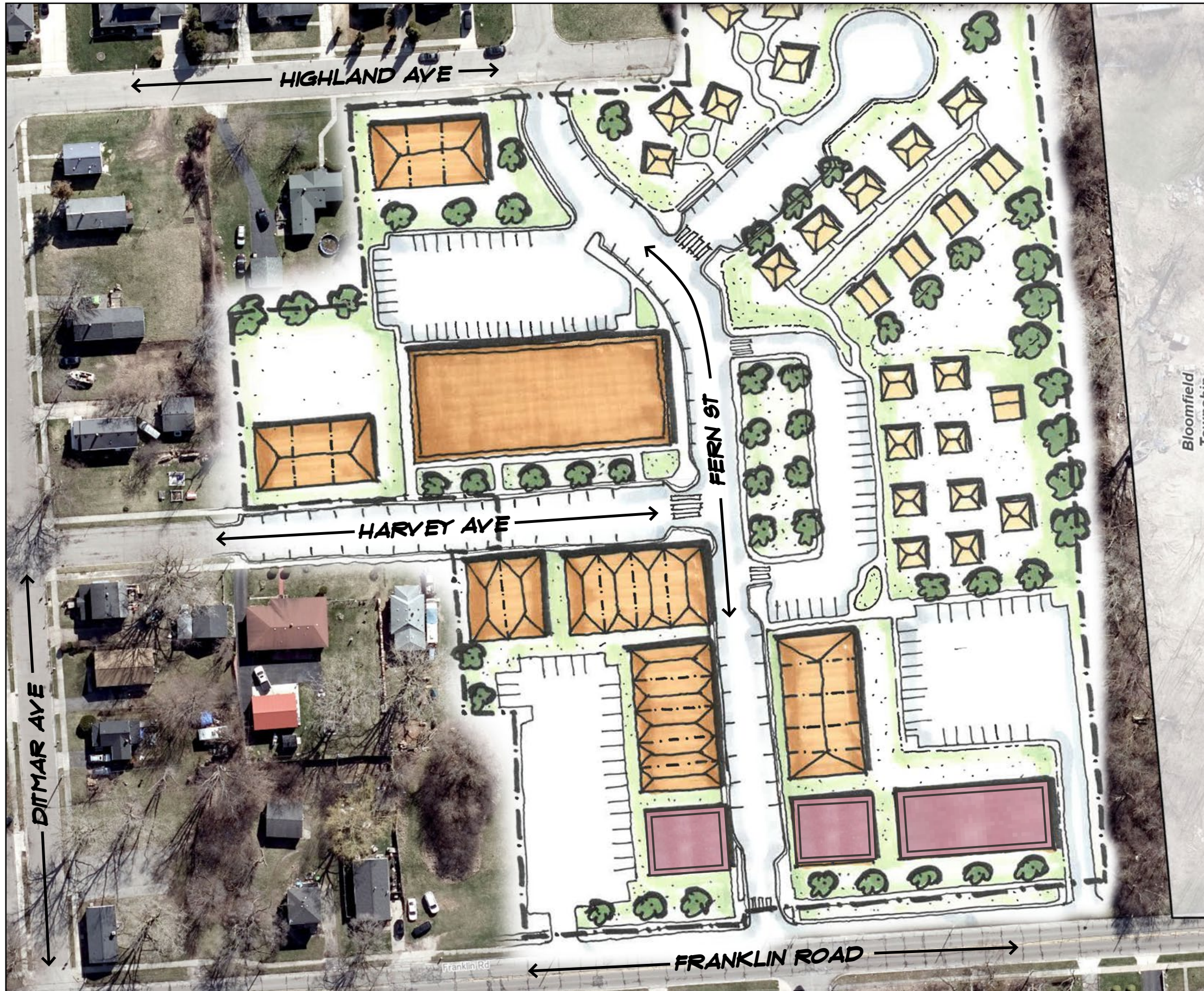


Exhibit 2. Franklin Elementary School Site

City of Pontiac, Michigan

Program Details

BUILDING TYPE	NO OF BUILDINGS	NO OF DWELLING UNITS
Duplexes	–	–
Bungalow Court	25	25
Townhouses	6	22
ADUs	–	–
Mixed Use	3	18
» Residential	2 Floors	18 Units
» Commercial	1 Floor	6 Units
Apartments	1	60
Civic	1	–
Commercial / Retail	1	–

Note: Dwelling units are calculated as 900 sq. ft. each.

Total commercial/retail development proposed here stands at 10,800 sq. ft. across 3 buildings.

LEGEND

- Multi-Family Residential
- Apartment Buildings
- Bungalow Courts
- Mixed Use Buildings



*Basemap Source: Michigan Geographic Framework, 2017.
Data Source: City of Kalamazoo, 2018, McKenna, 2018*

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Glenwood Plaza

Formerly a shopping center built in 1961, this approximately 26 acre site in the heart of Pontiac is now vacant and classified as a greyfield. The proposed redevelopment concept integrates the site into the City's existing road network, connecting to Omar Street on the south and Grandview Boulevard and Delco Street on the east.

In response to the City's housing needs and revitalization goals, the Plan designates a high-intensity development zone along the commercially fronted portion of Perry Street. This area will feature six mixed use buildings, four apartment-style buildings, one civic building, and one commercial/retail building, collectively providing 365 residential units and approximately 58,000 square feet of retail and commercial space.

The southern and eastern edges of the site transition into the existing residential fabric of the surrounding neighborhood, but with a denser and more varied housing mix. Proposed residential types include 16 duplexes, 300 bungalow court homes, 21 townhouse buildings, and 66 accessory dwelling units, amounting to approximately 488 additional residential units.

A central public green space is also incorporated into the plan, serving as a key amenity for the neighborhood that fosters health, well-being, and community cohesion.

The summary table below shows that the proposed Glenwood Plaza neighborhood mixed-use area plan would result in more than \$11.5 million in new annual tax revenue for the City, including 854 new homes with 2,161 people living in them, and 28 new businesses with approximately 154 new jobs.

Table 8: Glenwood Plaza Neighborhood Mixed Use Area Summary

GLENWOOD PLAZA	HOMES / BUSINESSES	PEOPLE SERVED	TAX BENEFIT
Residential Homes, 2.53 per unit	854	2,161	\$10,886,481
Commercial/Civic Spaces, 5.5 jobs per space	28	154	\$707,301
Total	882	2,315	\$11,593,782

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Exhibit 3. Glenwood Plaza Site

City of Pontiac, Michigan

Program Details

BUILDING TYPE	NO OF BUILDINGS	NO OF DWELLING UNITS
Duplexes	16	32
Bungalow Court	302	306
Townhouses	21	84
ADUs	66	66
Mixed Use	6	125
» Residential	2 Floors	125 Units
» Commercial	1 Floor	26 Spaces
Apartments	6	240
Civic	1	-
Commercial / Retail	1	-

Note: Dwelling units are calculated as 900 sq. ft. each

Total commercial/retail developments proposed here stand at a total of 58,000 sq. ft. across 6 mixed use buildings and 1 commercial building.

LEGEND

- Commercial/Retail
- Multi-Family Residential
- Duplexes
- Apartment Buildings
- Civic Use Buildings
- Mixed Use Buildings



Basemap Source: Michigan Geographic Framework, 2017.
Data Source: City of Kalamazoo, 2018, McKenna, 2018



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Corners of Huron and State Street

The site is located along Huron Street (M-59), a major six-lane thoroughfare with a center turn lane. The parcels in question are situated at the northwest and southeast corners of the intersection of Huron Street and State Street. The southeast lot is 1.6 acres and the northeast area is approximately 2 acres.

The northwest parcel is predominantly characterized by industrial uses, with some religious and residential uses in the vicinity. The presence of a construction company on this triangular-shaped site makes it unsuitable for low-rise, single-family residential development. Instead, the concept proposes a more vertical approach with a four-story mixed use building. This building would feature vibrant public spaces at the intersection, four ground-floor retail/commercial units, and 50 residential units on the upper floors. Additionally, a two-story apartment building located behind the mixed use structure would provide an additional 30 residential units. Vehicular access to these developments would be via State Street, with pedestrian access available from both State and Huron Streets.

The southeast parcel is designed to complement the surrounding residential fabric. The proposal includes 10 townhomes with front access along Clinton Street. At the end of the street, adjacent to the rail lines, a two-story apartment building is proposed, offering 30 additional residential units.

The summary table below shows that the Huron and State Neighborhood Mixed Use Area would result in more than \$1.1 million in new annual tax revenue for the City, including 134 new homes for 347 people, and 4 new businesses offering approximately 22 new jobs.

Table 9: Huron and State Neighborhood Mixed Use Area Summary

HURON AND STATE	HOMES / BUSINESSES	PEOPLE SERVED	TAX BENEFIT
Residential Homes, 2.53 per unit	134	347	\$1,016,470
Commercial/Civic Spaces, 5.5 jobs per space	4	22	\$116,042
Total	141	369	\$1,132,511

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Exhibit 4. W. Huron Street and State Street

City of Pontiac, Michigan

Program Details

BUILDING TYPE	NO OF BUILDINGS	NO OF DWELLING UNITS
Fourplex	–	–
Bungalow Court	–	–
Townhouses	2	10
ADUs	–	–
Mixed Use	3	77
» Residential	3 and 4 Floors	50 Units
» Commercial	1 Floor	4 Spaces
Apartments	2	77
Civic	–	–
Commercial / Retail	1	–

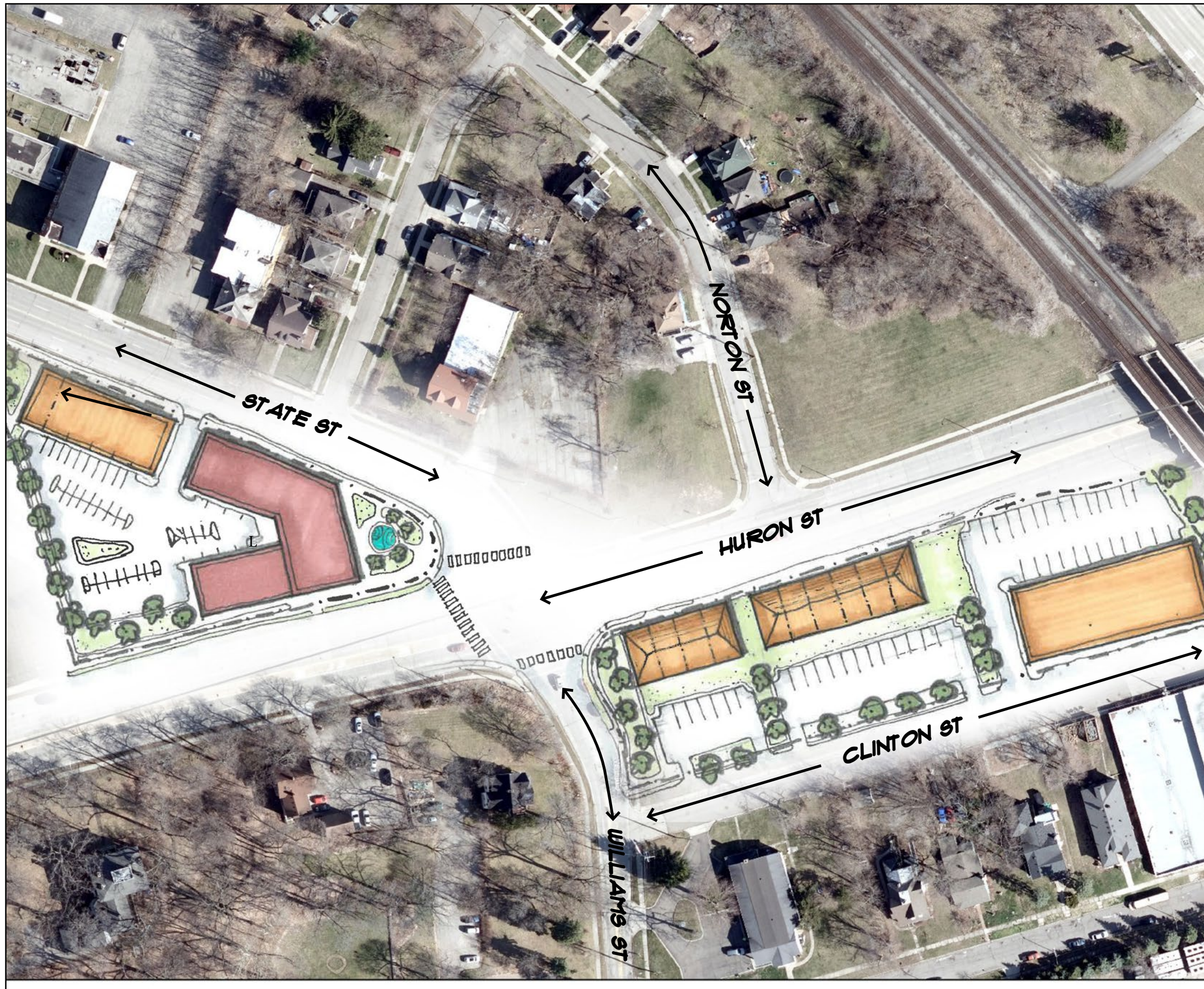
*Note: Dwelling units are calculated as 900 sq. ft. each
Total commercial/retail developments proposed here stand at a total of 8,750 sq. ft. across 1 mixed use building.*

LEGEND

- Multi-Family Residential
- Apartment Buildings
- Mixed Use Buildings



*Basemap Source: Michigan Geographic Framework, 2017.
Data Source: City of Kalamazoo, 2018, McKenna, 2018*



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350 E Walton Boulevard

Located on the east side of the City along Walton Boulevard, the 2.1 acre site is set within a predominantly residential area, with some adjacent commercial buildings. The site appears to be originally platted as a commercial frontage lot in the Glenwood Estates plat. The proposed development is envisioned as an urban activator designed to revitalize the area by leveraging nearby amenities to promote walkability, vibrancy, and attainable housing options.

Design Option 1

This concept introduces a retail strip facing Walton Boulevard, with limited parking space located behind the buildings, encouraging the use of on-street parking along interior streets. Small mixed use buildings are proposed to front Lehigh Avenue, aimed at activating this internal street with local businesses such as cafés and small offices occupying the ground floors, while residential units are located above. This arrangement is designed to foster community interaction and liveliness. In total, the buildings would accommodate 78 residential units.

The summary table below shows that the Walton Boulevard Option 1 Neighborhood Mixed Use Area would result in more than \$1.5 million in new annual tax revenue for the City, including 78 new homes for 197 people, and 21 new businesses offering approximately 116 new jobs.

Design Option 2

This alternative focuses more on development along Walton Boulevard, with minimal activation of Lehigh Avenue, which would primarily serve as an access point for parking for both business and residential uses. The concept includes a mixed use development on the west side of the site and a residential building adjacent to Jaycee Park on the east side. A small retail strip is proposed along Walton Boulevard on the north side, with combined parking facilities located to the south. The two three-story mixed use buildings would provide a total of 43 residential units, while the three-story residential building adjacent to the park would house an additional 33 units.

Table 10: Walton Boulevard Option 1 Neighborhood Mixed Use Area Summary

WALTON BOULEVARD	HOMES / BUSINESSES	PEOPLE SERVED	TAX BENEFIT
Residential Homes, 2.53 per unit	78	197	\$911,318
Commercial/Civic Spaces, 5.5 jobs per space	21	116	\$668,399
Total	99	313	\$1,579,717

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Exhibit 5.
E. Walton Boulevard
Site: Option 1

City of Pontiac, Michigan

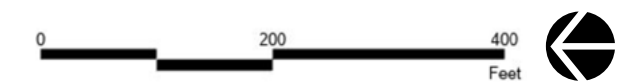
Program Details

BUILDING TYPE	NO OF BUILDINGS	NO OF DWELLING UNITS
Triplexes	–	–
Bungalow Court	–	–
Townhouses	–	–
ADUs	–	–
Mixed Use	3	78
» Residential	2 floors	78 Units
» Commercial	1 Floor	18 Spaces
Apartments	–	–
Civic	–	–
Commercial / Retail	3	–

Note: Dwelling units are calculated as 900 sq. ft. each
Total commercial/retail developments proposed here, stand at a total of 50,400 sq. ft. across 3 mixed use buildings and 3 commercial buildings.

LEGEND

- Commercial/Retail
- Multi-Family Residential
- Duplexes
- Apartment Buildings
- Civic Use Buildings
- Mixed Use Buildings



Basemap Source: Michigan Geographic Framework, 2017.
Data Source: City of Kalamazoo, 2018, McKenna, 2018

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Exhibit 6. E. Walton Boulevard Site: *Option 2*

City of Pontiac, Michigan

Program Details

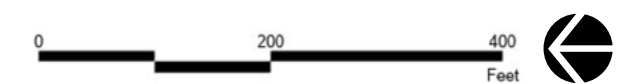
BUILDING TYPE	NO OF BUILDINGS	NO OF DWELLING UNITS
Fourplex	-	-
Bungalow Court	-	-
Townhouses	-	-
ADUs	-	-
Mixed Use	2	43
Residential	2 floors	43 Units
Commercial	1 Floor	12 Spaces
Apartments	1	33
Civic	-	-
Commercial / Retail	1	-

Note: Dwelling units are calculated as 900 sq. ft. each

Total commercial/retail developments proposed here, stand at a total of 33,000 sq. ft. across 2 mixed use buildings and 1 commercial building.

LEGEND

- Commercial/Retail
- Multi-Family Residential
- Duplexes
- Apartment Buildings
- Civic Use Buildings
- Mixed Use Buildings



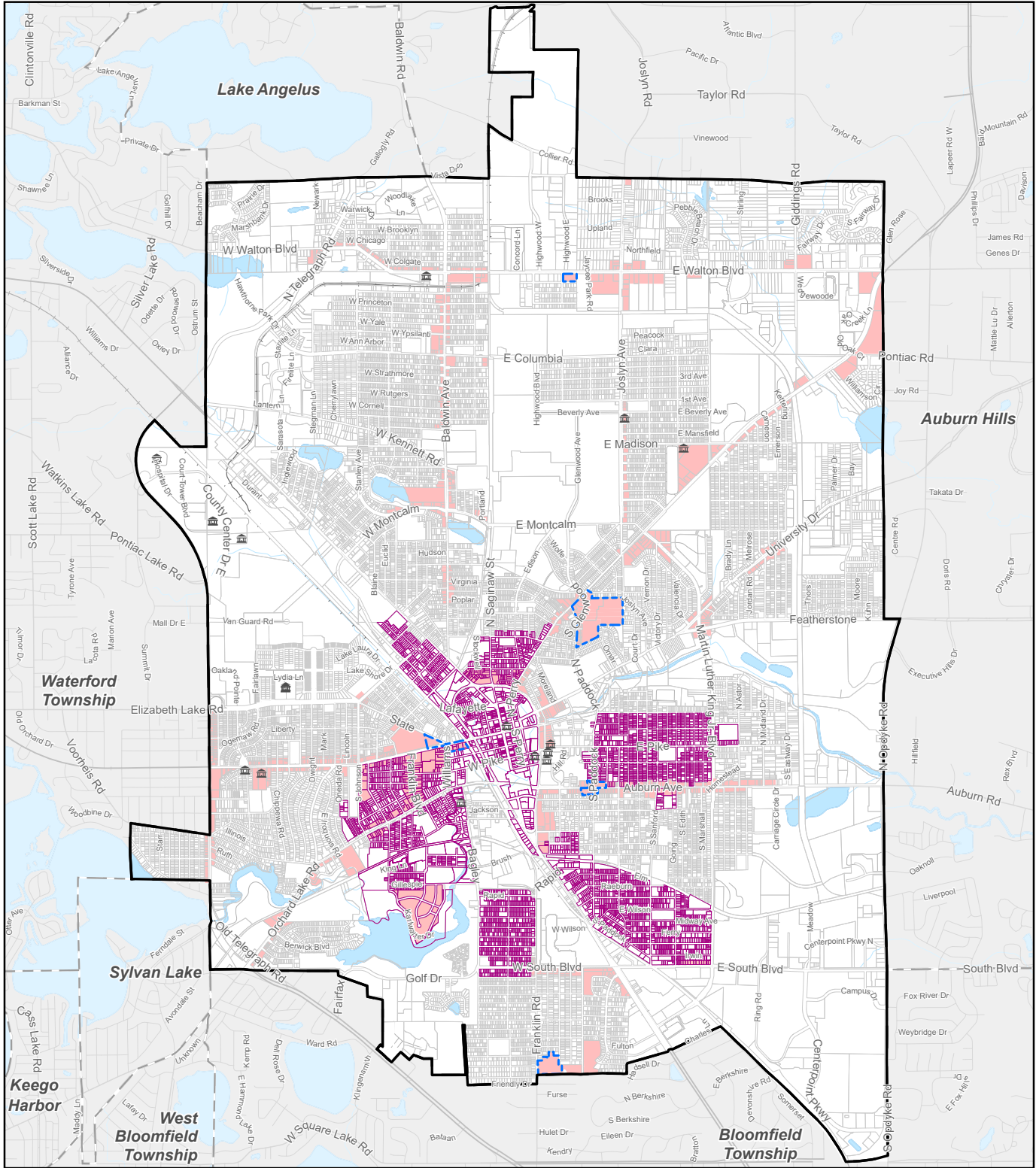
Basemap Source: Michigan Geographic Framework, 2017.
Data Source: City of Kalamazoo, 2018, McKenna, 2018

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3.4

Redevelopment Opportunities Map

The Redevelopment Opportunities Map on the following page shows areas of the City where redevelopment should be prioritized. The red areas are given the future land use designation of “Neighborhood Mixed Use” in the Future Land Use Map provided in Chapter 1 of this Plan. This future land use classification encourages the development of businesses that meet the daily service needs of neighborhood residents, including restaurants and food service, health services, public-facing offices, and similar uses. Additionally, residential uses above or behind neighborhood service businesses provide much needed housing units to the City and provide a market for those businesses. Sites with this future land use classification are strong opportunities for further development, as the existing land use on these current parcels are often commercial or public in nature, and can be retrofitted or expanded to add residential and neighborhood commercial uses to become vibrant mixed-use environments. City or County facilities are also shown on the Redevelopment Opportunities Map, where residents can go to receive public services and manage business related to their property. Lastly, the Neighborhood Mixed use Area Plans, defined in the previous section of this chapter, are shown in the Redevelopment Opportunities Map, which can be redeveloped to include residential, commercial, and mixed land uses, increasing the number and diversity of high-quality housing options and neighborhood services throughout the City.

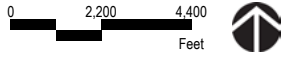


Map 5. Redevelopment Opportunities

City of Pontiac, Michigan

January 3, 2025 - Draft

- Legend**
- Target Mixed Use Node
 - Neighborhood Mixed Use
 - Neighborhood Enterprise Zone Parcel
 - City or County Facility
 - City Boundary



Basemap Source: MCGI, v. 17a.
 Data Source: City of Pontiac 2024.
 Oakland County GIS 2024.
 McKenna 2024.



3.5

Development and Redevelopment Action Plan

Core Finding and Metric

Core Finding: Mixed-use does not mean the same apartment building everywhere; people are concerned about the impacts of commercial development on neighborhoods.

Metric: By 2040, through a combination of redevelopment and new development, establish five new Neighborhood Mixed Use Nodes, with walkability, workforce housing, and daily service needs like child care, grocers, and restaurants.

Action Plan

To achieve the visions of the Pontiac community, the overarching goal statement for Development and Redevelopment will be approached through use of a strategic action plan, including a series of objectives and the action items that correlated to each objective. Accompanying each action item is a recommended timeline, which correlates with the priority level of each task. It consists of short-term (1-2 years), medium-term (3-5 years), and long-term (5+). To align with the City's goals, emerging trends, and input received from the public thus far, the goal, objectives, and action items have been created with the following priorities in mind:

- » Reduce vacancies and offer financial assistance to repurpose existing buildings rather than focusing solely on new construction
- » Improve upon collaborative partnerships
- » Support small businesses and entrepreneurs in commercial spaces
- » Improve appearance and aesthetics through code enforcement and development
- » Modernize development standards and infrastructure
- » Transform Downtown to be a place to “live, work, and play”
- » Priority for grocery stores, pharmacies, and convenience stores

Goal Statement for Development and Redevelopment

Attract and actualize more office, retail, commercial, and mixed use development that aim to serve and provide opportunities for Pontiac residents.

Objectives and Action Items Table

To accomplish the goal stated above, the following objectives and corresponding action items should be pursued:

OBJECTIVES AND ACTION ITEMS	TIME FRAME	COLLABORATION
Objective A – Encourage historic preservation and reuse of existing buildings to reduce the proliferation of vacant properties and abandoned buildings by offering incentives that foster entrepreneurial innovation and align with the community’s commitment to quality development.		
1) Continue to enforce the City’s Vacant Property Registration and Maintenance Ordinance to address long-standing vacancies and nuisances through code enforcement and vacancy standards.	Ongoing	
2) Increase communication and collaboration between Pontiac and its business community, Main Street Pontiac, and Greater Pontiac Area Chamber of Commerce.	Short-term	X
3) Seek grant funding or philanthropic dollars that can bolster financial aid offered to small businesses by partner organizations like Main Street Pontiac and others.	Medium-term	X
4) Administer a revolving low interest loan fund to support entrepreneurs in renovating existing businesses to prevent buildings from falling into disrepair.	Medium-term	
Objective B – Promote a healthy business environment that both attracts new businesses to address gaps in the market, and supports existing businesses experiencing financial hardships.		
1) Reach out to existing businesses in the State and greater region and advocate for the viability of the City of Pontiac as a market to open grocery stores, pharmacies, and other essential services that are currently missing or lagging within the City.	Ongoing	X
2) Evaluate Zoning Ordinance design standards and requirements that may act as barriers to grocery, mixed-use, and other commercial development within the City, particularly in areas identified on the Redevelopment Opportunities Map.	Short-term	
3) Establish a Business Attraction and Retention Team to work directly with companies to understand and respond to their needs, and work with State and local partners to improve the business operating climate and strengthen economic relations..	Short- to Medium-term	
Objective C – Identify and promote priority redevelopment properties to be reassessed annually, while preparing sites to be re-development ready.		
1) Each year, determine and promote the City’s “Top 3 Redevelopment Sites” and create a strategic redevelopment partnership or plan for each site.	Short-term, Ongoing	
2) Hosting bi-annual or quarterly public sessions with developers and entrepreneurs to share information about redevelopment opportunities.	Short-term, Ongoing	X
3) Develop and maintain an inventory of all vacant properties, and evaluate and prioritize redevelopment depending upon location, size, Future Land Use designations, and potential revenue generation.	Short-term, Ongoing	X
4) Strategize, establish, and enforce a Community Benefit Ordinance through facilitated partnerships between Pontiac residents and developers.	Short- to Medium-term	
5) Create a “Redevelopment Opportunity” page on the City’s website listing information about priority re-development sites, desired development, and additional incentives / collaboration opportunities.	Medium-term	

OBJECTIVES AND ACTION ITEMS	TIME FRAME	COLLABORATION
Objective D – Create re-development policies specific to the Neighborhood Mixed Use Areas that incentivize housing developments in new construction to promote mixed use in walkable districts.		
1) Incentivize or require a housing component in new construction within the potential Neighborhood Mixed Use Areas to promote mixed use in walkable districts.	Medium-term	X
2) Upzone priority ‘growth areas’ and allow for zoning flexibility through PUDs and MUDs to increase density and redevelopment potential.	Medium-term	
Objective E – Address and prevent brownfields in soil and groundwater contamination as development transpires.		
1) Seek funding and State support to remediate potential brownfields to make land available for development.	Ongoing	
2) Ensure that contaminated sites are monitored to prevent further contamination.	Ongoing	
3) Require new businesses that are likely to have or have historically causes contamination concerns (e.g. gas stations) to secure surety bonds with the City to cover the cost of the removal of the contaminants and a Phase 1 Environmental Assessment.	Short-term	
4) Re-evaluate zoning districts and land use available to intensive uses, to ensure adequate buffering from residential properties and other sensitive uses.	Short-term	
5) Convert brownfields to renewable energy fields through EGLE’s ‘Renewables Ready Communities Awards’ (RRCA) which offers tax and community benefits to host communities.	Short-term	X



Chapter 4.

Historic Preservation

Compared to neighboring communities and municipalities within the region, a unique feature of the City of Pontiac is its historical significance and features. Pontiac boasts a large quantity and wide variety of historic residential, commercial, and institutional buildings, churches and cemeteries, as well as a historic Downtown with numerous architectural gems preserved within the heart of the City. In addition to its urban fabric, Pontiac takes great pride in its rich social and economic history, including the City's affiliation with the height of Michigan's auto industry, during which General Motors (GM) manufactured an automobile line named after Chief Pontiac and the City. To continue honoring Pontiac's past, this section of Vision Pontiac focuses on ways to aid in the celebration and preservation of Pontiac's history while ensuring that historical assets are carried forward with the City into the future in a sustainable, gainful manner.

In the State of Michigan, a building may be considered 'historic' if it was built 50 or more years ago and meets certain criteria across location, significance, architectural value, and artistic value. There are certain instances where buildings built more recently are designated as 'historic', including if these structures have an exceptional significance, such as being associated with a significant person, event, or distinctive architectural style. Additionally, to be 'historic', the building or structure must retain its physical integrity, across materials, design, workmanship, and overall feeling of that time period. While historic designations can foster pride in a community, draw visitors, and increase eligibility for federal grant dollars, these designations do bring design restrictions and increases to the costs of maintenance and renovation that can be burdensome to owners.

Several institutions and bodies oversee historical preservation, from governmental agencies and offices to volunteer-based groups. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) oversees programs identifying, designating, and registering historical landmarks, sites, and buildings across Michigan, and supports the financial aspect of preservation. Further details of SHPO will be discussed in this chapter. At the local level, Pontiac has the Historic District Commission and a Historical Society, and Oakland County hosts the Oakland History Center at Pine Grove and the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society.

The Pontiac Historic District Commission (PHDC) is made up of volunteers appointed by the Mayor to uphold the U.S. Department of the Interior's standards of preserving historically designated properties and uplift the City's unique architectural characteristics as a result of the legacy of a major automobile and manufacturing center. The Commission and Oakland County Pioneer Historical Society also support educational awareness to the public and those involved in preservation more directly. They host workshops, town halls, walking tours, and develop material for educational purposes.

The Pontiac Historical Society Automotive Services, Inc. focuses on information and support for owners of historical Pontiac automobiles from 1961-1986. Relatedly, the Pontiac Transportation Museum is a repository of historic vehicles pertaining to the Pontiac car brand from 1890s to the 1980s.

There are a number of formally recognized historical sites and neighborhoods within the City, which include the following:

Historic Sites

- » Central School
- » Cook Nelson American Legion Post No. 20
- » First United Methodist Church of Pontiac
- » Horatio N. Howard House
- » Oak Hill Cemetery
- » St. Vincent de Paul Church
- » Governor Moses Wisner House
- » Sibley-Hoyt House, built in the 1820s by Solomon Sibley, one of the founders of Pontiac as a modern municipality

Historic Districts / Neighborhoods

- » The Commercial (Downtown)
- » Franklin Boulevard
- » Fairgrove
- » Seminole Hills
- » (GM) Modern Housing

Historic Museums

- » Pontiac Transportation Museum
- » Pinegrove Historical Museum, located in the mansion and accessory buildings of the former Michigan Governor Moses Wisner, focuses on tools and farming of the 1800s to early 1900s
- » Creative Arts Museum, housed in the former City Library



Historic Central School Building



28 N Saginaw in Downtown Pontiac



Pontiac's Little Art Theater (PLAT)



Governor Moses Wisner House



Casa del Ray Apartments



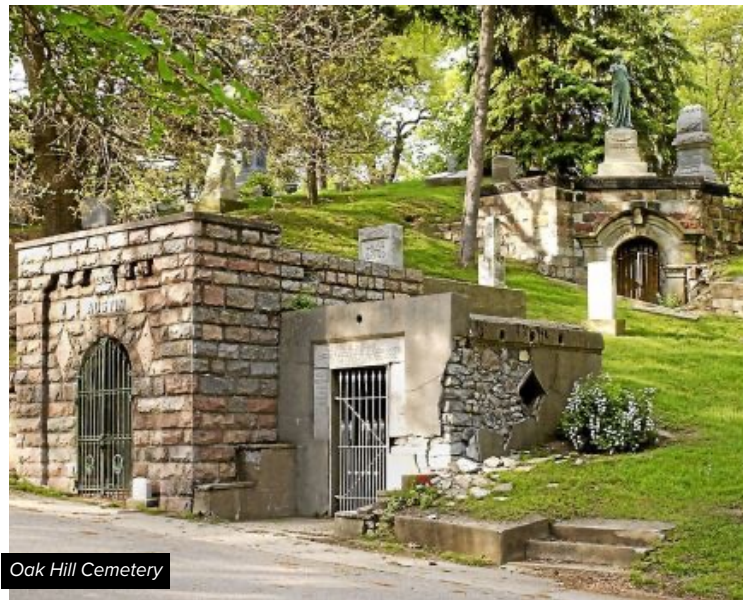
The Treasury Reception Venue



St. Vincent de Paul Church

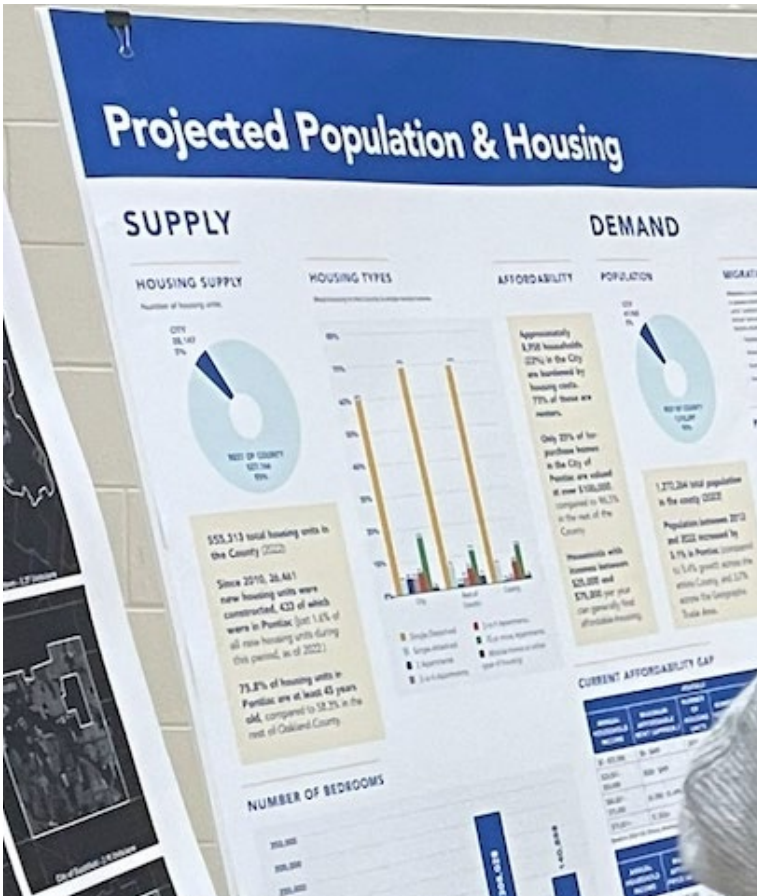


Downtown Pontiac



Oak Hill Cemetery

4.1 Findings



Engagement

Community Survey

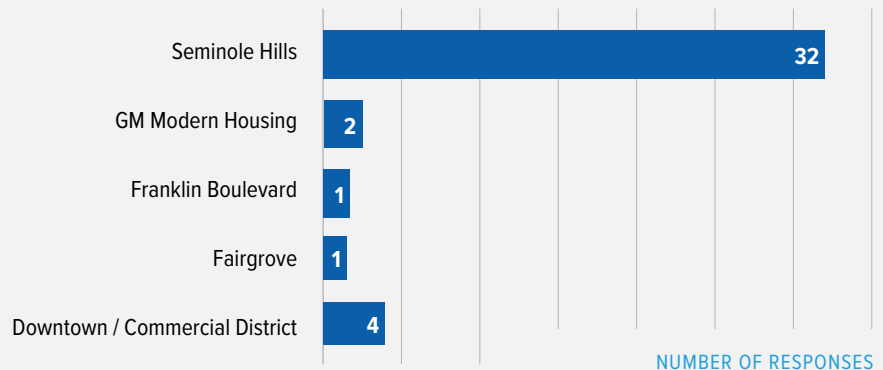
Several targeted questions regarding historic preservation were asked as part of the community-wide survey conducted for this Plan. Respondents were asked if they lived in a Historic District, and with an 82% response rate, they indicated:

- » 25% (42 respondents) live in a Historic District
- » 65% (109 respondents) do not live in a Historic District
- » 10% (16 respondents) were unsure if they live in a Historic District

Seminole Hills was the most representative residency of survey respondents, though it is also physically the largest of Pontiac's Historic Districts.

All respondents were asked how they would rate the City's current historic preservation efforts on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). Only 78 respondents answered the question, which had mixed feedback.

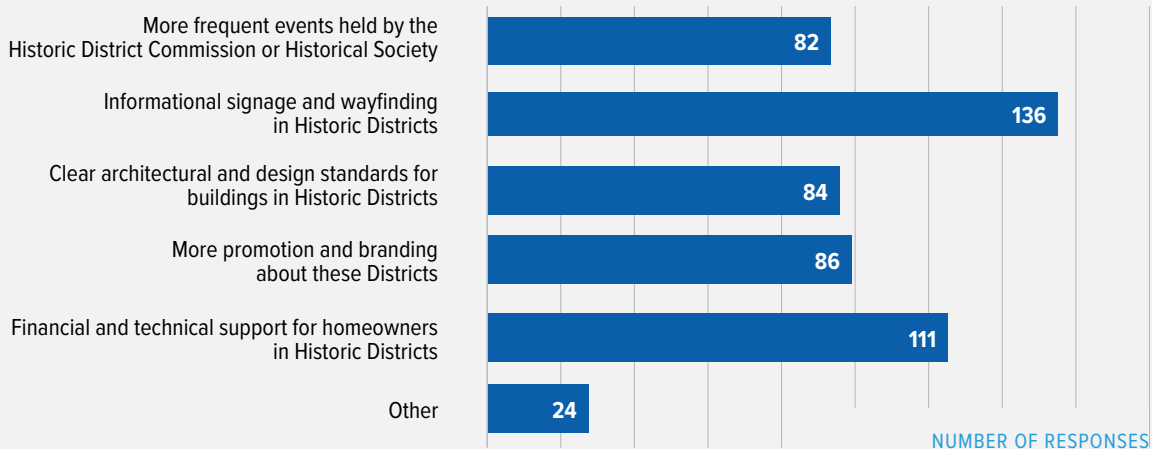
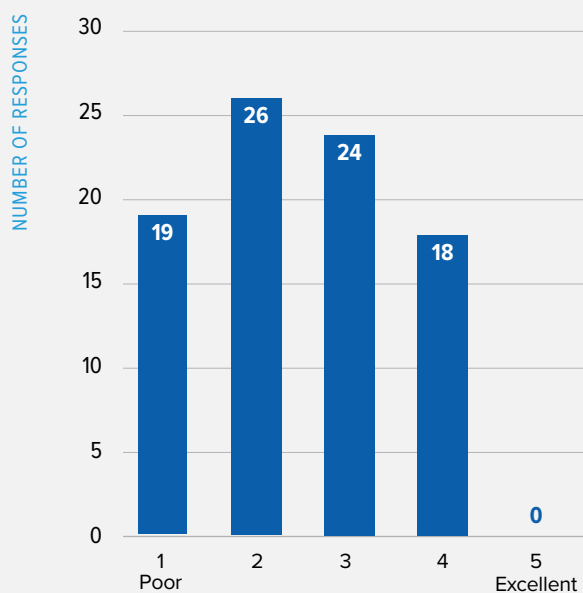
Figure 9.
Survey Respondent Historic District Residency



About half of respondents rated the City's existing preservation efforts as a 2 or 3, and notably, no respondents chose to rate these efforts as a 5. As Pontiac continues to grow and develop, protecting historic assets in a strategic, affordable, and sustainable way must be prioritized to ensure that historic preservation is a benefit, rather than a burden to residents. To address these low ratings, this chapter lays out Pontiac's historic assets and identifies tactics for preservation and education about the importance of and the process for protecting these structures and districts.

The final question regarding historic preservation in the community-wide survey queried existing and future preservation efforts. 184 (90.2%) respondents offered ideas for targeted improvements that could be incorporated into historic preservation efforts in Pontiac, as seen in the following chart. There is strong interest in acquiring additional support for carrying out improvements and repairs in Historic Districts as well as interest in promotion, education, and branding for Pontiac's existing Historic Districts to raise awareness and attract visitors.

Figure 10. Historic Preservation Efforts Ratings



Most importantly, 24 respondents left written comments under the “Other” category, which are listed and summarized below:

“Aggressive adaptive reuse of empty school buildings and other historic buildings.”

“Allowing what is necessary like fiberglass windows or changing roofing from terracotta to shingles or metal.”

“Code enforcement for those not maintaining their home properly.”

“Easy to find more budget-friendly alternatives to keep the historic look but make it feasible to fix/repair/replace items on historic homes.”

“Educational Information, and also Art Galleries/Museums, including Historical Paintings.”

“Financial or community support for the historical preservation efforts. This is especially true for housing. People do not have the funds to maintain their homes with historical accuracy.”

“Improved maintenance of historic buildings and homes homeowner incentives and support for maintaining their historical homes - older homes need more cash put into them, some relief from the city would be extremely helpful.”

“Reduce and/or clarify the historic maintenance processes to ease the burden on historic home owners.”

“Balance historic preservation and artistic and architectural variety with the immediate affordability, access, and health and well-being needs of Pontiac’s contemporary residents.”

“Lower prices for HD permits.”

“It’s incredibly expensive to try and keep to the (historic district) guidelines.”

“Clearer guidance for historic district housing requirements, and improved communication with the Historic District Commission.”

“More development incentives, tax breaks, NEZ, etc.”

“More funding.”

“There are historic houses in Pontiac, architecture and style of significant value, single standing itself but not in a designated historic district must be recognized. Preserved and Protected.”

“Would love to see the old school at the corner of Pike and Woodward Loop (next to Fire station) preserved and repurposed!”

Residents showed a broad concern relating to administrative and financial barriers that owners of historic homes encounter. Feedback focused on a need to step up enforcements and general code regulations. Respondents express a desire for more regulatory compliance focused on the Secretary of the Interior Standards and Pontiac’s Design Criteria, as well as funding assistance and guidance for those seeking to make updates.



Steering Committee Meeting

Outreach Events

The feedback gathered during outreach events and Steering Committee meetings suggests a need for a balanced approach to historic preservation that integrates adaptive reuse, financial incentives, community input, and a focus on sustainable building practices.

Key Themes:

- » **Education and Awareness.** Throughout the engagement process, residents and stakeholders shared a desire for clear, easily digestible information about Pontiac's historic districts, what it requires to own and maintain a home in a historic district, and where and what each unique district is.
- » **Celebrating Pontiac History, Outside of Just Homes.** Pontiac residents communicated their pride around their City's rich social and economic history, and wished to have opportunities to showcase it through art, multicultural tours or museums. Instead of just expanding the number of historic homes or Historic Districts, residents desired a more intentional and interactive showcasing of historic locations and figures who shaped Pontiac's history.
- » **Consistent Enforcement of Blight Regulations and Historic Standards.** Concerns regarding dilapidated homes in Historic Districts were commonly shared, as well as frustration around a lack of consistent enforcement for non-compliance with historic standards and blight regulations.
- » **Financial Resources for Historic Preservation.** Many Pontiac residents voiced the concern of not having the financial means to properly renovate their historic home (or that they acquire severe penalties if they can't afford to upkeep them). They desire additional resources to make historical preservation "worth it" and "a benefit", rather than a burden to homeowners. Burdens experienced homeowners should be an important focus of the City.
- » **Maintenance Needs.** While Pontiac residents do want to age in place, maintaining historic homes tends to be expensive and difficult. Many residents desire support in financing the necessary repairs. Further, it can be challenging to find contractors who are trained in historic repair guidelines. Many residents desire technical assistance to support necessary repairs and code compliance.



Goal Statement and Objectives: Rankings and Feedback

Steering Committee members were asked to rank the following draft goal statement for historic preservation on a scale of 1 to 5 on how aligned they felt it was with their vision for the City's future.

Prioritize the preservation of historic buildings, places, people, and events as the City embraces new development to remember where we came from.

These members responded with a 4.1 out of 5, signifying a close alignment with their intentions for the future of Pontiac. This draft goal statement was presented early in the outreach process, and as feedback was received, it was incorporated into the goal itself as well as the development of key objectives to reach it. Near the end of the process, the community feedback collectively heard was summarized in the following statement:

Pontiac residents are concerned about home maintenance and blight, and desire City-wide opportunities for creating local Historic Districts and properties.

Community members rated how they felt about this interpretation of community feedback. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1= I feel completely unheard, and 5 = I feel totally heard), community members rated this statement at an average of 3.8 out of 5.

Additional Comments:

"Finding resources to assist people in renovating historic homes and affording the cost of historic preservation."

"It can be costly to start a new business and move into historic buildings and homes."

"Promote existing dollars – like from the National Trust for Historic Preservation."

"Better utilize and celebrate the Historic Districts and define them, even before we expand to new ones. Define them and make them stand out. Instead of creating new, market what we have."

"We need a Pontiac Historic Museum that celebrates Pontiac's great leadership and those who set the City on a solid foundation – Veronica Taylor's idea."

"Historic District residents have a difficult time with repairs. Support offered is often income-based, with thresholds that leave many middle-income folks without the resources they need to adequately repair their home. Need help."

Historic Preservation
The HEART of Oakland County

GOAL: Prioritize and promote the preservation of historic buildings, places, people, and events as assets to the community, city, and region – while strengthening existing historic districts – and promoting inclusion to remember where we came from as the City embraces new investment and development.

Please place one dot on each of the three objectives you think should be a priority for the City of Pontiac.

OBJECTIVE	WHICH OBJECTIVES SHOULD BE PRIORITIZED?
OBJECTIVE A: Aid in Renovation Costs Administer financial incentives / support for repairs and refurbishments of historically designated or culturally important buildings or places.	[Dots]
OBJECTIVE B: Education and Awareness Integrate educational and promotional outreach initiatives into city historic preservation efforts to raise public awareness in the City and the greater region, foster appreciation for local heritage, and encourage community involvement in the preservation and stewardship of historic sites.	[Dots]
OBJECTIVE C: Adaptive Reuse Address existing barriers and initiate innovative ways to allow for greater reuse of historical buildings.	[Dots]
OBJECTIVE D: Regulations and Design Guidelines Develop new design guidelines, with specifics unique to the Downtown, that identifies elements that staff can approve to streamline, improving efficiency and minimizing costs, of the review process.	[Dots]

Please place any additional objectives that we should consider here:

Feedback captured at the Open House held on November 20th, 2024.

VISION PONTIAC OPEN HOUSE

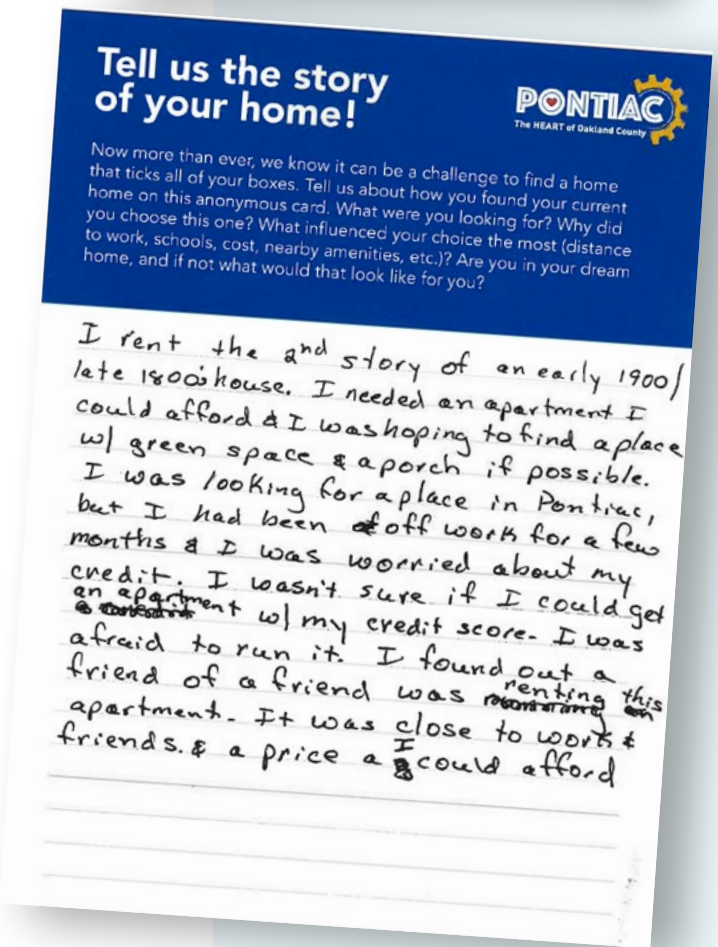
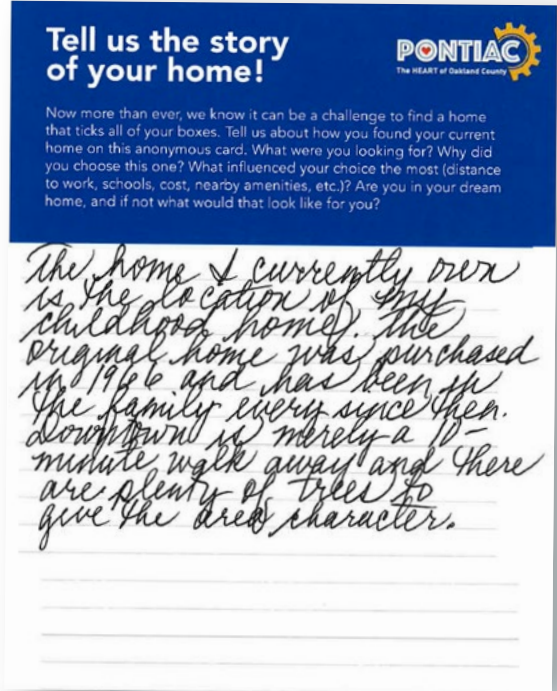
Share the Story of Your Home

Lastly, as part of understanding concerns and desires around housing broadly, the “Share the Story of Your Home” activity was conducted throughout events during the Vision Pontiac Master Plan process. The activity invited residents to describe their personal experience of finding housing in Pontiac and some details as to what they loved about their home, and what they wish they could change. This self-guided activity was aimed at understanding the numerous factors behind the participant’s housing choice—including cost, aesthetics, nearby amenities, social connections, and the reasons why they choose to live in Pontiac over other possible communities.

Residents used this opportunity to share details about their current home with the members of their small groups. Key factors around housing choice regarding historic preservation can be derived from the following excerpts from the collected stories are included below:

“My house is my dream home... I love that it is historic, no two houses are the same. The historic neighborhood was the deciding factor in the purchase.”

“I like the historical character of the area.”



Demographics

As seen in the map below, Pontiac has developed mostly from the center outward. A majority of structures in the middle of the City were built prior to 1924, making up a historic heart of Pontiac. Development continued to spread in each direction through the 1970s, especially toward the north. Structures built after 1975 are most concentrated near the borders of City, with notable additions in the north- and south-east areas.

Figure 11. Year of Construction for Pontiac Buildings

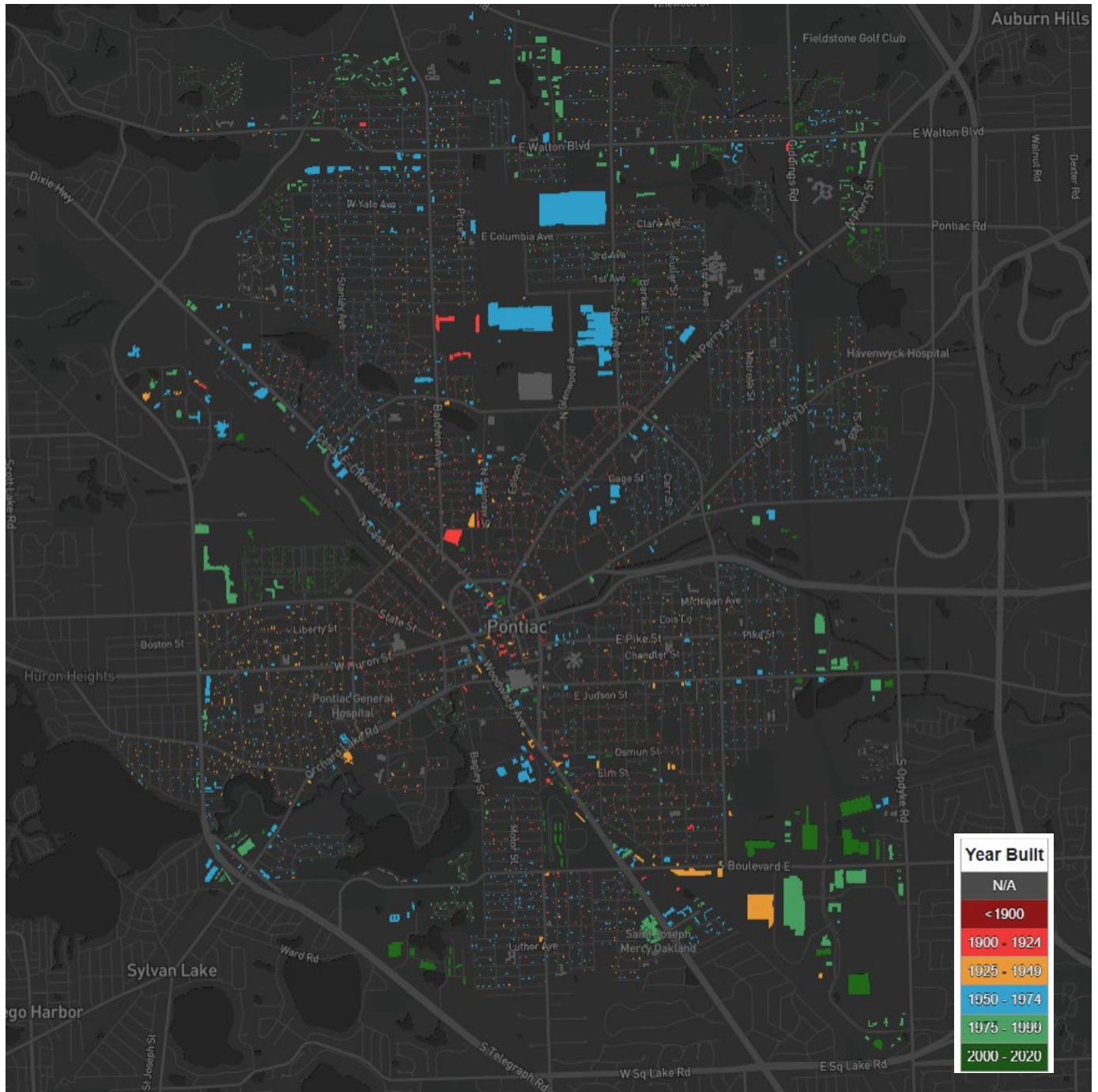
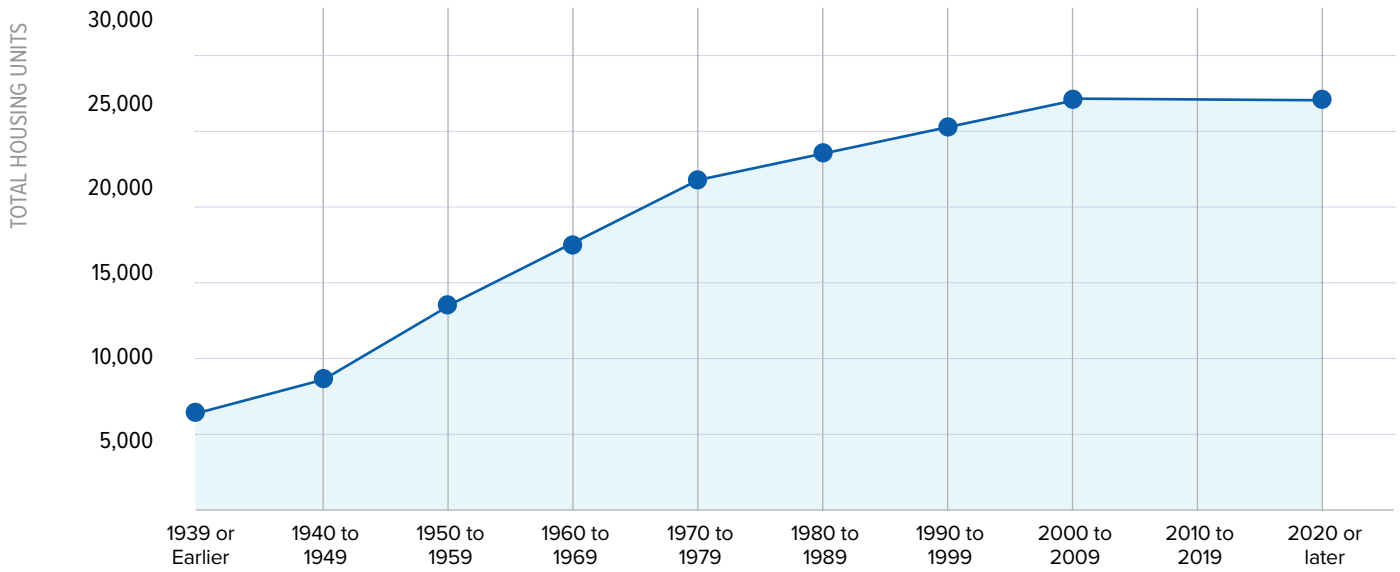


Figure 12. Growth of Housing Stock by Year of Construction



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2022 5-year estimates, Table B25034

This Figure 12 shows Pontiac's housing stock growth over the past 10 decades, with the most rapid development occurring between 1940 and 1980, then tapering off into the 2000s until it plateaus. With a median housing stock age of 53 years, it is clear that Pontiac has numerous historic assets. However, when compared to Michigan's overall median unit age of 36 years old, there appears to be an additional burden of maintenance concerns for homeowners in Pontiac in comparison to the rest of the State.

While the median unit age has decreased by 12 years since 2010, construction has slowed drastically in the last several decades. As of 2022, 77.1% of Pontiac's housing stock was constructed prior to 1979. As Pontiac's housing stock continues to age, the City must prioritize efforts to support preservation of historic homes and meet affordable, sustainable maintenance needs with funding and technical assistance.

Table 11: All Housing Stock by Year of Construction (including Occupied and Vacant Units)

YEAR BUILT	NUMBER OF HOUSING EXISTING UNITS	PERCENTAGE SHARE
2020 or later	191	0.7%
2010 to 2019	456	1.6%
2000 to 2009	2,377	8.4%
1990 to 1999	1,996	7.1%
1980 to 1989	1,579	5.5%
1970 to 1979	4,057	14.4%
1960 to 1969	3,717	13.2%
1950 to 1959	5,032	17.8%
1940 to 1949	2,750	9.7%
1939 or earlier	6,138	21.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2022 5-year estimates, Table B25034

4.2

Preserving Historic Pontiac

Emerging Historic Districts

There is potential to add additional historic districts based on the City's concentration of historic buildings, which include those over 50 years in age. Over time, as structures continue to age, additional areas will arise as candidates for preservation. As part of ongoing preservation efforts, Pontiac should evaluate if there are areas appropriate for historic designation on an annual basis moving forward. These areas should include those that would benefit from special recognition and that serve the community through their artistic and architectural value. Potential emerging historic districts can be identified with timeframes indicating when it may be suitable to begin actively engaging property owners and residents about what it would mean to have their property designated as a historic structure, and the resources available to help them do so.

A primary example of this is the Indian Village neighborhood, shown in the Historic Preservation Opportunities Map in the following section. Residents have mentioned emerging interest in the creation of Historic District. The City should consider pursuing official designation for this area to recognize the importance and value of its existing character to ensure it remains protected and celebrated. It should be noted that a potential barrier to historic preservation for emerging Historic Districts is their ownership status. Property owners who rent their homes can be less likely to support a Historic District designation due to the associated additional costs (which may in turn raise rents) and administrative processes. Therefore, engaging with these property owners to understand their concerns and gain their support will be critical to the success of preserving these emerging districts.

Home Ownership Incentives

Vision Pontiac offers an entire chapter dedicated to Housing and Neighborhoods, which provides a detailed account of numerous housing and home ownership incentives. As part of the overarching City effort to increase homeownership in Pontiac, it is important for the City to focus on, prioritize, and advertise initiatives specific to historic homes based on the large quantity in Pontiac.



Preservation and Renovation of Homes

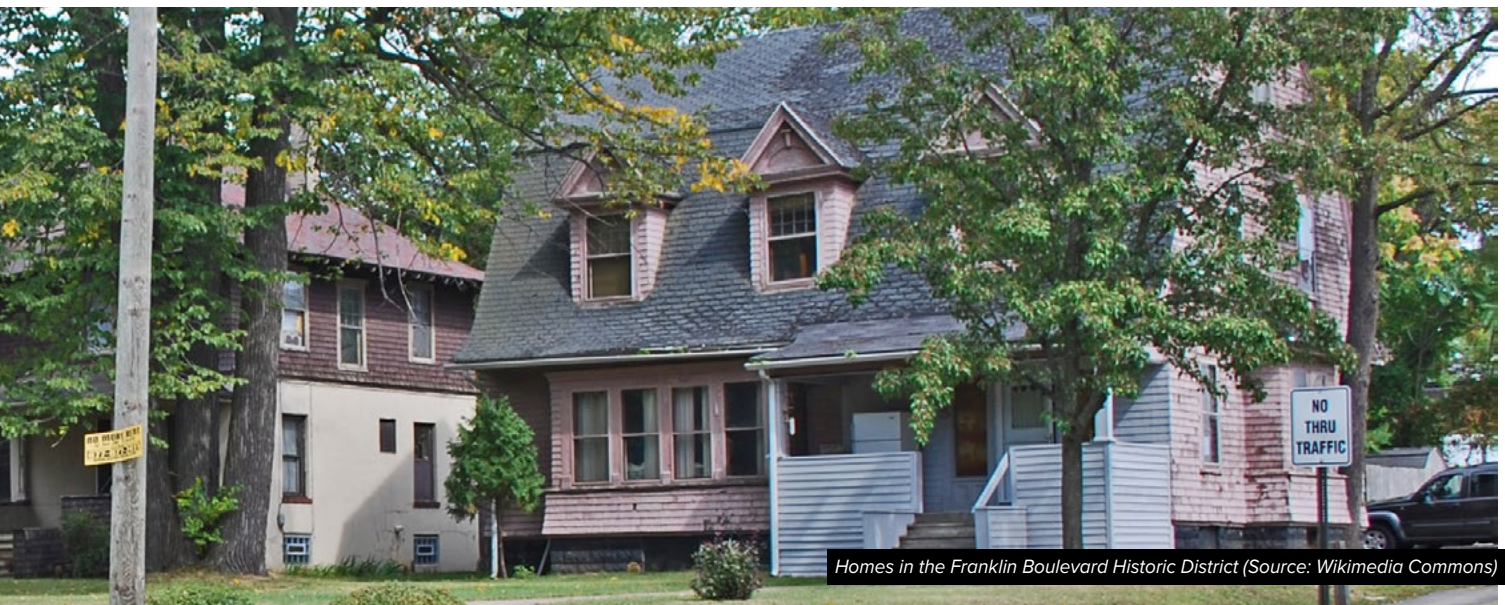
For recognized sites or structures in a local Historic District, there are a number of State-level programs that offer financial incentives, such as a State Historic Tax Credit for Commercial and Residential Properties that applies to large commercial (\$2 million or more), small commercial (up to \$2 million), and residential/owner-occupied properties. For income-producing properties, this can be applied in addition to the 20% Federal Tax Credit for rehabilitation projects. This incentive serves to support work that is in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Bolstering local support for historic preservation can also begin by channeling additional financial resources towards ongoing maintenance for Pontiac households.

Code Enforcement and Blight Removal

Based on comments received during the public engagement activities, which are summarized in the Findings section above, there exists frustration with the inconsistency in the application of rules and regulations of Historic Districts. Factors may be lack of understanding of historic stipulations, a lack of municipal resources for code enforcement of historic homes and buildings, or a desire to channel code enforcement resources towards imminently dangerous building conditions.

We recommend that the Building Department, in conjunction with Code Enforcement, continues its enforcement of the City Code within historic districts to eliminate blight and continue preservation efforts within these districts. Code Enforcement Officers should also be provided with the adequate tools, knowledge, and training to assess and apply regulations to historic properties.



Homes in the Franklin Boulevard Historic District (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Expanding Historic Preservation

Residents have expressed further interest in coordinated efforts to preserve the City's rich history beyond the preservation of buildings. This offers the opportunity for enhanced placemaking opportunities rooted in historic significance. For example, Pontiac residents requested additional Pontiac history museums, including a civil rights museum or additional ways to recognize and remember significant people and contributions to the City's history. This could be done through adding a statue, sculpture garden, or historical walkway in the Downtown, inspired by the following examples:

- » **Cleveland Cultural Gardens (Cleveland, Ohio):** A large urban park featuring a number of historical monuments and statues representing cultural pride of more than 30 ethnic groups. The African American Cultural Garden, pictured in this Plan, is undergoing its second phase of development.
- » **Cleveland History Center's African American Art/History Walk (Cleveland, Ohio):** A public art installation featuring the murals of six prominent African American Clevelanders, painted by a local artist and educator.
- » **Sam Houston Park (Houston, Texas):** Considered a "living history" corridor, this park is a small part of the larger parkway system connecting to the Downtown that features restored historically significant buildings and other monuments, paired with educational plaques.
- » **Paseo de los Presidentes or 'Walkway of the Presidents' (San Juan, Puerto Rico):** A public art installation along Constitution Avenue, which enhanced the walkway and plaza in front of the Capitol Building with a series of statues representing political leadership across generations.

Public art with historically significant context or figures unique to Pontiac could be added around the City Hall campus green space or in the corridor of the Downtown area, enhancing the pedestrian experience Downtown while adding to historic preservation and creating destination points.



4.3

Historic Preservation Opportunities Map

The “Historic Preservation Opportunities Map” on page 112 demonstrates Pontiac’s existing residential building stock (as of 2020). The building footprints shown are divided into those built prior to and after 1975, demonstrating the concentration of historic homes and therefore existing and potential future Historic Districts.

The Commercial (Downtown). In the City’s Downtown, the center of the Woodward Loop is the Pontiac Commercial Historic District. This area is currently primarily commercial, with the core of the District originally listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. The boundaries of this Historic District were expanded in 1989. The District includes the Eagle Theater and the Grinnell Brothers Music House, which is also listed on the National Register. This District contains parts of sixteen blocks in Downtown, including the single block within the original 1983 District. This block contains sixteen buildings, of which fourteen contribute to the historic nature of the District. The remainder of the district contains an additional 84 buildings, of which 53 contribute to the historic nature of the District. New architectural styles have been introduced to the Commercial District across many decades, and as a result it is now home to Second Empire and Late Victorian brick commercial buildings from the 19th century and Neo-Classical Revival, Renaissance Revival, Adamesque, Romanesque, Gothic Revival, and Art Deco buildings from the 20th century.



A Bird's-Eye View of Pontiac's Historic Downtown
(Source: Pontiac City Hall)



Franklin Boulevard Historic District (Source: HMdb)



Fairgrove Historic District (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Franklin Boulevard. Located just west of Downtown, The Franklin Boulevard Historic District is a primarily residential historic district located along Franklin Boulevard between West Huron Street and Orchard Lake Road. It contains structures along Mary Day and Henry Clay Avenues between Franklin and Miller, some structures along West Huron between Franklin and Williams, and along West Lawrence between Williams and the railroad. In the late 1800s, Franklin Boulevard was termed “the Boulevard of the Roses” and was home to Pontiac’s elite – including doctors, lawyers, bankers, writers, and early automotive leaders. The district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983, and became Pontiac’s first historic district. The heart of the district, along Franklin Boulevard, contains relatively large lots with large, detached, single-family houses of two-and-a-half to three stories. The District boasts a mix of architectural styles and materials, including Greek revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Stick styles, but the streetscape is unified by a consistent 60-foot setback from the street. Today, this District is also home to the Pontiac Transportation Museum

Fairgrove. Located just north of the Woodward loop is the Fairgrove Avenue Historic District, which is a residential historic district located along Fairgrove Avenue, between North Saginaw and Edison Streets. This district once served as Pontiac’s fairgrounds, hosting vibrant community festivities and celebrations, and later were used as a training and mustering ground for trips during the Civil War. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. This District, containing around 20 turn-of-the-century middle-class homes on relatively small lots. The Fairground Avenue Historic District offers an array of architectural styles, including Colonial Revival and Queen Anne styles, and is home to the Pontiac Transportation Museum.

Seminole Hills. Just to the south of West Huron Street, west of the Franklin Boulevard Historic District and south of the emerging Indian Village district is the picturesque Seminole Hills Historic District. Established in 1926, the National Register historic district of nearly 500 homes was laid out in the 1910s, and constructed in the 1920s and 30s. Ottawa Street features many of Seminole Hills' grandest homes built in Tudor revival, Colonial revival, craftsman, and other popular styles of the period.

General Motors (GM) Modern Housing.

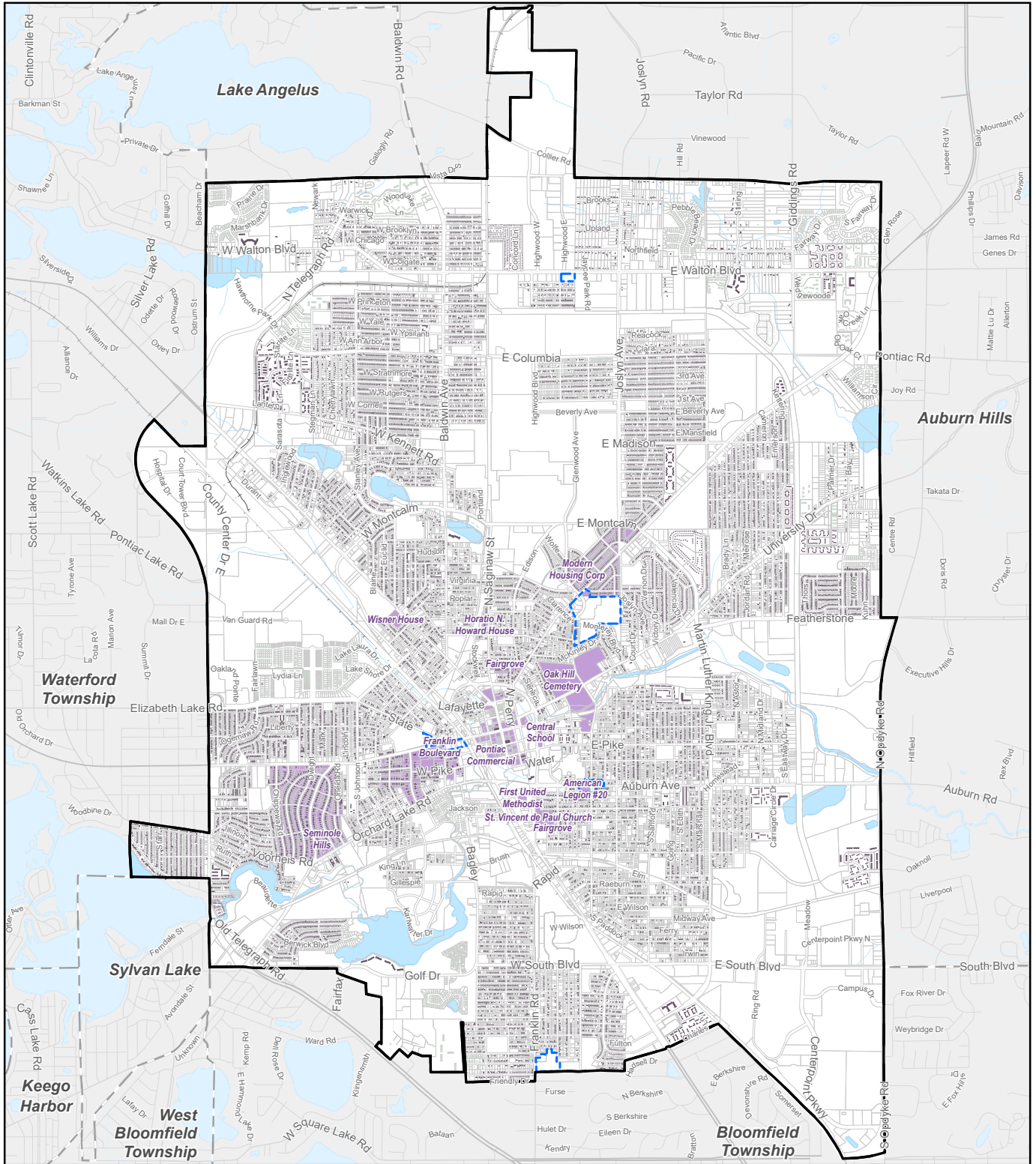
The Modern Housing Corporation Historic District is a residential historic district located northeast of Downtown and roughly bounded by Montcalm Street, Perry Street, Joslyn Avenue, Gage Street, Glenwood Street, and Nelson Street. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989. In communities where the rapid expansion of General Motors (GM) employees was making it impossible to find housing, GM itself began to make provisions and planned this 61-acre community in 1919 for the erection of homes that it occasionally rented to its employees but more commonly sold on a deferred payment basis. By 1929, almost 35,000 GM employees had availed themselves of corporate housing.



Seminole Hills Historic District (Source: Movoto)



General Motors (GM) Modern Housing (Source: Pontiac Transportation Museum)



Map 6. Historic Preservation Opportunities

City of Pontiac, Michigan

January 3, 2025 - Draft

- Legend**
- Structure Built Before 1975
 - Structure Built After 1975
 - Current Historic District
 - Target Mixed Use Node
 - City Boundary



Basemap Source: MCGI, v. 17a.
Data Source: City of Pontiac 2024,
Oakland County GIS 2024,
McKenna 2024.



4.4

Historic Preservation Action Plan

Core Finding and Metric

To continue strengthening the presence and support for historic preservation in Pontiac, the following goal statement was co-developed and validated by the Pontiac community:

Core Finding: Prioritize and promote the preservation of historic buildings, places, people, and events, to promote inclusion and opportunity, and strengthen Historic Districts by promoting historic preservation as an asset for the community, city and region to remember where we came from as the city embraces new investment and development.

Based on this goal and key engagement findings, success in historic preservation will be judged by the following 2040 metric:

Metric: Support the renovation of 600 houses that are more than 50-years old and prioritize contributing resources in established and emerging Historic Districts.

Action Plan

To achieve the visions of the Pontiac community, the overarching goal statement for Historic Preservation will be approached through use of a strategic action plan, including a series of objectives and the action items that correlated to each objective. Accompanying each action item is a recommended timeline, which correlates with the priority level of each task. It consists of short-term (1-2 years), medium-term (3-5 years), and long-term (5+). To align with the City's goals, emerging trends, and input received from the public thus far, the goal, objectives, and action items have been created with the following priorities in mind:

- » Strengthen historical assets through education, workshops, citizen input, and awareness/branding opportunities to increase the love and pride for these assets
- » Highlight the location of historical assets through pamphlets, mapping and signage
- » Assist homeowners in finding grants and resources to preserve and refurbish buildings
- » Continue developing new guidelines focused on building materials and new application processes
- » Continue working with SHPO to develop new guidelines
- » Continue working with Michigan Historic Preservation Network to develop training for Commissioners

At this point in time, the key stakeholders to aid in executing the action plan are the following:

- » **State-Level Entities and Non-Profits:** State Historic Preservation Office; Michigan Historic Preservation Network
- » **Regional and Local Resources:** Oakland County Pioneer Historical Society; Burton Collection; Pontiac Historic Preservation Commission
- » **Community Non-Profits:** GM Modern Housing Neighborhood Group
- » **Potential Industry Leaders:** Main Street Pontiac; Other Historic Districts; Ford Foundation; Hudson Weber Foundation; Miltida Dodge Wilson Foundation; Kresge Foundation

Goal Statement for Historic Preservation

Prioritize and promote the preservation of Pontiac’s historic buildings, places, people, and events, to promote inclusion, opportunity and strength Pontiac’s Historic Districts by promoting historic preservation as an asset for the neighborhoods, City and region to remember where we came from as the city embraces new investment and development.

Objectives and Action Items Table

To accomplish the goal stated above, the following objectives and corresponding action items should be pursued:

OBJECTIVES AND ACTION ITEMS	TIMEFRAME	COLLABORATION
Objective A – Administer financial incentives / support for repairs and refurbishments of historically-designated or culturally important buildings or places.		
1) Establish a low-interest revolving loan fund to support reuse and renovations of historic buildings (including churches, cemeteries, and residential and commercial buildings).	Long-term	
2) Seek State and private funding opportunities, such as grants, to be administered at the local level, to assist in energy efficiency and weatherization improvements to historic buildings.	Short- to Medium-term	
3) Promote NEZ Zones as a way to support the renovation of historic homes.	Short-term	X
Objective B – Integrate educational and promotional outreach initiatives into City historic preservation efforts to raise public awareness across the City and greater region, foster appreciation for local heritage, and encourage community involvement in the preservation and stewardship of historic sites.		
1) Continue to conduct regularly scheduled Historic District Commission meetings with a focus on educating the community.	Short-term	
2) Continue offering regular community trainings about the history of the Historic Districts and buildings, the guidelines and process for maintaining them, and the financial and capacity-building resources available to support historic preservation in Pontiac.	Short-term	X
3) Conduct an inventory and create an official City map that highlights and pinpoints the existing historical assets and people/events within Pontiac. Inventorying and mapping efforts should identify unique attributes and existing conditions of such assets, to portray if tailored ordinances or programs are needed to address specific needs.	Long-term	X
4) Continue to provide educational materials and resources to Pontiac residents and building owners regarding the establishment of a new Historic District to encourage location registration.	Short-term	X
5) Leverage historic assets into placemaking and branding opportunities (including banners, signage, light posts, etc.) and promote commercial nodes adjacent to Historic Districts to enhance engagement with and visits to Pontiac’s historic sites.	Short-term (Downtown) Medium-term (Residential)	X

OBJECTIVES AND ACTION ITEMS	TIMEFRAME	COLLABORATION
Objective C – Create an adaptive reuse policy within the Ordinance to encourage the registration of historic buildings and to standardize and clarify reasonable upgrade requirements for historical buildings that address life safety concerns without being too onerous.		
1) Address existing barriers and initiate innovative ways to allow for greater reuse of historical buildings.	Ongoing	
2) Continuously monitor variance and development requests to determine if revisions to the Zoning Ordinance are needed to further support in the adaptive reuse of historic buildings.	Short- to Medium-term	X
3) Create an adaptive reuse policy within the Ordinance to encourage the registration of historic buildings and to standardize and clarify reasonable upgrade requirements for historical buildings that address life safety concerns without being too onerous.	Medium-term	X
Objective D – Clarify historical design guidelines and streamline the review process for residential and commercial properties.		
1) Continue to develop new guidelines for windows and doors, and increase what is eligible for administrative approval.	Short-term	X
2) Provide a guideline solely for Pontiac’s Downtown that focuses on historical signage, building cladding, landscaping, murals, pocket parks, furniture, and more.	Short-term	X



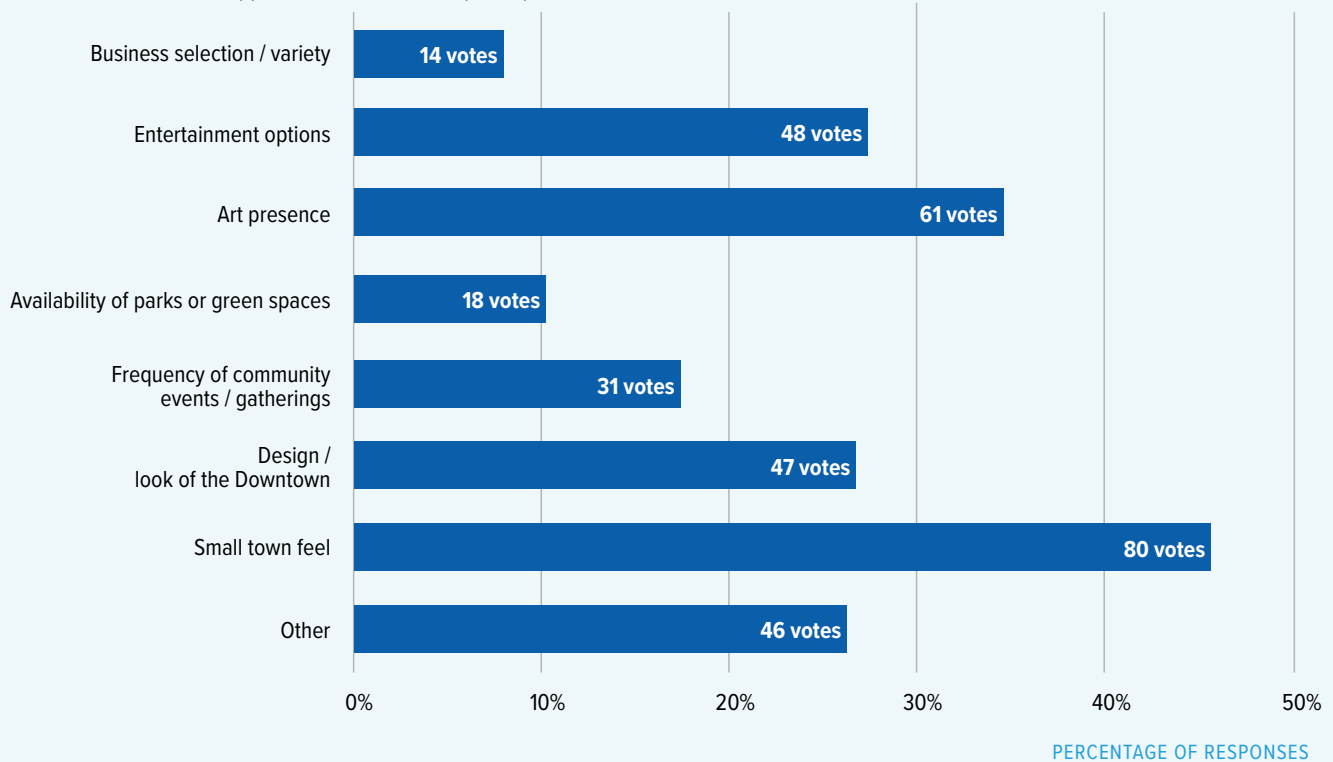
Chapter 5.

Downtown and Commercial Corridors

Considered the ‘heart’ of the City, Downtown Pontiac boasts historic charm and distinct, cutting-edge community spaces and artistic enterprise, such as art-filled alleyways and outdoor art galleries, hole-in-the-wall music and theater venues, and STEAM educational programming and events. An economic and entrepreneurial hub for the City, Downtown Pontiac offers rising Pontiac-based chefs, artists, and creatives the opportunity to experiment, launch, and grow their business ideas through a range of unique programs, including the “Make it to Scale” Kitchen Incubator Program and Saginaw Green Maker’s Village for small business vendors. Downtown Pontiac also offers “The Circuit Social District”, which invites residents and visitors to take their beverages with them while enjoying Downtown’s small businesses and strolling along its sidewalks and common areas. When asked what they currently enjoy about Downtown Pontiac, residents ranked the “small town feel”, “art presence”, and “entertainment options” highest—suggesting a firm Downtown foundation from which the City can continue visioning forward.

What do you currently enjoy about Downtown Pontiac?

Multi Choice | Skipped: 28 | Answered 176 (86.3%)



The bustling check-out line at Carnival market, Pontiac's premier specialty grocery store. (Source: McKenna)

Pontiac also boasts key commercial nodes extending outwards from Downtown, including Auburn Avenue, Woodward Avenue, West Huron Street, Orchard Lake Road, Cass Avenue, Cesar E. Chavez Road, and Perry Street, among others. These corridors are currently home to key storefronts and cultural staples, including Carnival Market, a specialty grocery store on East Walton Boulevard that boasts award-winning tacos and tortillas, and Goldner Walsh Garden and Home, a full-service landscape design company with a vibrant floral and nursery department, as well as a tropical greenhouse. These corridors host a strong diversity of zoned uses and heavy regular traffic that lay the groundwork for commercial market growth. Further, Pontiac's relative affordability as compared to other commercial investment opportunities in surrounding Oakland County communities provides a unique opportunity for artists and other creative entrepreneurs to set up shop in Pontiac.

Vision Pontiac seeks to strategically and intentionally build atop this foundation of innovation in the Downtown and along existing and future commercial corridors using the ideas and visions of Pontiac community members and key stakeholders.

5.1 Findings

Engagement

Pontiac's Downtown and commercial corridors have the advantage of an admirable history, a firm foundation, and vibrant community-led visions for the future. Throughout Vision Pontiac's months-long engagement with City staff and Leadership, Steering Committee members, Subcommittee members, and passionate community members, the following ambitions and ideas for improvement and exploration emerged:

Branding and Storytelling Around Pontiac's Downtown and Commercial Corridors

Pontiac residents see the value in building a positive marketing campaign around Downtown Pontiac's history, creativity, and diversity, and reorienting perceptions of Downtown and commercial nodes towards existing assets and future opportunities. This includes everything from improved storefront facades and landscaping to comprehensive and effective communications around existing opportunities, resources, and events happening in these areas. As for the Downtown, many Pontiac community members recommended setting up a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) to lead these branding efforts and to engage small business owners to help them market their goods and services and to get their buy-in for strategic investments Downtown.

As for the commercial corridors, Pontiac stakeholders and community members shared the need for clear marketing and geographic definition of existing commercial corridors, and the investment in cultural districts that channel Pontiac's multicultural diversity and ingenuity into economic opportunities.

Together, these marketing efforts will draw both long-standing Pontiac residents and visitors to become aware of—and take advantage of—all that Pontiac has to offer.



Business Support, Diversity, and Creativity

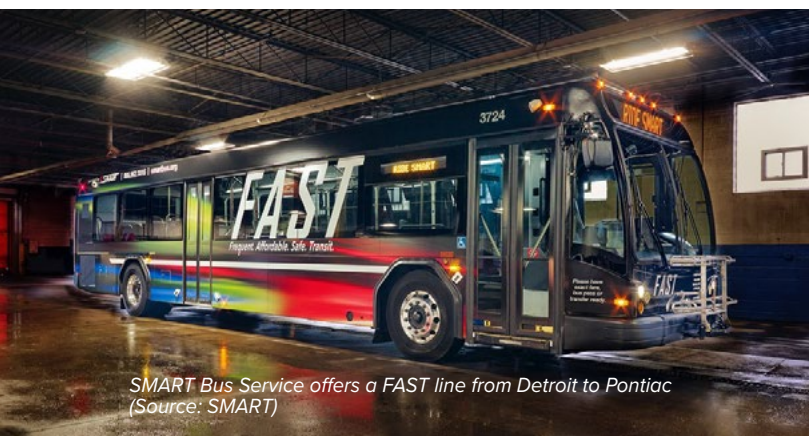
A key point of feedback heard across multiple engagement events was that there needs to be an improvement in the diversity of small business and property ownership both Downtown and along Pontiac's commercial corridors, including an increase in both Black-ownership and Pontiac resident-ownership opportunities. In addition to supporting successful and diverse business ownership, Pontiac community members cited the need for additional layers of retail and amenities that serve the everyday, basic needs of a multi-generational, income-diverse community while also drawing dollars and foot traffic Downtown and along commercial nodes, including:

- » Local Grocers with Well-Stocked Produce
- » Coffee Shops and Cafés
- » Clothing Stores
- » Pharmacies
- » Beauty Salons, Barbershops, and Self-Care Services
- » Entertainment and Recreation (e.g. movie theaters, bowling/skating rinks, arts classes, ice cream and sweets shops)
- » Restaurants and Food Trucks/Pop-Up Food Spots
- » Co-working and Entrepreneurial Hubs
- » Educational and Training Spaces
- » Music/Arts Studios and Galleries

Notably, many residents desired everyday amenities to be accessible within closer proximity to their neighborhood.

Transportation

Building on the desire for more easily accessible amenities, a key point of feedback received from residents was the desire for safer and more convenient connections between commercial nodes and the Downtown, and Pontiac's neighborhoods. In particular, many residents expressed a need for improved pedestrian infrastructure across key corridors and along the Loop that would allow them to walk or bike safely to shopping and entertainment opportunities.



SMART Bus Service offers a FAST line from Detroit to Pontiac
(Source: SMART)

Outdoor and Civic Spaces

In addition to recreational pedestrian infrastructure, Pontiac community members also shared the need for outdoor and civic spaces to complement Downtown and commercial uses. For example, many residents imagine creative activation of alleyways and streetscapes, a Downtown water feature, or a public plaza where a diverse and multicultural swath of visitors and residents can safely sit, gather, and play.

Code Enforcement, Activation, and Redevelopment of Existing Sites

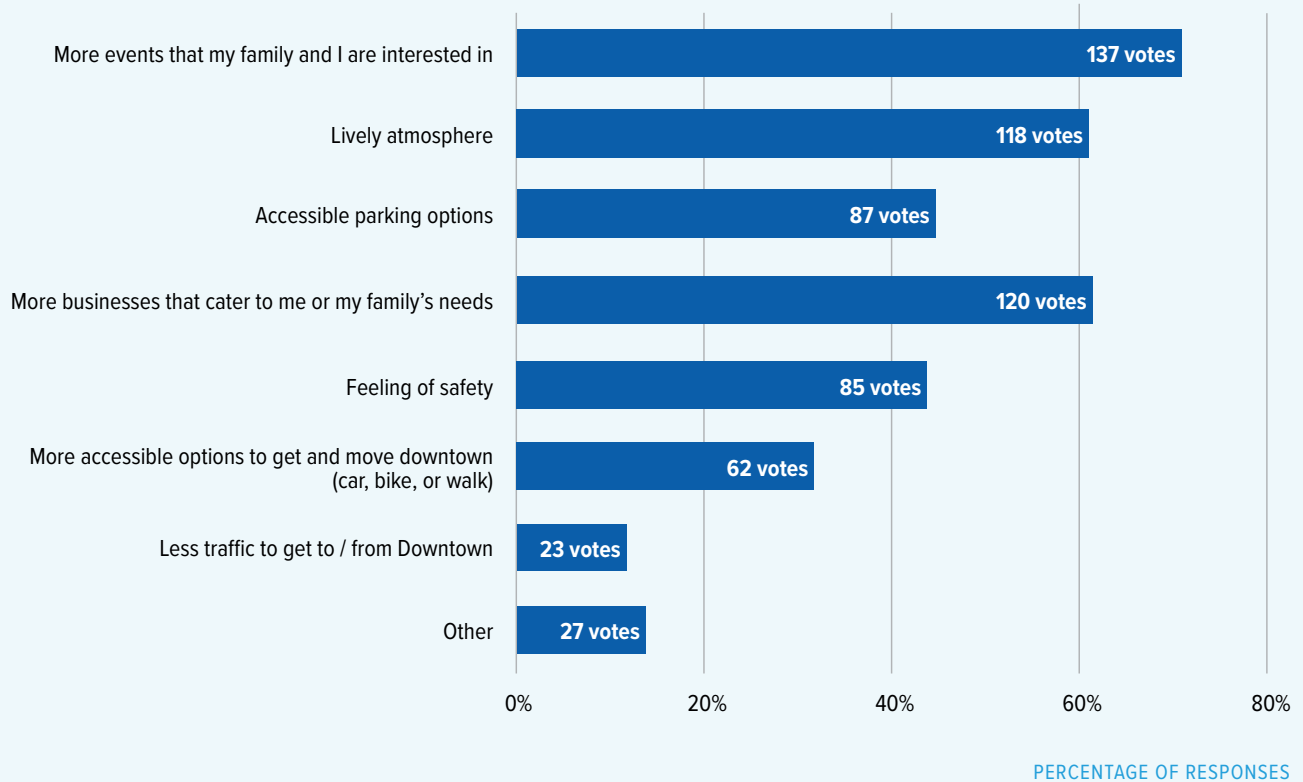
Pontiac community members shared their desire for maintaining, activating and redeveloping underutilized lots both Downtown and along commercial corridors, in addition to building new.

When it comes to current buildings, many residents shared their concerns around property owners who “sit” on their property without making improvements or keeping an active storefront. This leads to dilapidated facades that detract from the aesthetic and activity of the Downtown. Further, many residents noted that they would indeed spend their dollars at Downtown businesses but cannot as businesses do not remain open during all business hours. Additional code enforcement and regulation of these properties would, in the eyes of Pontiac community members, contribute positively to the economic development of the Downtown.

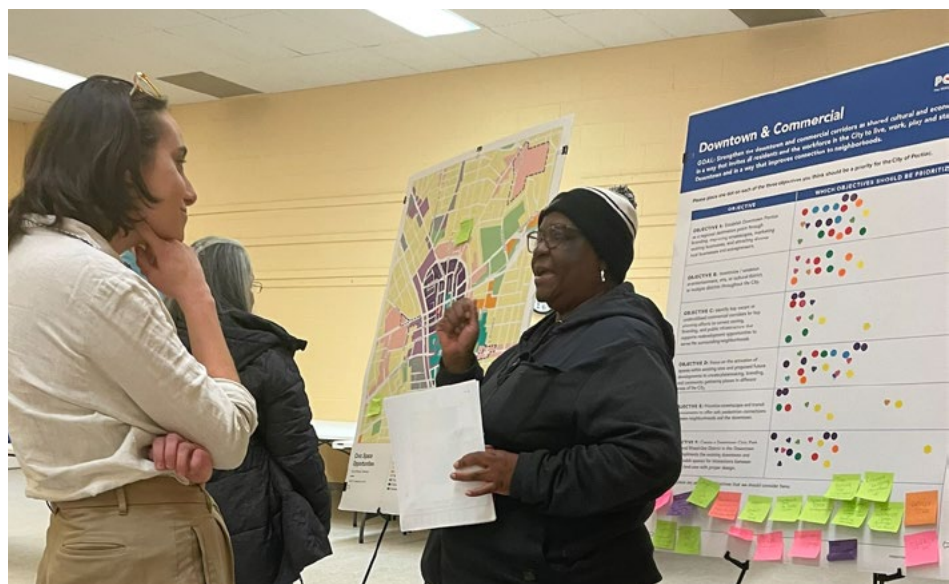
Activation of existing spaces goes beyond code enforcement, however, and must include seeing existing spaces through new eyes. Staying true to their innovative spirit, Pontiac community members also identified alleyways that currently exist within commercial nodes as a unique opportunity for placemaking and entrepreneurial experimentation. Creating programming and other plans for these alleyways could maximize their commercial potential. When asked in the Community Survey what would make residents visit Downtown more often, residents prioritized events (70.26%), more businesses that cater to [their] needs (61.54%), and a lively atmosphere (60.51%), suggesting ample interest in experimenting with programming and targeted investments to bring Downtown Pontiac to life.

What would make you visit Downtown Pontiac more?

Multi Choice (select all that apply) | Skipped: 9 | Answered 195 (95.6%)



Pontiac residents also raised the point that the City must get additional, regular foot traffic Downtown to ensure that businesses can afford to stay open and maintain their storefronts. To create needed density Downtown, many community members suggested developing mixed-use, multi-family housing Downtown as well as workforce housing, and bringing larger employers Downtown.

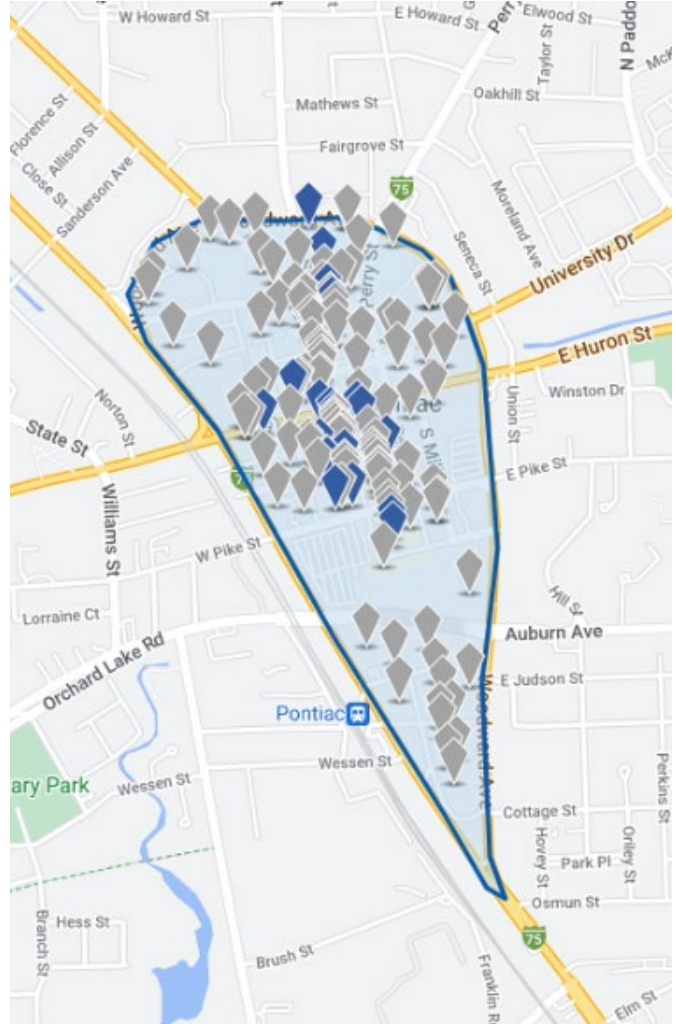


Market Analysis

The feedback offered by Pontiac residents can be contextualized, enhanced, and validated by quantitative commercial data points. For this reason, a Market Analysis was conducted using CoStar data within the boundaries of Downtown Pontiac’s 139 properties to understand the current commercial and housing backdrop. Together this comprehensive set of data can help to holistically inform policy and programmatic solutions and interventions.

Key findings from this analysis include:

- » **Vacancy.** While Downtown Pontiac’s Office and Industrial spaces both experience a vacancy rate under 5%, respectively, retail spaces experience vacancy rate of 14.5%, totaling 70,600 sq. ft of unused space. This suggests an opportunity to attract new and bolster existing retail businesses in town.
- » **Hospitality.** There are no hospitality uses in Downtown Pontiac, including hotels or motels, bed and breakfasts, or short-term rental units such as Airbnbs. Investments in small-scale hospitality spaces could support the City’s goal to attract and cater to visitors and tourists.
- » **Housing.** Downtown Pontiac offers 350 units of multi-family housing, with a vacancy rate of 5.8%. Average rent for a 1-bedroom apartment in Downtown Pontiac is \$832. Given the interest in increasing density Downtown, there may be an opportunity to utilize mixed-use zoning to increase the number of units while bringing needed regular foot traffic to Downtown businesses and retailers.



MARKET	INVENTORY SF	VACANCY RATE	VACANT SF	TOTAL AVAILABLE SF	OCCUPANCY RATE	PROPERTIES	MARKET CAP RATE
Office	1,600,000	1.1%	17,400	23,400	98.9%	45	11.6%
Industrial	324,000	4.9%	16,000	16,000	95.1%	9	11.0%
Retail	487,000	14.5%	70,600	84,000	85.5%	47	8.2%
	INVENTORY	VACANCY RATE	1-BEDROOM RATE	2-BEDROOM RATE	3-BEDROOM RATE	PROPERTIES	MARKET CAP RATE
Multi-Family	350	5.8%	\$832	\$1,287	\$1,450	9	7.3%

Market Analysis for Downtown Pontiac Properties (Source: CoStar)

* Please note that vacancy rates in the above table are derived from CoStar’s comprehensive real estate analytics, but tenancy changes frequently. As of January 2025, there were only 33 Commercial and Rental vacancy registrations Downtown, per City documentation. For the latest figures, please refer to the City of Pontiac’s Planning and Zoning Staff.

5.2 Future Downtown

An Opportunity Site is a piece of land or property that is considered to have great potential for redevelopment or economic development due to its location, size, and current underutilization. Vacant or blighted sites often become candidates for this designation. These sites are typically identified by local government leaders, planners, and community members as places where new strategic, imaginative investments could generate significant community benefits across local businesses and add job creation, housing, public gathering space and more. The redevelopment of these sites also serves to improve a city's tax base.

Opportunity Sites (5 on Maps)

The City of Pontiac wishes to amplify residents' ideas to invigorate key commercial nodes within the City and to address both the need for public space and civic open space, and the need to develop more active commercial uses. For this reason, the City has identified a series of 5 Opportunity Sites within and around Pontiac's Downtown which can be reimagined to better serve the needs of Pontiac residents and visitors today and into the future. These five sites include:



Parking Lot 9

Acreage: 6.8 acres

Total Parcel Value: \$428,070

Land Value: \$899,530

Located beside the Phoenix Garage on the corner of Saginaw and Pike Street in Downtown Pontiac, Parking Lot 9 amasses over 6 acres of land in the heart of the City. While it occasionally hosts parking for patrons of the Crofoot Ballroom and night clubs Vogue and Elektric, the lot has remained mostly underutilized and blighted for years. Its prime location as a connector to Downtown poses significant opportunity for redevelopment for public purposes, public use, and for public benefit.



Source: Regrid Parcel Data



Source: Regrid Parcel Data

Phoenix Center

Acreage: 9.14 acres

Total Parcel Value: \$0

Land Value: \$756,550

Located at the entrance to Downtown Pontiac on Saginaw, the Phoenix Center is a monument of the urban renewal era, which promised social and economic revitalization to Pontiac through the creation of this central event space at the gateway to the City. The Phoenix Center once hosted a large amphitheater, office spaces, and a parking garage, but has remained structurally nonfunctional since 2008. As it stands, the Phoenix Center Garage is largely unkept and limits access to the south half of the downtown and can be reimagined to improve the connection between key thoroughfares and Downtown Pontiac.

City Hall Campus

Acreage: 4.66 acres

Total Parcel Value: \$0

Land Value: \$0

Located on Woodward Avenue, City Hall serves as the administration building for the City of Pontiac, representing the offices of the Mayor, the City Council, the City Clerk, the Community Development Department, the Department of Public Works, and the Finance Department. Currently, City Hall is physically separate from Downtown and can be difficult to access for pedestrians and drivers alike.



Source: Regrid Parcel Data

Library Campus

Acreage: 1.13 acres

Total Parcel Value: \$0

Land Value: \$0

Located on Woodward Avenue across from City Hall, the Pontiac Public Library Campus offers a range of free educational, social, and cultural services and programming to the Pontiac community, including Teen Night, STEM tutoring, art camps, group readings, book signings, and more. Given its close proximity to the Loop, the Library Campus is difficult to access for pedestrians and drivers alike.



Source: Regrid Parcel Data

Parking Lot 6

Acreage: 0.4 acres

Total Parcel Value: \$17,340

Land Value: \$36,423

Located on the corner of Huron Street and Saginaw, directly on Pontiac's main Downtown thoroughfare, Lot 6 stands with paid parking spaces for patrons of nearby businesses. While providing needed parking Downtown, the lot is poorly maintained, and the prime location poses an opportunity for reimagining the space for improved downtown aesthetics and cohesion and for an overall public benefit.

Civic Space Creation

Investments in dedicated spaces for public use are essential to capturing the inspiring past and modern creativity of a place, fostering social cohesion and feelings of belonging and bolstering economic development. To keep residents and visitors coming to and staying in Downtown Pontiac and along Pontiac's commercial corridors, these areas must be vibrant, accessible, and welcoming to all while offering high density and a wide range of public and commercial amenities. Civic space creation must be central to the planning and programming for Downtown Pontiac and the City's commercial corridors. Creating spaces for people to enjoy without spending money allows everyone to enjoy public investment, while providing opportunities for business owners to attract customers and build up a market.

Creating civic space can take a variety of approaches, from public art installations and pocket parks, to alleyways and plaza spaces activated with benches, local food, and music. Pontiac residents must be involved in identifying and leading the charge on the types of civic space that they would like to have created specifically for their community in Downtown and along commercial corridors. Further, Pontiac is home to a robust social and economic history and a talented, authentic population of artists and musicians, which can be an asset to Pontiac's streetscapes and cultural offerings.

To inspire civic space creation, Pontiac can consider the ways in which similar communities have reinvigorated and authenticated their commercial and public spaces:



City of Detroit, Michigan – Arts Alleys

In recent years, the City of Detroit has sought to transform underutilized alleyways into functional, art-filled community spaces that spur neighborhood pride, collaboration, and revitalization. Arts Alleys Fellowships were awarded across the City, and designated Fellows were tasked with partnering with community stakeholders to identify design qualities, infrastructure, and programming that best aligned with community values and preferences. These alleyways are on track to become museums and memory keepers, creative gathering spaces, and urban farms. To date, proposed Arts Alleys include rain and vegetable gardens, solar arrays, youth activity spaces, history panels, murals, and more.

Old Redford Arts Alley under construction in Detroit (Source: City of Detroit)

Flint, Michigan – Flint Mural Poems

Flint is home to hundreds of one-of-a-kind murals, placed on the outer walls of buildings to bring inspirational color and culture to spaces that carried the false narrative of crime or blight. The Flint Arts Project saw these murals as an asset, and beginning in 2022, began inviting Flint high school students to submit original poems inspired by local murals that reflect their feelings, worries, hopes, and dreams around the Flint community. These poems have been documented in a publicly accessible app, and residents and tourists can visit the murals in person and engage virtually with the student poetry.





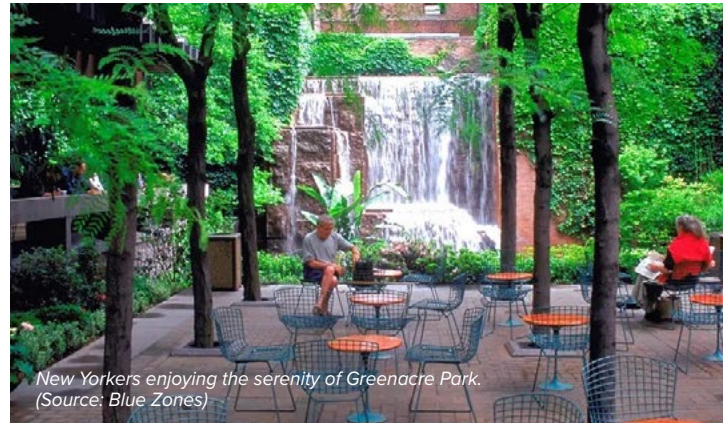
Southfield, Michigan – Red Pole Park

In recent years, the City of Southfield has made concerted efforts to invest in local art in both public and private civic spaces as a means to create places to gather, promote non-motorized transit, and to draw diverse people into dialogue. Southfield collaborated with MEDC’s Public Spaces, Community Places initiative, which funded the Red Pole Park, an interactive 47-pole art installation and that rises from the shared-use greenway in a small 140-linear foot space, along Northwestern Highway, north of Civic Center Drive. The red poles of various heights symbolize civic values of sustainability, education, and stewardship and have become places for biking, walking, and community photography.

Red Pole Park, Southfield MI (Source:)

New York City, New York – Greenacre Park

Despite being one of the most densely populated and developed cities in the United States, New York City has taken advantage of uniquely shaped lots to secure green space for residents, employees, and visitors. Greenacre Park is a hidden oasis within a narrow lot on one of the busiest areas in Manhattan, offering three levels of open seating, tree shade, and a 25-foot waterfall. The quiet, peaceful space is often utilized by students studying remotely, colleagues enjoying an outdoor lunch break, or locals taking a break from the buzz of the City.



New Yorkers enjoying the serenity of Greenacre Park. (Source: Blue Zones)



Cleveland, Ohio – Cleveland Public Square

Public Square is a newly renovated, 10-acre public green space in historic Downtown Cleveland. In addition to pedestrian promenades, a large multi-purpose lawn, and a range of shade trees, Public Square offers a large water feature surrounded with public seating that becomes a splash pad for children in the summers, and a public ice skating rink in the winter. This adaptable, multigenerational space creates opportunities for experimental programming in Downtown Cleveland, including markets, concerts and performances, and seasonal events – making Cleveland the place to be, all year round.

Birds-eye view of Cleveland Public Square Source: American Planning Association)



The Former Phoenix Center Site

Placed in the middle of Saginaw Street and bisecting the Woodward Loop, the Phoenix Center is a large and, currently, mostly unused parking garage and public plaza. Serving as the gateway to Downtown Pontiac, a reimagining of the Phoenix Center represents an opportunity to breathe new life into Pontiac and transform the public-facing narrative of this legendary cultural center. As it stands, many residents describe the Phoenix Center as a hindrance to accessing Downtown and an eyesore that keeps visitors and residents from enjoying Pontiac's historic Downtown streetscape. However, plans are underway to revitalize the facility in a way that maximizes the economic and social potential of the space, beautifies and modernizes the area, and brings a talented local workforce and new community spaces to the heart of the City.

Oakland County: Redevelop, Revitalize, and Reconnect Downtown

In 2023, Oakland County purchased two office buildings, several parcels of vacant land, and the Phoenix Center garage and amphitheater to redevelop and reinvest in Downtown Pontiac. Oakland County also plans to renovate the vacant former GM building on East Judson and move nearly 600 of its employees into the building. Further, an agreement approved by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and Pontiac City Council outlines how the project will proceed:

- » The City will use funds received from the State of Michigan to retire debt related to the Phoenix Center and will convey ownership of the property on which it sits to Oakland County.
- » The County will demolish the Phoenix Center, reopening Saginaw Street through to what is now the south end of the Woodward Loop and creating a much more walkable environment in Downtown.
- » The County's plans include construction of a new parking garage for the use of workers in the two office buildings, as well as by residents and people doing business Downtown.

This revitalization of Pontiac's Downtown lays the groundwork for potential public and private investment. According to the County's agreement, after removing the Phoenix Center, the County will convey a minimum of two acres of land to the City of Pontiac. The City will own this property and will determine how it can be best used for the benefit of its residents. Further, the project is expected to spur private investment and additional business activity Downtown.

Beginning in Summer 2024, a series of community listening sessions and engagement events kicked off to ensure that community visions and priorities were incorporated into the project plans, including the types of development prioritized for the Phoenix Center and newly acquired public parcels.

The Vision Pontiac planning process and strategic recommendations for the Phoenix Center were designed to be responsive to and in alignment with the future improvements anticipated by Oakland County's redevelopment of this site. Please refer to the Downtown and Commercial Strategic Action Plan in the subsequent sections for specific objective and action items identified for reimagining the Phoenix Center.

The Loop

Originally created in the early 1960s, the Woodward Loop is a one-way loop at Woodward Avenue's northern end that encircles Pontiac's Downtown. While it was originally designed to facilitate efficient traffic movement and quick shopping, today's residents have frequently raised concerns about the Loop's high vehicular speeds, the lack of pedestrian infrastructure around and across the Loop, and the resulting barriers to accessing and enjoying Downtown, the heart of Pontiac.

The Loop provides a unique opportunity for Pontiac to reimagine the access to and through Pontiac's Downtown, in a way that celebrates Pontiac's history, centers the safety, well-being, and aspirations of Pontiac's existing residents and business owners, and welcomes new visitors with charming aesthetics and a vibrant, lively Downtown experience.

M-1 (Woodward Avenue) Corridor Plan

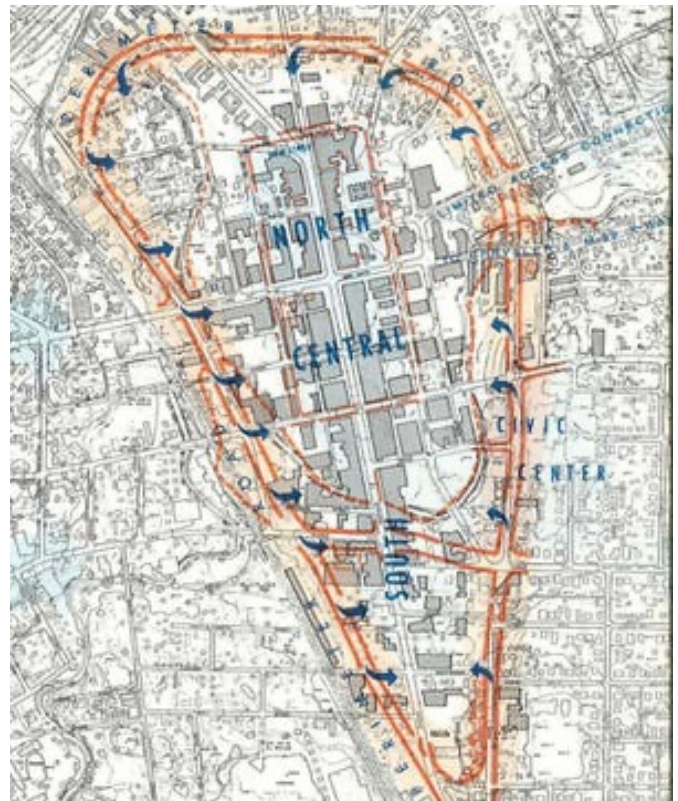
After decades of discussion and input, in 2022, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) announced their investment in a redesign of the Woodward Loop, extending from Adams Road in Downtown Detroit to the Loop in Pontiac that would transform the one-way corridor into a pedestrian-friendly two-way boulevard, with reduced speeds and additional connections to Pontiac's business nodes and residential areas. Planned for 2025 and 2026, the M-1 (Woodward Avenue) Corridor Plan intends to boost economic development and quality of life. According to MDOT, the Plan's improvements will:

- » Consider environmental, community, historic preservation, and economic goals throughout the transportation planning process.
- » Evaluate the infrastructure, geometry, safety, and operational needs of all modes of transportation.
- » Coordinate with and integrate applicable recommendations of public transit studies conducted by the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) and/or Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT), which may include bus rapid transit (BRT), fixed-route, and other related transit services.
- » Integrate sustainability and climate resilience best practices.
- » Establish high-level construction cost estimates for the preferred options, prioritization of project segments, and estimated timelines based on current funding amounts.

In addition to vehicular traffic improvements, the Plan is designed to increase Pontiac's walkability by including new sidewalks and refuge islands, traffic signals, and bike paths. Both residents and visitors alike will enjoy a safer, more accessible passage to Pontiac's downtown, helping improve the area's foot traffic, vibrancy and overall economic development.

Beginning in 2023, MDOT has led a robust Community Engagement Plan to allow community knowledge and lived experience with the Loop to inform the outcomes of the project. A series of Key Stakeholder Working Groups, Committees, and Focus Groups, as well as a full calendar of public engagement events, have been organized by MDOT, findings from which will be compiled in a Final Summary Report during Winter 2025/2026.

The Vision Pontiac planning process and strategic recommendations for the Loop—and Downtown as a whole—were designed to be responsive to and in alignment with the future improvements anticipated by the M-1 (Woodward Avenue) Corridor Plan. Please refer to the Downtown and Commercial Strategic Action Plan in the subsequent sections for specific objective and action items identified for reimagining the Loop.



5.3

Commercial Corridors Redevelopment

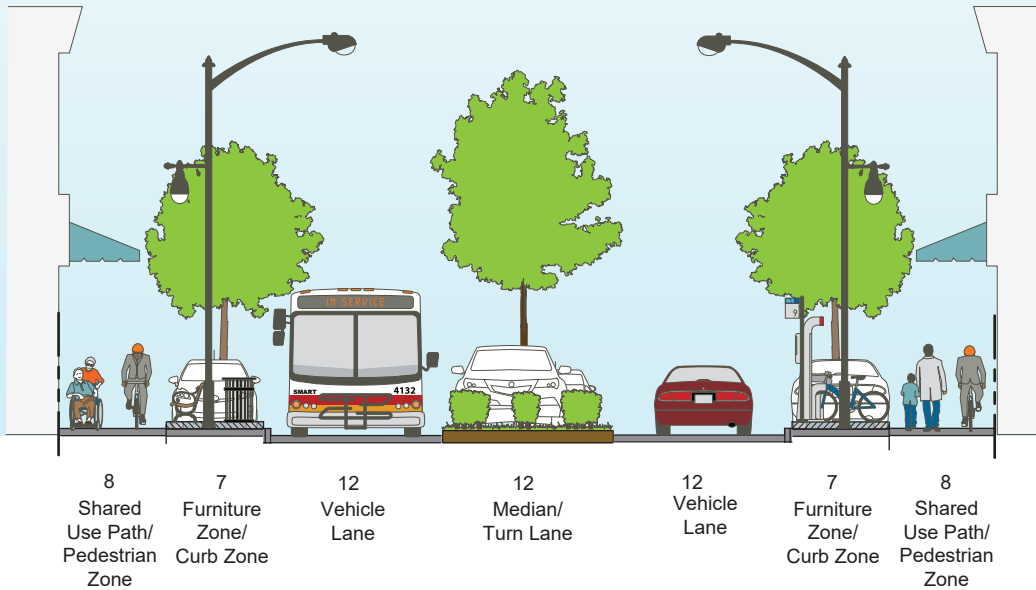
The Development and Redevelopment chapter presents neighborhood plans for five mixed use nodes around the City. Along with reinvestment in private development, the City can invest in corridor resurfacing and reconstruction to improve design and access for people.

The following section shows potential cross sections and building massing diagrams that illustrate corridor reconfiguration. Reinvesting in the City's infrastructure will help to implement the City's 2017 Complete Streets plan and support the creation of neighborhood centers. These concepts can be expended on as a model for other neighborhood mixed use areas and explored in more detail in future updates to the City's Complete Streets plan.

Auburn and Paddock

Exhibit 1a

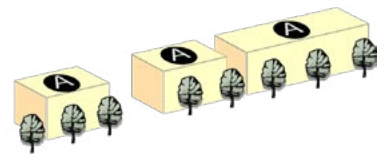
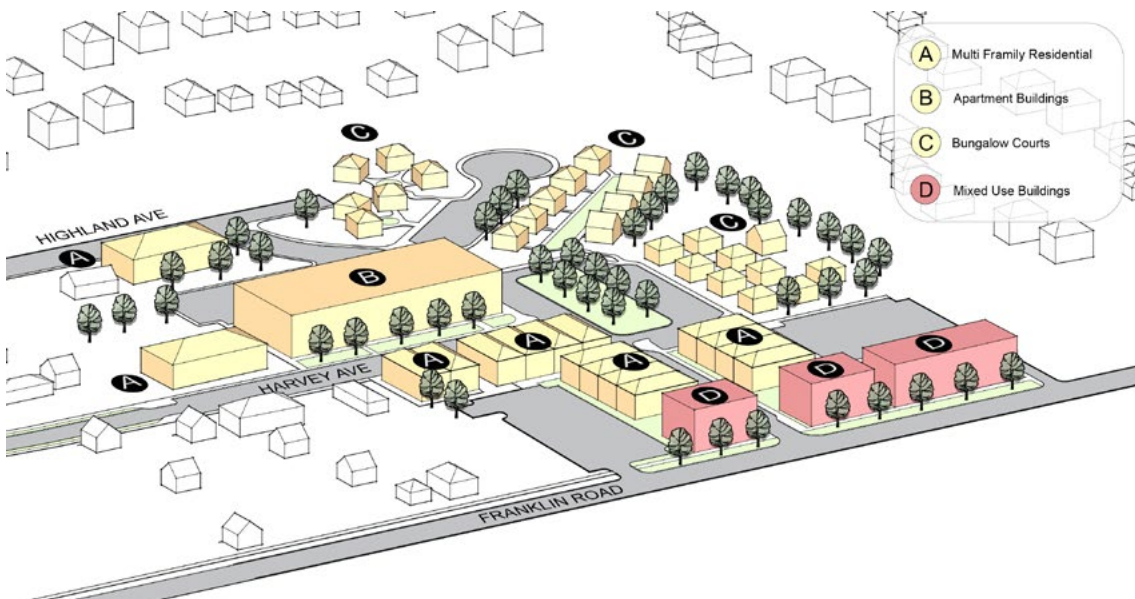
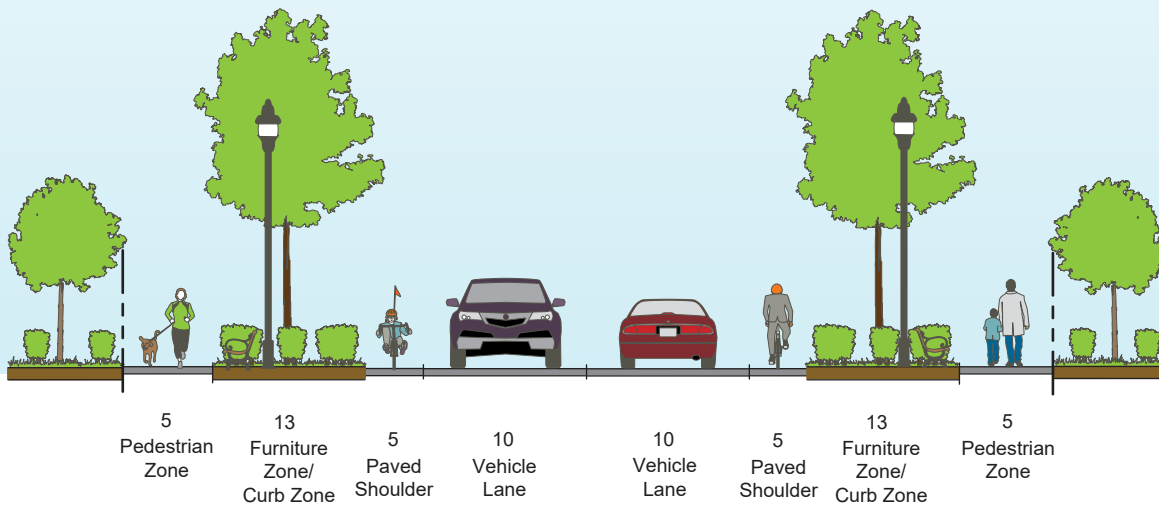
Auburn Avenue. Lane reduction on Auburn Avenue as shown in the mixed-use neighborhood plan (Exhibit 1) will create opportunities for on-street parking, bump-outs, street trees, improved crossings, and small medians to slow traffic and provide pedestrian refuge areas.



Franklin Elementary School Site

Exhibit 2a

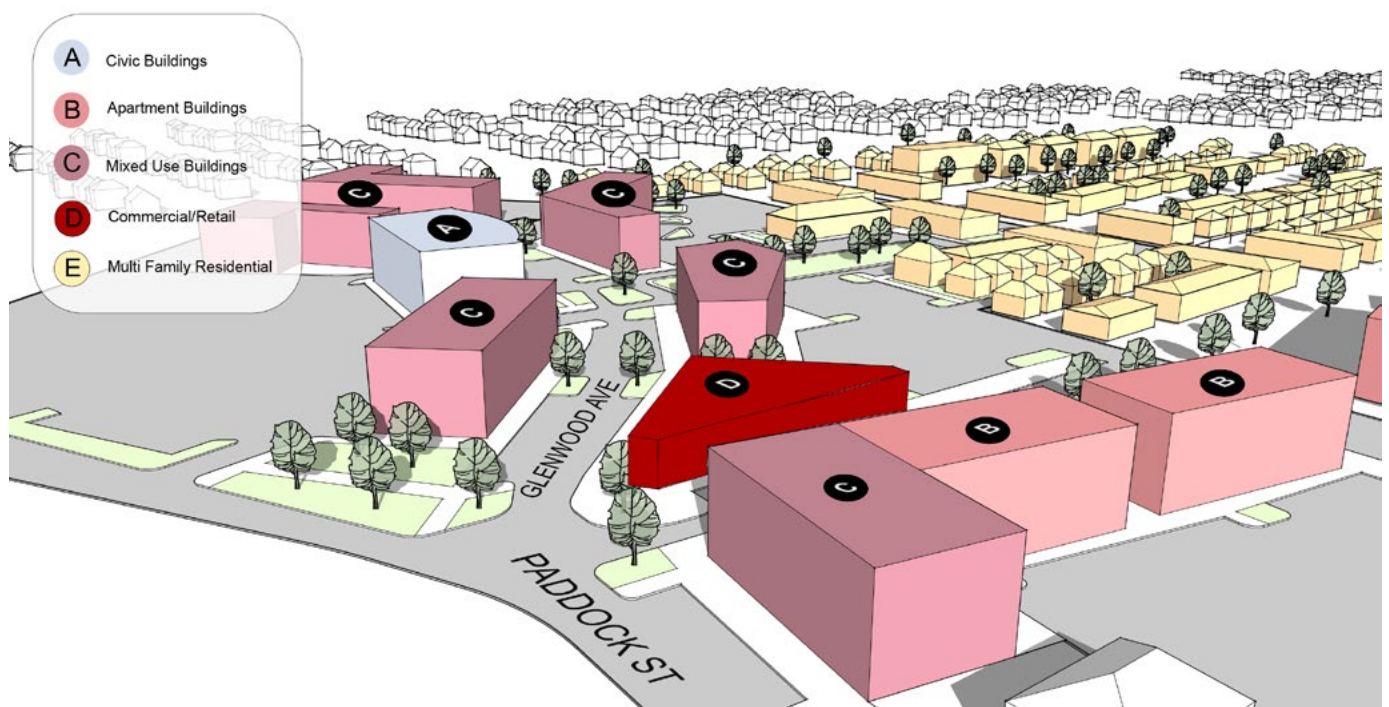
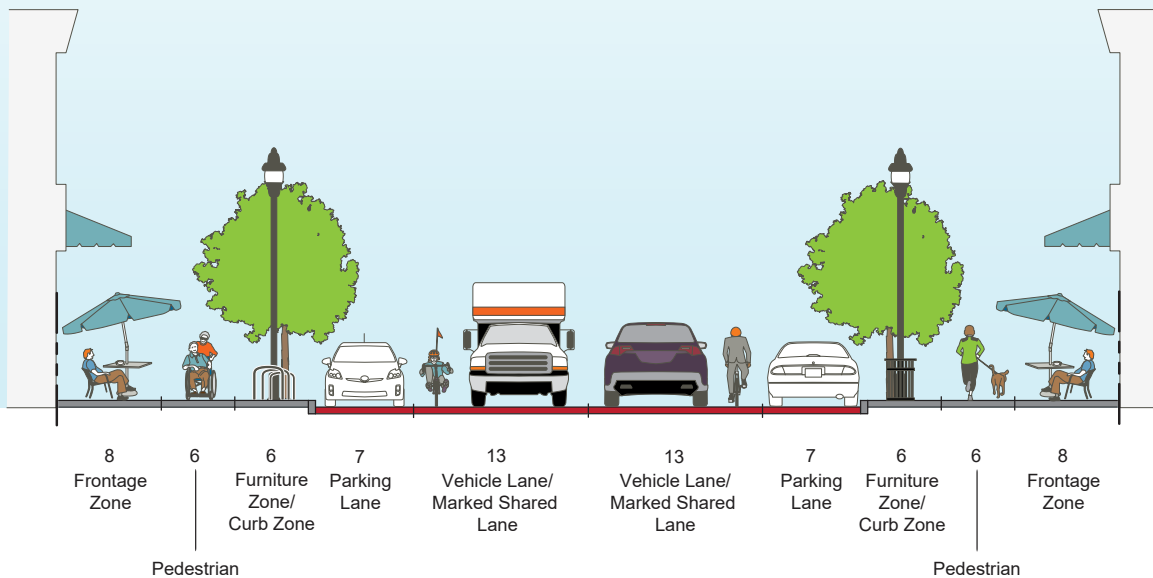
Franklin Road. The redevelopment concept for the Franklin Elementary School Site (Exhibit 2) includes providing pedestrian zones, generous landscaping along the curb zone, paved shoulders for bikes on Franklin Road and on street parking on Fern Street.



Glenwood Plaza

Exhibit 3a

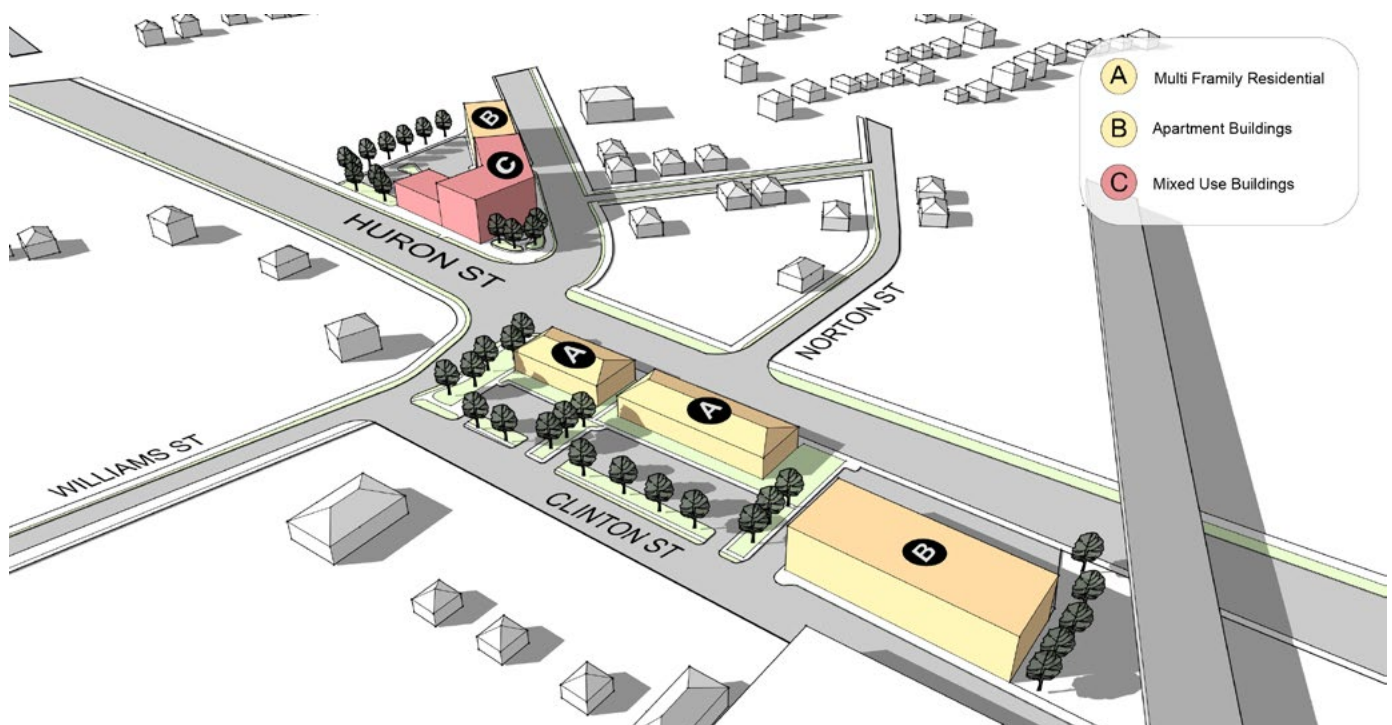
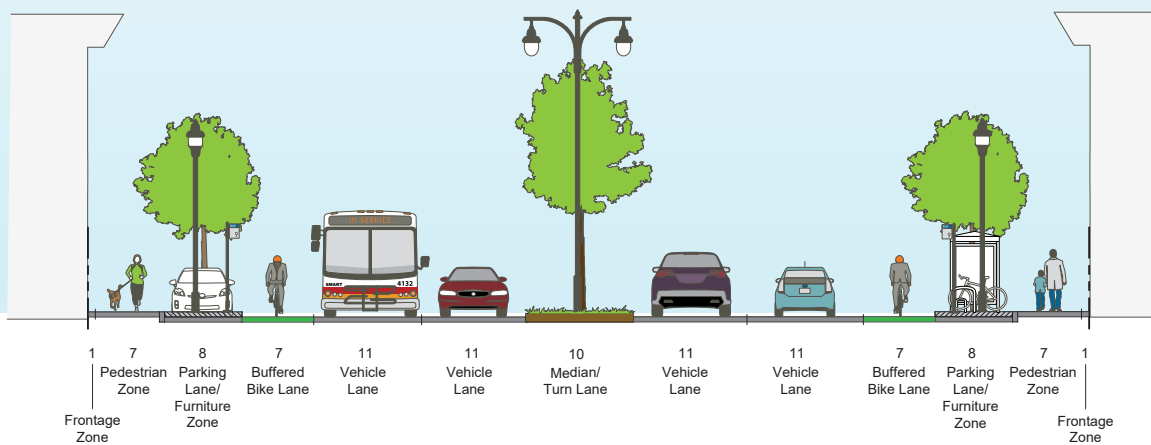
S. Glenwood Avenue. In addition to extending the City's road network into the site, including Omar Street on the south, and Grand view Boulevard, and Delco Streets on the east, the Glenwood Plaza redevelopment concept (Exhibit 3) transforms S. Glenwood Avenue into a pedestrian-friendly space with opportunities for on-street parking, shared vehicle/bike lanes, street trees, and generous pedestrian zones.



Corners of Huron and State Street

Exhibit 4a

Corner of Huron and State Streets. As shown in the W. Huron and State Street redevelopment concept (Exhibit 4), W. Huron Street modifications provide opportunities for an enhanced median, buffered bike lanes, potential on-street parking, and improved pedestrian zones.

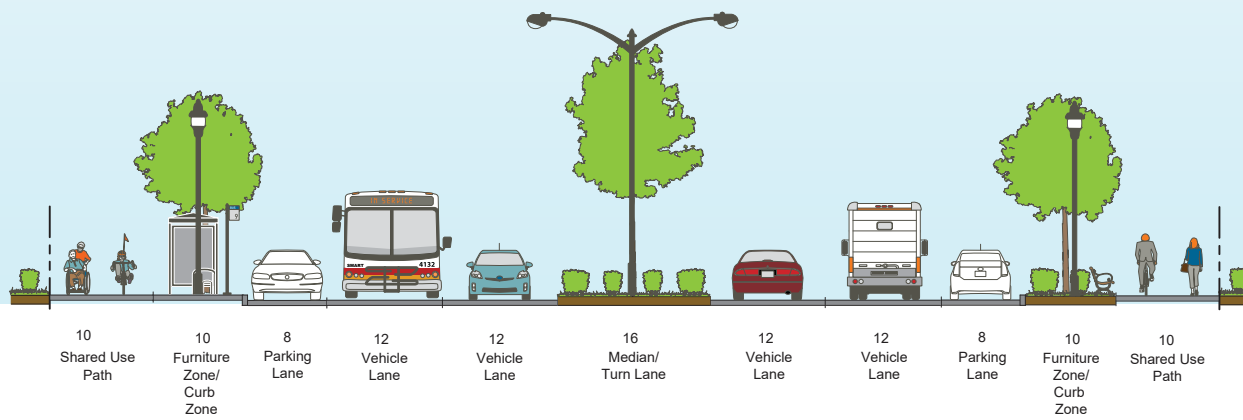


350 E. Walton Boulevard

Exhibit 5a

Option 1

E. Walton Boulevard Site – Option 1. Option 1 redevelopment concept (Exhibit 5) includes minimal on-street parking on E. Walton with the emphasis of building frontages shifting to Lehigh, more on-street parking is provided on Lehigh Avenue. This option includes enhanced medians to slow traffic and provide pedestrian refuge areas along E. Walton Boulevard.

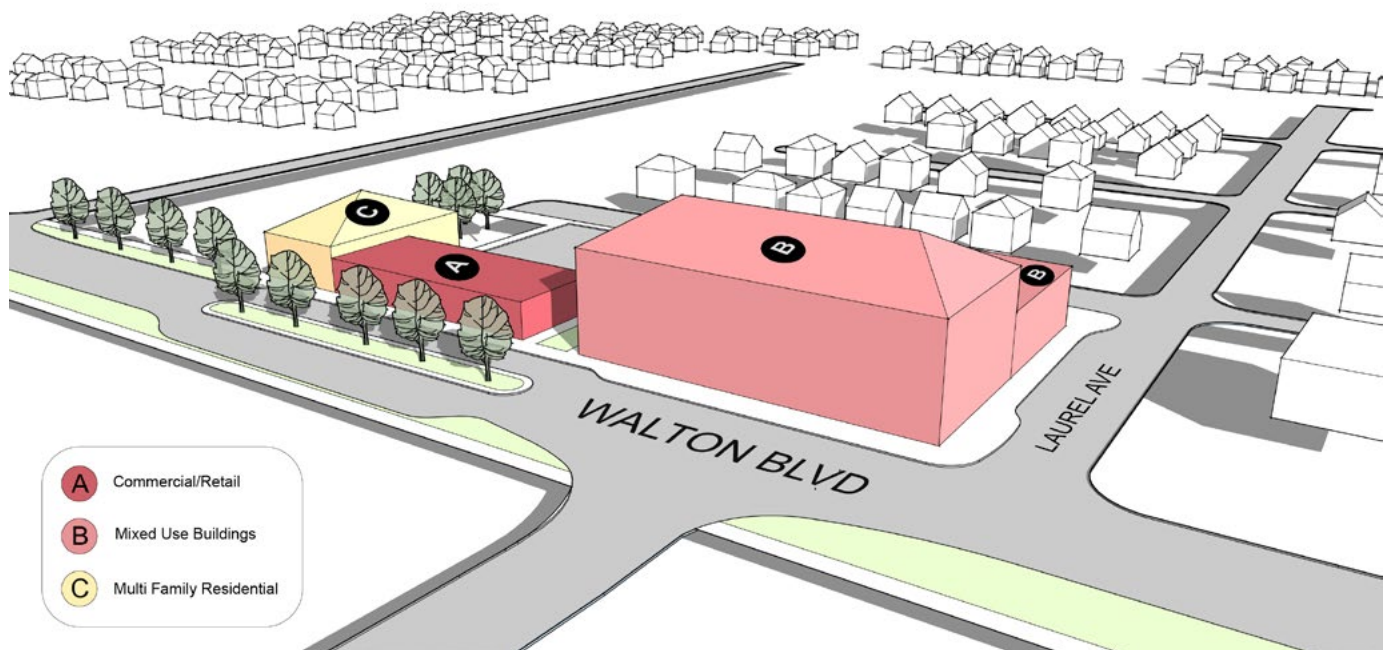
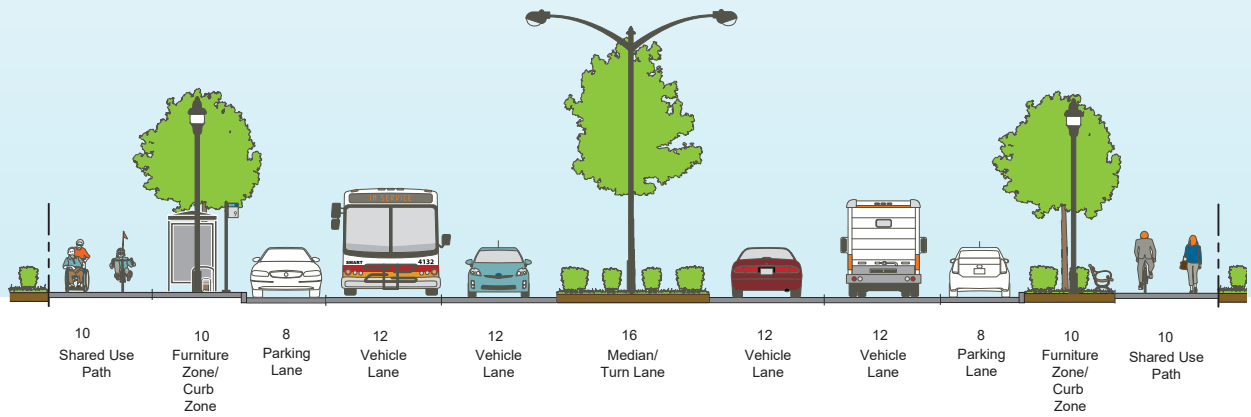


350 E. Walton Boulevard

Exhibit 6a

Option 2

E. Walton Boulevard Site – Option 2. Modifications to E. Walton Boulevard as shown in the redevelopment option 2 (Exhibit 6) concept includes the addition of on-street parking to service businesses fronting on E. Walton Boulevard, along with improved pedestrian zones, and enhanced medians to slow traffic and provide pedestrian refuge areas.

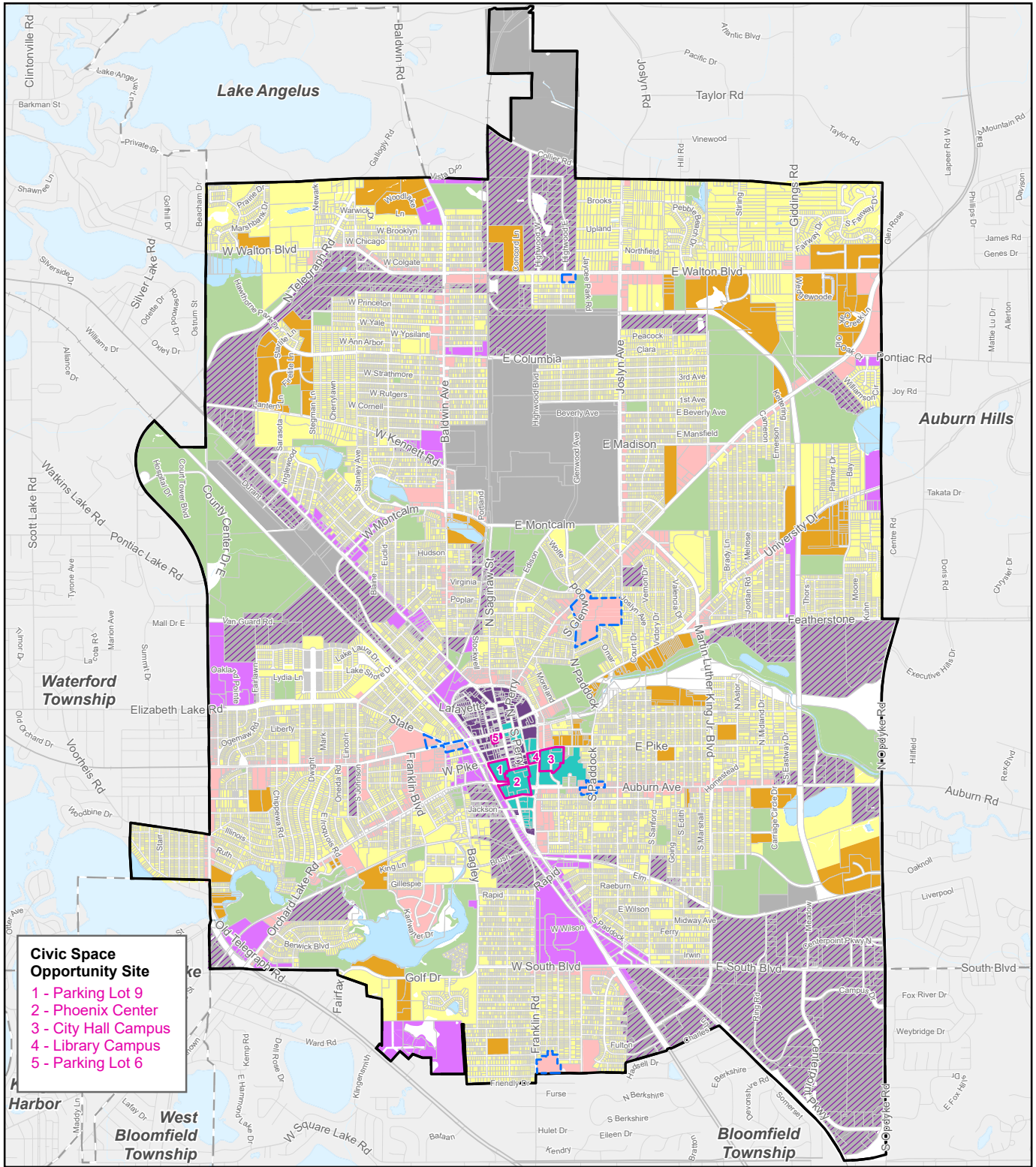


5.3

Downtown and Commercial Corridors Opportunity Map

The following map demonstrates goals and opportunities for development in and around Downtown Pontiac. It shows planned civic spaces in Downtown Pontiac, along with Future Land Use categories, and potential Neighborhood Mixed Use Areas. The Downtown/Civic/Park/Mixed Use Parks Future Land Use category is intended to celebrate Pontiac's existing assets while guiding the creation of new civic and community, commercial, and housing spaces to improve quality of life for all. This Future Land Use category prioritizes accessibility and coherence; In doing so, it seeks to ensure that public services and spaces are located in convenient places within Pontiac, and that Pontiac community members have equitable access to green spaces and gathering places, basic services, and everyday amenities.

Pontiac's five Opportunity Sites, labeled on the **Map 7**, will be central to achieving this vision for the future.



Civic Space Opportunity Site

- 1 - Parking Lot 9
- 2 - Phoenix Center
- 3 - City Hall Campus
- 4 - Library Campus
- 5 - Parking Lot 6

Map 7. Civic Space Opportunities

City of Pontiac, Michigan

January 3, 2025 - Draft

- Legend**
- Civic Space Opportunity Site
 - Target Mixed Use Node
 - Neighborhood Residential
 - Community Residential
 - Neighborhood Mixed Use
 - Corridor Mixed Use
 - Downtown
 - Downtown/Civic/Park/Mixed Use
 - Civics and Parks
 - Research and Development Campus
 - Industrial
 - Right of Way
 - City Boundary



Basemap Source: MCGI, v. 17a.
 Data Source: City of Pontiac 2024.
 Oakland County GIS 2024.
 McKenna 2024.



5.4

Downtown and Commercial Corridors Action Plan

Core Findings and Metric

When discussing the Downtown and Commercial Corridors goals and setting a vision of the future of these spaces with Pontiac community members, the following key engagement finding was ascertained:

Core Finding: Downtown and the commercial corridors are full of underutilized land and buildings; Pontiac residents should have priority access to entrepreneurship in these locations.

Based on this goal and the key engagement finding, success in the Downtown and Commercial Corridors will be judged by the following 2040 metric:

Metric: By 2040, use Community Benefits Agreements to create 500 new Pontiac resident-owned businesses.

Action Plan

To achieve the visions of the Pontiac community, the overarching goal statement for Downtown and commercial corridors will be approached through use of a strategic action plan, including a series of objectives and the action items that correlated to each objective. Accompanying each action item is a recommended timeline, which correlates with the priority level of each task. It consists of short-term (1-2 years), medium-term (3-5 years), and long-term (5+). To align with the City's goals, emerging trends, and input received from the public thus far, the goal, objectives, and action items have been created with the following priorities in mind:

- » Positively branding Pontiac's Downtown and commercial areas to retain and attract visitors and businesses
- » Fostering opportunities for business diversity and creativity
- » Promoting placemaking using Pontiac's existing assets
- » Improving pedestrian access and safety to Downtown
- » Supporting code enforcement and vacancy prevention

Goal Statement for Downtown and Commercial

Strengthen the downtown and commercial corridors as shared cultural and economic hubs in a way that invites all residents and the workforce in the City to live, work, play and stay in the City and in a way that improves connection to neighborhoods.

Objectives and Action Items Table

To accomplish the goal stated above, the following objectives and corresponding action items should be pursued:

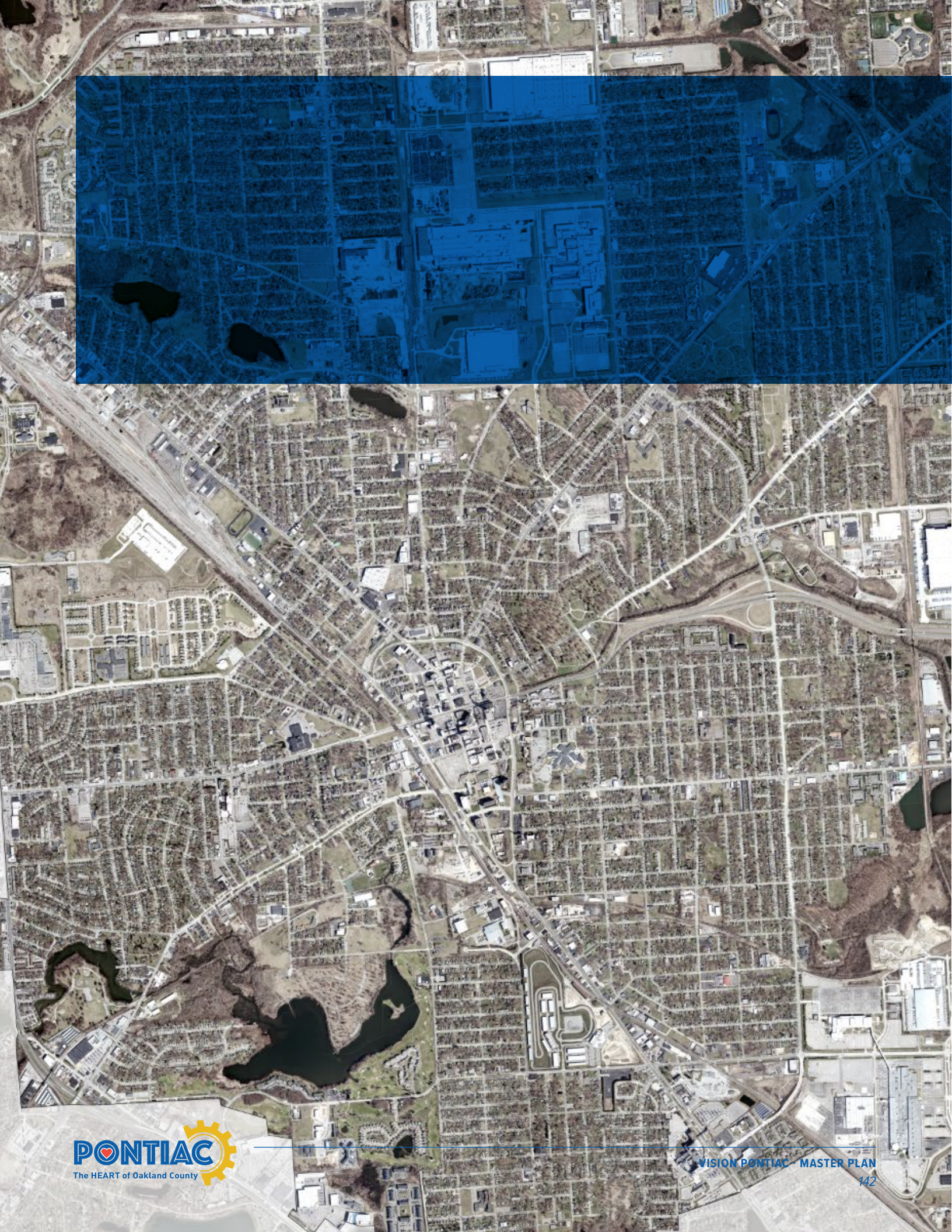
OBJECTIVES AND ACTION ITEMS	TIMEFRAME	COLLABORATION
Objective A – Establish Downtown Pontiac as a regional destination point through branding, improving streetscapes, marketing existing businesses, and attracting diverse local businesses and entrepreneurs.		
1) Amplify existing branding initiatives and funding opportunities from Main Street Pontiac and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of current initiatives to inform their expansion.	Short-term	X
2) Facilitate strategic conversations with existing Downtown business owners to coordinate and extend business hours.	Short-term	X
3) Consider hiring a commercial consultant to market Downtown Pontiac to businesses and developers.	Short-term	X
Objective B – Incentivize / establish an entertainment, arts, or cultural district, or multiple throughout the City.		
1) Evaluate existing commercial character along major thoroughfares to identify potential growth and rezoning opportunities.	Short-term	X
2) Continue to support and promote existing arts and cultural programming and groups (i.e. Pontiac Arts Walk; murals).	Short-term	X
Objective C – Identify key vacant or underutilized commercial corridors for key planning efforts to correct zone, enhance branding, and improve public infrastructure to provide redevelopment opportunities that support the surrounding neighborhoods.		
1) Utilize a DDA or other similar entity / financing structure to establish public parking to encourage the redevelopment of surface parking lots.	Short-term	X
2) Within the Vacancy Ordinance, work with Main Street Pontiac to continue to ameliorate vacancies and nuisances specific to the Downtown.	Short-term	X
3) Create or review design guidelines, specific to the Downtown, that requires new development to replicate or flexibly complement the historic architecture of the older buildings.	Short-term	X
4) Work with existing employers and property owners Downtown to develop new housing opportunities for the existing and potential workforce.	Long-term	X
Objective D – Focus on the activation of spaces within existing sites and proposed future developments to create placemaking, branding, and community in different areas of the City.		
1) Continue to host and sponsor community events in existing and emerging public spaces downtown and around the City.	Short-term	X
2) Reevaluate the usage of roadways and alleys to identify opportunities to activate these corridors for greater pedestrian and business use.	Short-term	X
3) Prioritize public spaces and places for activation and/or public events in new developments between different land uses through compatibility, design, and branding.	Short-term	X

OBJECTIVES AND ACTION ITEMS	TIMEFRAME	COLLABORATION
Objective E – Prioritize streetscape and transit improvements to offer safe pedestrian connections between neighborhoods and the Downtown.		
1) Ensure “The Loop” redesign improves pedestrian connectivity between the Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, through the inclusion of street lighting and protected, painted, and signalized crosswalks every 200-300ft.	Medium-term	X
2) Coordinate with SMART bus services to provide rapid service routes from neighborhoods to Downtown OR Work with Main Street Pontiac to sponsor a Downtown Trolley connecting neighborhoods to the Downtown.	Medium-term	X
3) Collaborate with key planning institutions and development partners to ensure that all future roadway, thoroughfare, and Downtown redevelopment plans improve the connectivity to Downtown for residents and visitors.	Long-term	X
Objective F – Create a Downtown Civic, Park Space and Mixed use District in the Downtown that compliments the existing Downtown and creates public spaces for interactions between different land uses with proper design.		
1) Coordinate with Oakland County, residents, and the Phoenix Center development partners to communicate and integrate Master Plan objectives into redevelopment plans.	Short-term	X
2) Design and incorporate strategies to acquire critical pieces of land for public purposes for redevelopment.	Short-term	X
3) Reactivate and improve access to the Clinton River for improved placemaking opportunities and natural attractions in the Downtown.	Long-term	X

Key Partners and Stakeholders

To accomplish this Strategic Action Plan, the following groups, bodies, and institutions will serve as the City of Pontiac’s key partners and stakeholders, with whom close collaboration and resource-sharing will be essential:

- » **State- and Federal-Level Entities.** United States Department of Transportation (DOT); Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT); Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC).
- » **Regional Resources.** Oakland County; SMART Oakland County; Oakland University.
- » **Local Resources.** Main Street Pontiac; Clinton River Watershed Council; Pontiac Creative Arts Center; Greater Pontiac Community Coalition.
- » **Existing Industry Leaders in Pontiac.** Large employers in the Automotive, Distribution, and Healthcare Sectors as well as Construction and Development Companies etc.
- » **Existing Small Business Owners.**



Chapter 6.

Future Transportation

Pontiac is at the heart of the Oakland County transportation system. M-59, a major east-west route, runs through the center of the City and accounts for 20,557 daily drivers. Another principal arterial is Woodward, which spans from Detroit to Pontiac carrying 11,853 daily drivers. Telegraph is the most used principal arterial which carries 52,000 commuters each day. Perry Street, Orchard Lake Road and Auburn Avenue are considered “other principal arterials”, which are principal roads that are not part of the interstate highway system. These roads range from 10,000-12,000 daily drivers each. In addition to these roadways is I-75 which is within 2 miles of the City limits. Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport, located in Romulus, is the primary international airport for the Metro Detroit area and provides passenger and cargo service to the region, but Oakland County International Airport is located only 8.5 miles from Pontiac’s City Center.

A well established and efficient transportation network lays a foundation for thriving neighborhoods, vibrant commercial corridors, and unique community spaces—and Pontiac’s should be no different. This chapter explains the transportation network successes, challenges, and opportunities within Pontiac’s existing transportation system and identifies ideas for Pontiac to collaboratively implement in the future.

(Left) An aerial of Pontiac from Google Maps highlighting the City’s well-connected road network. The City has strong freeway access via the Woodward Loop and M-59/West Huron Street.

6.1 Findings

Engagement

Baseline information about the Pontiac community's experience with the transportation system was gathered through Steering Committee meetings and public engagement events, as well as through targeted questions in the Community Survey.

Similar to national trends, 95% of Pontiac residents use a private vehicle as their method of transportation to get around the City. Walking and biking are the other top options of transportation with walking accounting for 35% of Community Survey responses, and biking accounting for 15%. This data reflects the auto-oriented transportation network in Pontiac.

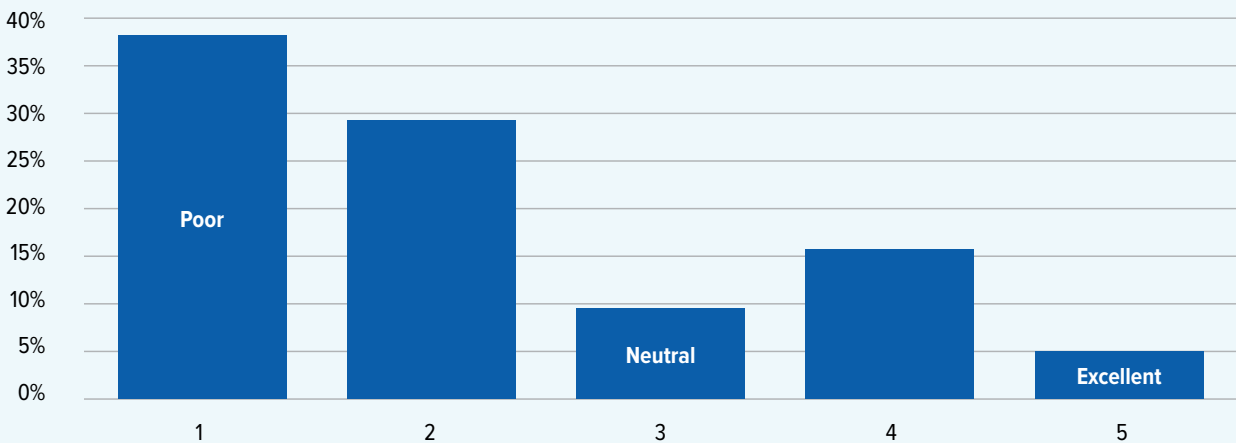
When asked how residents rank access to grocery stores by walking, biking or public transit, the majority indicates that the infrastructure is poor with 61% of responses. Only 5% of residents believe that the infrastructure is excellent.

Finally, 38% of residents rate access to parks and recreation as poor, indicating an opportunity for the City to create non-motorized connections between the City's parks and increase parks and recreation programming.

Public feedback during the community engagement process expressed concern about the impacts of heavy truck traffic through residential areas close to industrial sites. The City should conduct a traffic, engineering, and transit study to identify specific routes in the City where truck traffic would be least impactful to residents.

How would you rate your access by walking, biking, or public transportation to parks in Pontiac?

Slider | Skipped: 83 | Answered 101 (54.9%)



Resident Feedback on Priority Destinations and Accessibility

To ascertain the current and future mobility strengths and needs of the City, residents' were asked about preferences to access to key destinations in and near the City by driving, walking, biking, or using public transit. These key destinations include:

- » Amazon
- » Amtrak Station/Transportation Hub
- » Beaudette Park
- » Carnival Market
- » City Hall
- » Costco and the Village of Bloomfield area
- » Downtown
- » Galloway Lake Park
- » GM
- » Glenwood Plaza
- » Goldner Walsh
- » Golf Course
- » Indian Village Historic District
- » M1 Concourse
- » Micah 6
- » Murphy Park
- » Oakland County Offices
- » Pontiac High School
- » Pontiac Oaks Park
- » Pontiac Transportation Museum
- » Trinity Health (St. Joe's)
- » UWM

The results of this activity clearly indicate the majority of these locations are most comfortably accessed by car. One resident suggested that "driving is the only option unless it's literally at the end of my street", suggesting a lack of safe and convenient alternatives. Walking was the second most popular form of transit, followed by limited biking and public transit use. A small number of residents provided some locations that were easy to walk to from their home – including the Amtrak Station, City Hall, Goldner Walsh, Murphy Park, Trinity Health, the Golf Course, UWM, the Historic District, and the M1 Concourse. The only locations accessible by public transit to a small number of residents were reported as City Hall, Carnival Market, GM, and Downtown. Locations that provided limited bike-ability were Goldner Walsh, the M1 Concourse, the Golf Course, the Pontiac Transportation Museum, and UWM.

This data indicates an opportunity to expand non-motorized transit and public transit options to key destinations in the City.

When asked what modes of transportation are most in need of improvement when traveling to and from one's neighborhood, residents responded with the following details:

Driving

"Road improvements"

"I want to feel safe to be there with how people drive; safe driving is questionable at times"

"Vehicular traffic calming"

"Pontiac should create our own Uber transportation services"

"Reduce impacts of heavy truck traffic"

Walking

"Improve sidewalk"

"Sidewalks are horrific and unsafe"

"More pathways and connections between neighborhoods and also connecting them with downtown"

Biking

"Rails to trails: old train track should become a trail"

"Biking requires driving on the road and people do not look for bikes"

Public transit

"Buses moving every 30 minutes to bus stops"

Notably, when asked who in the room would ride a City bus system, no residents raise their hand. Residents also expressed concern with the safety of biking alongside dangerous and speeding drivers.

Demographics

Vehicle Access

In Pontiac, 18% of households do not have access to a personal vehicle. Many residents rely on their friends and family for ride sharing and lack access to public transportation or alternative modes of transportation to their daily activities. A greater percentage of Pontiac households lack access to a personal vehicle than the national average, indicating a need for a connected transportation system with multiple transportation options.

Table 12: Vehicle Access for Pontiac Households

VEHICLES AVAILABLE	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	PERCENTAGE
No vehicles	4,557	18.0%
One vehicle	10,405	41.1%
Two vehicles	7,086	28.0%
Three or more vehicles	3,295	13.0%

Source: American Community Survey, 2022 5-year estimates, Table B08201

Transportation System

Jurisdiction and System Maintenance

Most streets in Pontiac fall under the City's jurisdiction, while some of the major thoroughfares and arterials are managed by Oakland County or the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). This means the City can implement improvements such as upgrades to roads, sidewalks, street lighting, or street trees on its own roads. For major routes like M-59 and Woodward Avenue, any enhancements require approval from Oakland County or MDOT. Despite this, the City is still obligated to contribute funding for transportation improvements, with the required contribution percentage varying based on the project scope, the project location, and the County/State program under which the project is funded, as described below:

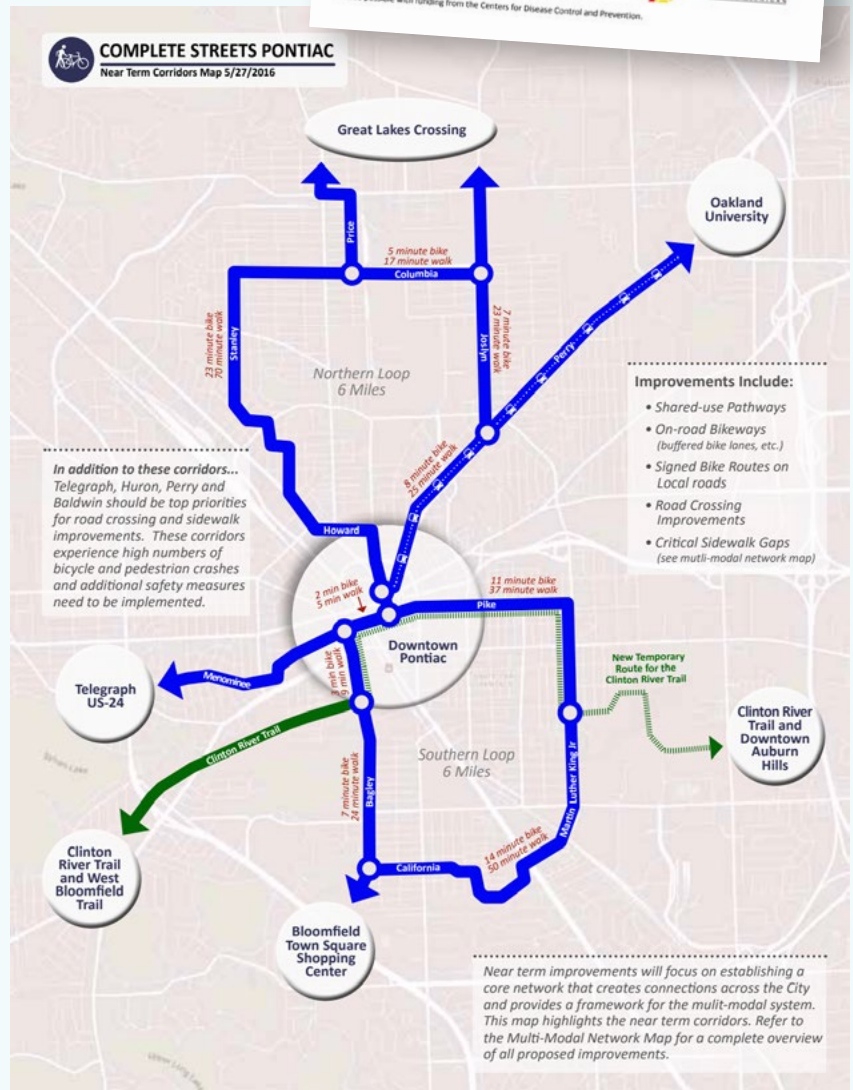
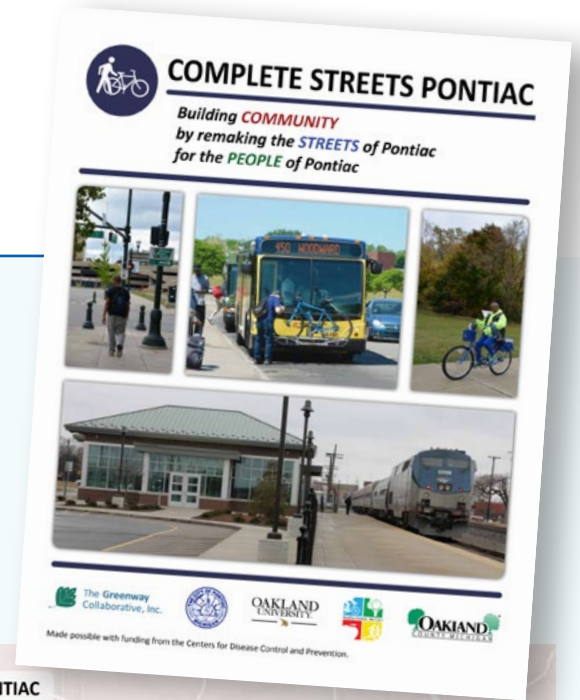
- » **Scope:** Road improvement refers to major projects like repaving or converting gravel roads into paved surfaces. In contrast, road repair involves routine maintenance to address issues such as filling potholes, grading gravel roads, sealing cracks, and repairing shoulders. Both road improvements and repairs are funded either partially or fully by the City.
- » **Location:** M-59, Woodward Avenue, Cesar Chavez Avenue, North Perry Street, and Telegraph Road are controlled by MDOT, which has a planned update schedule for all its roads. Few roads are owned by the County leaving the rest of them in the primary care of the City of Pontiac. MDOT roads will be updated every few decades using taxpayer funds without the City intervening. If the City desires to fix MDOT roads ahead of the planned schedule, the City will need to contribute some of the funds to fix them.
- » **Funding: Key Partners and Stakeholders:**
 - **State- and Federal-Level Entities:** United States Department of Transportation (DOT); Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT); Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), Amtrak; Greyhound
 - **Regional Resources:** Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC); Oakland County Transit; SMART Oakland County; People's Express
 - **Existing Industry Leaders in Pontiac:** Automotive, Distribution, and Healthcare Sector as well as Construction Companies.
 - **Existing Micro-Mobility Companies in Pontiac:** Trek Bicycle Pontiac

Complete Streets Pontiac Plan 2017

Pontiac has undertaken efforts to make upgrades to their transportation system that benefit all transportation users. In 2017, the City adopted the Complete Streets Pontiac Plan. The Complete Streets Pontiac Plan offers policy recommendation, near term projects for the built environment, and methods to promote walking and biking transportation in the City. The City should continue to implement this Complete Streets Plan to support transportation infrastructure that meets the needs of all transportation users.

Oakland County has conducted similar efforts to support non-motorized transportation access throughout the County. The Oakland County Access to Transit Program was created to tackle the “first mile/last mile” challenge—the difficulties people face when getting to and from transit stops. This challenge can manifest in various ways, including limited access to stops, inadequate pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, distance and time constraints, accessibility issues for vulnerable populations, and safety concerns.

On November 8, 2022, Oakland County residents approved the Oakland County Public Transportation Millage. This 10-year, 0.95-mill tax is dedicated to maintaining and expanding public transit services across the county. Since its passage, many residents have highlighted the critical role public transit plays in providing convenient access to jobs, healthcare, education, and other essential services. Finally, the Oakland County Transit Division is currently in the process of developing a Community Transit Plan, and Road Commission for Oakland County is currently in the process of developing a Safe Streets for All Plan, which will provide a basis for non-motorized transportation improvements throughout the County.



The 2017 Complete Streets Pontiac Plan recommends several strategies and interventions to improve transportation access for all Pontiac residents.

6.2

Non-Motorized Transportation Improvements

As highlighted in the Complete Streets Pontiac Plan, non-motorized transportation options play a vital role in fostering a sustainable, accessible, and healthier community. By promoting alternatives to motorized vehicles, these options help reduce environmental impacts, such as vehicle emissions, and address health concerns linked to decreased physical activity. Some Pontiac residents have stated they prefer walking or biking to their daily destinations but often feel unsafe. To address this, strategic planning for alternative transportation modes—through infrastructure, policies, programming, and comprehensive planning—is essential for Pontiac’s future land use and development. The following non-motorized transportation options are worth exploring:

Neighborhood Mixed Use Area Plans

Effective non-motorized transportation planning starts with understanding the daily amenities that Pontiac residents need or want to access, such as grocery stores, pharmacies, healthcare facilities, community spaces, and educational centers. Developing neighborhood mixed-use areas suitable for mixed-use development near residential communities can enhance pedestrian connectivity to these amenities and support the creation of walkable, bike-friendly neighborhoods. The goal of neighborhood nodes is to minimize reliance on motor vehicle travel and reduce the challenges of long commutes, while improving overall community well-being. Preliminary plans for establishing neighborhood nodes in Pontiac were established in Chapter 3 of this Master Plan.

These neighborhood mixed-use areas will also support non-motorized transportation through amenities and beautifying elements, such as bus stops and shelters, pedestrian benches, bicycle parking, street trees, and landscaping.

Demand Response



Community Transit

A community’s public transportation system, offering services like fixed routes, dial-a-ride transit, and other services.



Microtransit

A growing part of the transportation sector that offers transportation for one or two riders, such as rentable bicycles or scooters.



ADA Paratransit

A transit service offered to those with disabilities who are unable to use fixed route services.



Fixed Route

Transportation services offered on pre-set routes at scheduled times.

Oakland County contracts with five transit providers that provide four different types of public transportation services, shown in this breakdown. (Source: Oakland County Access to Transit Program Guide, Oakland County Transit Division, 2024)

Sidewalk Network and Gaps

Pontiac's sidewalk network allows for the flow of pedestrian activity within residential communities and along commercial corridors and Downtown. However, current residents describe being unable to safely reach their intended destinations using Pontiac's current sidewalk network due to its gaps, particularly as it pertains to crossing major thoroughfares.

Sidewalk gaps refer to places where sidewalk segments do not connect, abruptly stop, or simply do not exist. These lapses in pedestrian infrastructure can cause a hazard because it forces users to cross at non-designated crosswalks or use unimproved surfaces for traveling. To promote non-motorized transportation in Pontiac, a Sidewalk Gap Analysis is recommended to identify and strategically address such gaps. Connecting the existing gaps will not only improve safety but encourage non-motorized transportation.

Additionally, the construction of new sidewalks and sidewalk replacement and repair should adhere to the guidelines outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These standards guarantee suitable width, slope, and separation, ensuring that sidewalks are accessible to a broad range of individuals. Sidewalks in residential areas should be a minimum of five feet, and when space allows, can be even wider. Higher traffic pathways that allow for multiple uses should be 8 to 12 feet wide in neighborhoods and 10 to 14 feet wide in more recreational settings. Curb cuts and curb ramps should also be designed and constructed in compliance with ADA requirements. The City should commit to conducting rotating annual inspections of sidewalks, focusing on one City Council District each year to ensure ongoing maintenance of sidewalks.

State and federal programs exist to support municipalities with improving sidewalk infrastructure and gaps. Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) is a federal program aimed at providing children of all abilities safe walking and bicycling access to school. SRTS in Michigan offers mini-grants and major grants for schools to support active transportation programs and transportation infrastructure improvements at schools, such as sidewalk improvements, traffic calming interventions, bicycle parking facilities, and other interventions. The City should support Pontiac schools in applying for these opportunities if the schools are interested.

Bicycle Lanes

Typically marked with signage, pavement striping or markings, or protective infrastructure, bicycle lanes are designated areas of road specifically reserved for people riding bicycles. Pontiac currently offers a short series of "sharrow" bike lanes throughout the City; however, many residents decide to ride their bike on the sidewalk, or not at all, as they feel unsafe sharing the road with higher speed traffic.

The following treatment options offer various types of bicycle lanes with differing levels of investment and infrastructure. Pontiac should consider these bicycle lanes, as appropriate, when coordinating with the County and State on roadway improvements:

- » **Conventional Bicycle Lane.** A standard bicycle lane marked with painted lines and symbols, typically positioned adjacent to motorized vehicle lanes. It provides a designated space for cyclists and helps define their right of way.
- » **Buffered Bicycle Lane.** A buffered bicycle lane includes additional painted markings or physical separation (such as a striped buffer zone) between the bicycle lane and adjacent motor vehicle lanes. This provides an extra layer of protection for cyclists.
- » **Protected Bicycle Lane (Cycle Track).** A protected bicycle lane physically separates cyclists from motorized traffic using barriers, bollards, or other elements. This type offers a higher level of safety and comfort for cyclists, often positioned between the sidewalk and the parking lane or roadway.
- » **Marked Shared Lane (Sharrows).** Shared lane markings (sharrows) are painted symbols on the road indicating that cyclists share the lane with motorized vehicles. They are typically used in areas where a full bicycle lane may not be feasible, on roadways with lower traffic volumes and speeds.
- » **Bicycle Parking.** While not a type of bike lane, frequent bicycle parking facilities are important for active bicycle lanes, as people are more likely to utilize bicycle lanes if there are places to park their bicycle at or near their destination. Bicycle parking comes in a variety of styles, some of which are shown below. The City should work to add bicycle parking along bicycle routes and incentive commercial property owners to add bicycle parking at their businesses.

Note that not all roadways are appropriate, feasible, or safe for bicycle lanes. For example, throughout our community engagement process, Pontiac residents expressed feeling unsafe biking in the bike lane on Perry Street and wanting the bike lane to connect to existing

destinations. Before large-scale investments in this type of non-motorized infrastructure, smaller projects may be piloted in moderate to low traffic areas that are most heavily used by Pontiac pedestrians as routes to community spaces and daily amenities, to help gauge interest and attune the treatment options to Pontiac's needs.

During public engagement sessions, community members also noted the importance of bicycle education campaigns, for both riders and drivers to learn how to coexist safely on the road. All investments and pilot projects should be accompanied by comprehensive public engagement and safety training to prevent collisions and accidents.



Conventional Bike Lane



Buffered Bike Lane



Protected Bike Lane



Marked Sharrows

Recreational Walking and Biking Trails

Trails are an important part of a city's non-motorized transportation system, as they offer a protected, low-impact connection to nature and recreational opportunities. They offer a safer, quieter, and more enjoyable space for diverse pedestrians and cyclists of all ages and abilities, as they are separated from roadways and motorists.

The Oakland County Parks system offers nearly 80 miles of paved and natural trails for walking, jogging, skating, biking and equestrian riding year-round. Additionally, Pontiac is home to the highly favored Clinton River Trail, a 16-mile long, multi-use, recreational trail extending through the communities of Sylvan Lake, Pontiac, Auburn Hills, Rochester Hills and Rochester. The trail provides connections to several other area trails and is a critical part of two cross-state trails: the Iron Belle Trail running from Belle Isle to Ironwood and the Great Lake-to-Lake Trails Route #1 from South Haven to Port Huron.

When considering improvements to its non-motorized transportation system, Pontiac should incorporate strategic investments in its walking and biking trails that serve community's recreational and everyday needs. Where possible, trails should connect to neighborhoods and commercial hubs to support residents' ability to walk and bicycle to daily errands and activities. Further, the consistent upkeep of Pontiac's trails is essential for their safe use and visual appeal. Investments should also consider incorporating necessary lighting and sufficient wayfinding signage to promote accessibility, thereby improving enjoyment and safety. Trails should also be designed and maintained to ADA standards to increase universal accessibility for all users. Including shaded benches, drinking fountains, and restrooms along the trails also improves the accessibility of a trail.



Priority Intersection Improvements

The first step to improve intersections is to identify which intersections need improvements based on safety, infrastructure, and traffic volume. Once these intersections are identified the next step is to create a method of prioritizing which intersection should be improved. Metrics can be established to measure the level of priority of each intersection. For example, an intersection that has a high traffic volume and a low safety rating would be a prime starting location.

During the community engagement process for this Master Plan, the Loop, Franklin Road, Franklin Boulevard, and West Huron Street were frequently noted by participants as being particularly difficult to navigate via walking and biking. This is likely to be due to high speeds in these corridors and a lack of pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure. While some of these roads are under County or State jurisdiction, the City should work with the appropriate entity to determine feasible traffic calming and safety improvements for these prime roads.

When considering infrastructure improvements for priority intersections, the City should implement interventions that support Complete Streets. Complete Streets is an approach that addresses the transportation needs of all road users, whether you are a pedestrian, bicyclist, public transportation user, or driver. A Complete Streets approach also aims to improve transportation access for those currently underserved by the existing auto-oriented transportation system, such as those with disabilities or those without access to vehicles.

Traffic calming and intersection improvements that support Complete Streets policies can include the following:

- » **Traffic signal updates**, including adding traffic signals or adjusting existing signals to optimize signal timing and reduce traffic congestion. This may also include traffic signals for protected left turns.
- » **Roundabouts** improve traffic flow and reduce severe crashes by slowing speeds and minimizing the points of potential collision within an intersection.
- » **Enhanced signage and markings** can help improve visibility and alert drivers to traffic patterns and upcoming intersections. Signage and markings can also be used to improve pedestrian safety by making them more visible.
- » **Design modifications** to improve safety may include reconfiguring traffic lanes, adding medians or barriers, adding turn lanes, or road dieting (where a wider, undivided roadway is converted into a two-lane road with a dedicated center left-turn lane).

- » **Lighting improvements and sign improvements** help improve visibility in the intersection increasing safety. Making sure all signs meet the current reflectivity standards of the MUTCD.
- » **Non-motorized accessibility improvements** include pedestrian crossings, High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK) signals (with which pedestrians can push a button to activate a crosswalk signal in a high-traffic area), crosswalks, ADA-compliant ramps, curb extensions, pedestrian refuge islands, and bike lanes, which are all valuable tactics for increasing pedestrian and non-motorized safety.

Through implementing Complete Streets policies throughout the City, and most importantly in high-traffic intersections, the City can improve the transportation system in a way that benefits all users.





Median

Parking Demand Management

Parking demand management refers to the processes, systems, and strategies used to effectively manage the use of parking spaces. The goal is to ensure availability while preventing overcrowding and promoting safety. It involves designing policies that decrease demand and influence modal shifts, such as changing parking behavior, mode of transportation, destination, schedule, or activity.

Options for parking demand management include setting time limits on City-owned parking spaces in the Downtown and commercial districts. These time limits can range from thirty (30) minutes to multiple hours. Other options include designated spaces for businesses and residential parking permits which guarantee parking spaces for those who use shared parking lots.

By encouraging alternative forms of transportation, the City can reduce the need for high parking space demands and increase the use of public transit, cycling, walking or ride sharing services. The way in which this could be enacted is to offer discounted or subsidized transit passes for employees or redesigning infrastructure to support non-motorized transportation. Vision Pontiac intends to increase workforce housing which serves as a primary reason to enhance alternative modes of transportation.



Pedestrian Crossing Signs

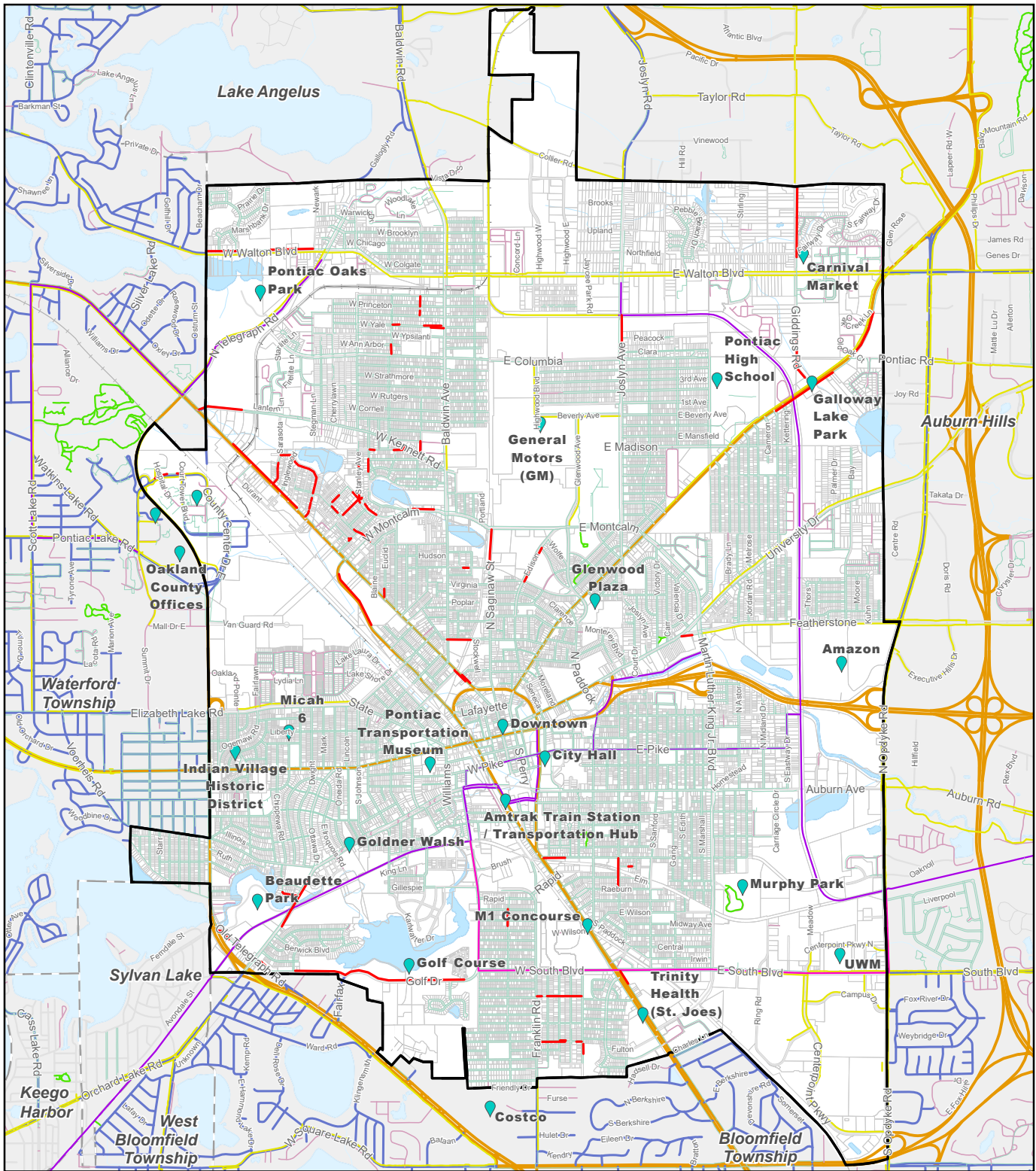


Smart Growth America provides an example of Complete Streets at work in a downtown environment. Here, angled parking, curb extensions, wide sidewalks, and raised crosswalks are used to harmoniously support pedestrian and automotive transportation.

6.3

Future Transportation Plan Map

The following Future Transportation Plan highlights suggested improvements for the City of Pontiac's transportation system to create dynamic, safe streets for all transportation users. The Non-Motorized Route recommendations shown come from the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments Regional Non-Motorized Plan. This robust non-motorized plan works to improve safety for all non-motorized transportation users and increases connectivity between residents, retail and neighborhood services, and parks and public spaces, improving quality of life for residents who are interested in utilizing non-motorized transportation options, or may not have access to a vehicle. The Future Transportation Plan Map also includes existing sidewalk gaps in the City, which identify initial locations where non-motorized access can be improved. Road jurisdictions are also included to indicate which road improvement projects would require collaboration with Oakland County, the Michigan Department of Transportation, or a private road entity.



Map 8. Future Transportation Plan

City of Pontiac, Michigan

January 3, 2025 - Draft

Legend

- Non-Motorized Route
 - Bike Lane
 - Park Path
 - Sidepath
 - Trail/Shared-Use Path
 - Sidewalk
 - Water Trail
 - Other Route
- Sidewalk Network Gap
- Roads
 - MDOT Road
 - Oakland County Road
 - City of Pontiac Road
 - Private or Other Road
- Community Destination
- City Boundary



Basemap Source: MCGI, v. 17a.
 Data Source: City of Pontiac 2024.
 Oakland County GIS 2024.
 McKenna 2024.



6.3

Transportation Action Plan

Core Finding and Metrics

Core Finding: People in Pontiac want safe streets and are concerned about the effects of growth on neighborhood parking.

Metric: Success within Future Transportation will be judged by the following 2040 metrics:

1. (Re)install and update 200 streetlights
2. (Re)install 500 high visibility traffic signs
3. Improve 25 school crossings
4. Resurface 10 miles of complete street corridors
5. Create residential parking demand strategy

Action Plan

To achieve the visions of the Pontiac community, the overarching goal statement for Downtown and commercial corridors will be approached through use of a strategic action plan, including a series of objectives and the action items that correlated to each objective. Accompanying each action item is a recommended timeline, which correlates with the priority level of each task. It consists of short-term (1-2 years), medium-term (3-5 years), and long-term (5+). To align with the City's goals, emerging trends, and input received from the public thus far, the goal, objectives, and action items have been created with the following priorities in mind:

- » Pedestrian safety, accessibility, and connectivity
- » Public transit accessibility and reliability
- » Traffic calming and enforcement in both commercial and residential areas
- » Innovative micro-mobility options

Goal Statement for Future Transportation

Strengthen opportunities for mobility and the quality of transportation experiences available in Pontiac.

Objectives and Action Items Table

To accomplish the goal stated above, the following objectives and corresponding action items should be pursued:

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	COLLABORATION
Objective A – Provide a safe, complete, connected, universally accessible, and well-maintained nonmotorized network.		
1) Using Safe Streets for All federal grant, complete a sidewalk and street lighting inventory to identify and strategically address sidewalk gaps and accessibility concerns.	Short-term	X
2) Improve the pedestrian network to public transportation options by providing painted and signalized crosswalks around key transit hubs, including the Amtrak Station and the Greyhound Bus Station.	Medium-term	
3) Continue to develop a Biking Trail Network within the Parks Master Plan process that separates bicycles from vehicle roadways and connects neighborhoods and commercial corridors, including the Downtown.	Long-term	X
4) Ensure access to parks, recreational opportunities, and green spaces for citizens of all ages, incomes, and abilities (within a 10-minute walking distance, or quarter mile).	Long-term	
5) Complete an Infrastructure Plan for the City of Pontiac that assesses needs and proposes gaps or improvements in the infrastructure network.	Plan: Short-term Implementation: Long-term	
6) Continue to seek, evaluate and sustain funding mechanisms for infrastructure in the Infrastructure Plan through grants, bonds, a road millage, and the establishment of a City Capital Improvement Fund.	Short-term	X
Objective B – Provide safe, reliable, and accessible public transit options that allow residents and visitors to access local amenities and education and employment opportunities in a timely manner.		
1) Conduct an assessment of current bus routes to evaluate the need for additional transit stops, lines, and frequency to key amenities, educational institutions, and employment nodes, as well as bus stop shelter improvements.	Short-term	
2) Create a safe and accessible pedestrian corridor connecting the Pontiac Transportation Center to the Downtown.	Medium-term	
3) Partner with SMART, Oakland County and other entities to evaluate, propose and construct a northern SMART transit hub in Downtown Pontiac.	Long-term	X
Objective C – Provide a safe flow of traffic through both commercial and residential areas, through design measures and enforcement.		
1) Through the Safe Streets for All federal grant, identify Pontiac’s most dangerous roadways and intersections, and actualize strategies to reduce speeds, traffic accidents and hazard points.	Short-term	X
2) Identify funding and policies to regulate and enforce street parking and commercial vehicle parking regulations in residential areas.	Short- to Medium-term	
3) Reevaluate the roadway network to identify vacancies and underutilized roadways that could become trailways, pedestrian-only plazas or green spaces, or corridors for new real estate opportunities.	Medium-term	
4) Reevaluate and clarify the roadway network to eliminate high speed and cut-through traffic on residential streets through signage, enforcement, and street design.	Medium-term	
5) Reevaluate and clarify the roadway network to mitigate truck traffic on residential streets through signage, enforcement, and communication with associated industry.	Medium-term	

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	COLLABORATION
Objective D – Incorporate innovative micro-mobility options throughout the City that are affordable and accessible for Pontiac residents and visitors.		
1) Promote existing on-demand shuttle services, including the SMART Connector, SMART Flex Rideshare, and People’s Express services, and evaluate the need for additional services and accommodations.	Short-term	X
2) Explore adding local shared, rentable electric transit modes (such as bikes, scooters, or EV vehicles) to increase access to and affordability of vehicles, reduce air pollution, and celebrate Pontiac’s mobility-focused history.	Short-term	



Chapter 7.

Workforce Development

Pontiac is filled with brilliant, hard-working residents, and given its proximity to academic institutions and major employers, has the potential to develop, attract and retain a top-tier workforce. As a people-first approach to economic prosperity, workforce development plays a critical role in planning for the community's collective future by aligning the skills and needs of Pontiac residents with local industries and employment opportunities, thereby fostering economic stability and growth. In practice, workforce development can be carried out through continuing educational courses, targeted skills training, mentoring and coaching, and other career and professional development resources—all of which keep jobs, dollars, and people in Pontiac.

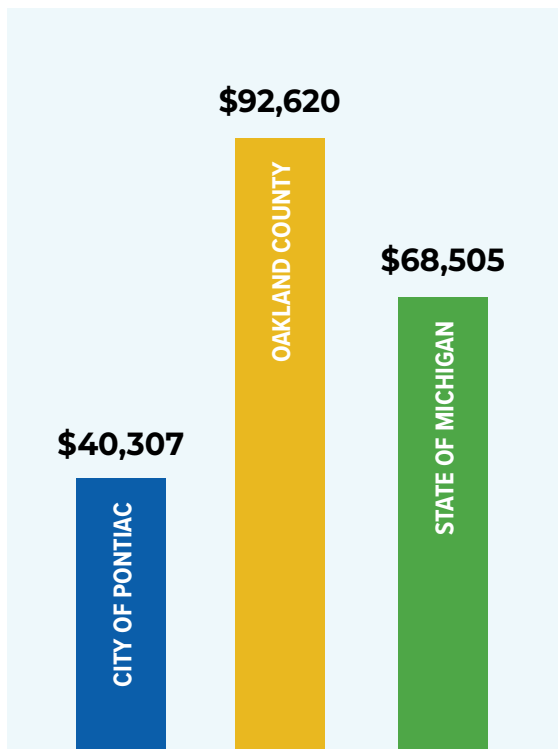
7.1 Findings

Demographics

Income Levels

Pontiac's median household income levels lag in comparison with the County's overall average, as well as the State (see Figure below). Additionally, the median household income for Pontiac has decreased by 2.3% since 2010.

Figure 13. Median Household Income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates

Workforce Data

Based on 2022 American Community Survey estimates for Pontiac, about 47% of Pontiac residents make up the civilian labor force, which can be referred to more commonly as “the workforce”. The civilian labor force is defined as residents at least 16 years of age who are employed and unemployed (including only those not currently employed, but actively seeking work). This group includes those in the desired retirement age (65+) that are working or seeking work, but not those who are currently in retirement. Of this subgroup, 26,178 residents, or 90% of the civilian labor force, are employed. This means that of the total population living in Pontiac, 42% are employed and 58% are unemployed/not in the workforce.

As the birthplace of General Motor's Truck and Bus Division, Pontiac has been, and continues to be, a hub of large employers—including Amazon, United Wholesale Mortgage, McLaren Oakland Hospital, and Oakland County—as well as many industrial sites. The distribution of current industry types among residents in the workforce is shown in Figure 14. Just over half of Pontiac's population is in service work or in production, transportation, and material moving occupations.

Of the workforce, only 25% both live and work in Pontiac. The average travel time to work for Pontiac residents is 21.7 minutes, which means that the average commute of Pontiac's workforce is to an adjacent municipality, in a different Oakland County community, or within a County that abuts Oakland County. Thus, while the commute may not be far, the majority (75%) of the Pontiac workforce commutes outside of the City for employment.

Notably, almost three-quarters of Pontiac's workforce travels to their place of employment in a single-occupancy vehicle, suggesting that there are limited shared or public transit options to key workplaces.

Figure 14. Where People Work

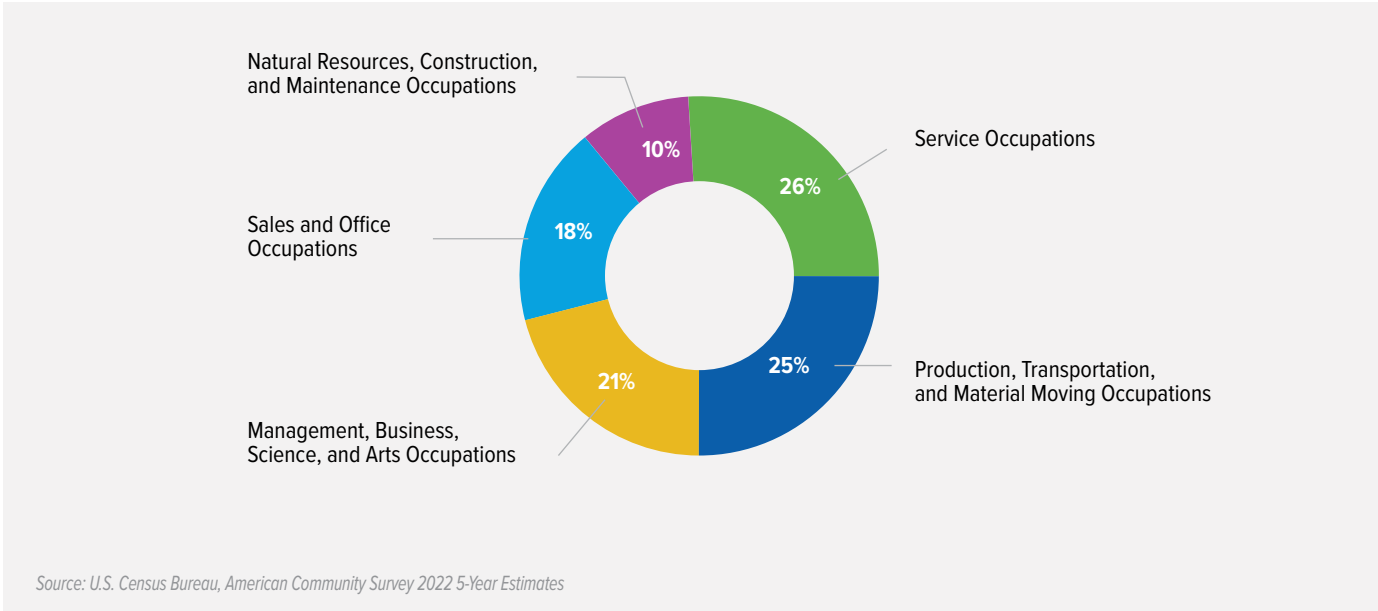


Table 13: Commuting to Work

MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION	WORKFORCE PERCENTAGE (%)
Car, truck, van – drove alone	73%
Car, truck, van – carpoled	18%
Public transportation	0.9%
Walked	2.4%
Other means	2.3%
Worked from home	3%
Mean travel time to work	21.7 minutes

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2018-2022 Estimates

Additionally, a significant number of workers who reside outside of Pontiac commute into the City for work. In fact, there are more commuters that drive into Pontiac for work than there are workers residing in the City of Pontiac. In 2021, 31,553 non-Pontiac residents drove into Pontiac for work. This means that 92.9% of the people who work in Pontiac do not live in Pontiac, and therefore, 92.9% of the jobs in the existing City of Pontiac are held by non-residents.

Figure 15. Commuting Patterns of City of Pontiac Workers, 2014



U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES), Origin-Destination Files, 2021.

Educational Attainment

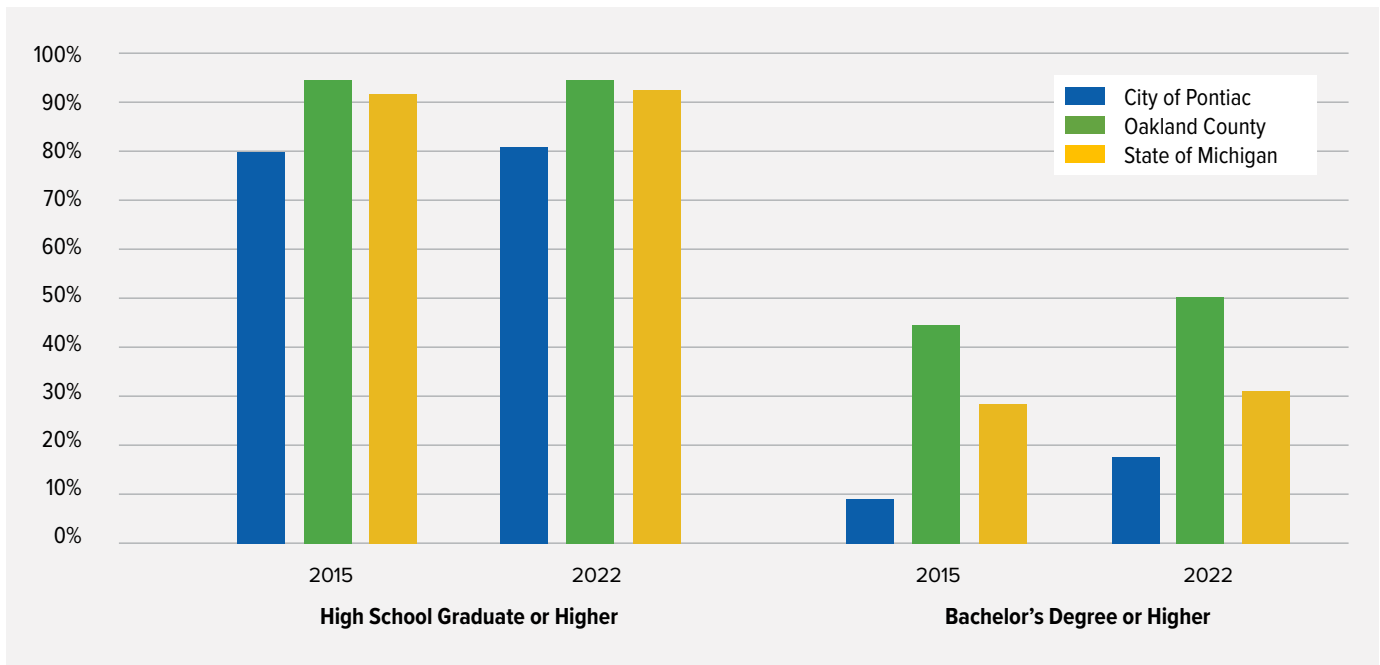
While there has been a slight increase in Pontiac's educational attainment since 2015, the rates of high school graduation and Bachelor's degree attainment are still significantly below the County and State average.

Table 14: Educational Attainment for Population Aged 25 and Over in the City of Pontiac, 2022

	CITY OF PONTIAC	OAKLAND COUNTY	STATE OF MICHIGAN
Population 25 years and over	40,430	903,930	6,938,439
Less than 9th grade	6.0%	1.9%	2.6%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	12.9%	3.4%	5.6%
High school graduate	35.9%	18.0%	28.4%
Some college, no degree	23.4%	18.9%	22.5%
Associate's degree	5.7%	8.3%	9.7%
Bachelor's degree	11.2%	27.9%	18.9%
Graduate or professional degree	4.9%	21.6%	12.2%
High school graduate or higher	81.8%	94.7%	91.8%
Bachelor's degree or higher	16.1%	49.5%	31.1%

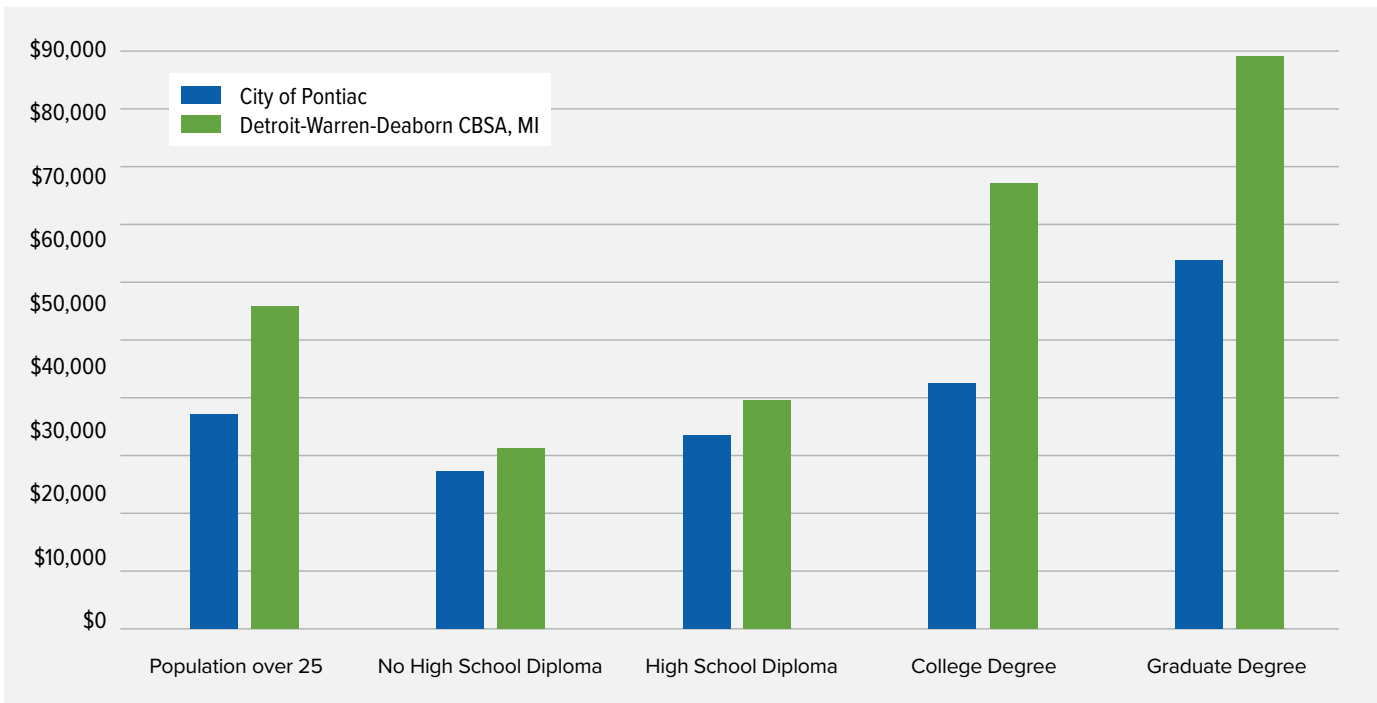
U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates

Figure 16. Education Attainment, 2015 vs 2022



Improvements in educational attainment will be a driving factor in increasing median income levels, as educational attainment and income levels are directly correlated. This is demonstrated in [Figure 17](#), which shows the median earnings of residents based on their highest level of education, both in the City of Pontiac and within the Detroit-Warren-Dearborn region as a whole.

Figure 17. Median Earnings by Educational Attainment, 2022



Access to quality K-12 education is fundamental for a community’s collective educational advancement and workforce development. The Pontiac School District contains 10 schools and approximately 3,400 students. The District has made strides in recent years to increase the diversity and quality of its educational offerings to students, and therefore to promote workforce development, including:

- » **Adult, Alternative, Career and Technical Education (CTE).** An extensive offering of career readiness resources for Pontiac students, including workforce training and work-based learning experience programs, opportunities for dual enrollment to Oakland University and Oakland Community College, ROTC training, and more. Adult education courses are also offered to residents looking to achieve high school completion or acquire a GED.
- » **Accent Pontiac.** A music education program that promotes equitable access to quality music making experiences through regular programming, week-long workshops, field trips and assemblies, and opportunities to join local choirs.
- » **Project Excel.** High quality, educational after-school programming for students in need of care during non-traditional hours.
- » **Parent University.** A community network of parents with students in the Pontiac City School District to forge strong relationships between the City and community, and to engage parents in their students’ academic life.

Despite these improvements, there remains a deficiency in educational performance and skill-building at a young age within the Pontiac School District. Based on recent reporting from the US News & World Report, less than 20% of Pontiac students across elementary, middle, and high school tested at a proficient level for math, and only 30% were proficient in reading. In both cases, the proficiency level for reading and math decreased at high school levels. The purpose of this Master Plan is not to pinpoint the reasons for the low testing levels or the decrease in proficiency in high school; however, it is important to acknowledge as the quality and services of the public education system and higher education are vital to the development and attraction of a highly-skilled, well-educated workforce, and therefore to the future success of the local economy.

Race and Ethnicity

While Oakland County at large is home to majority white constituents, Pontiac is a majority-minority community, meaning the majority of the population belongs to racial and/or ethnic minority groups. Similar to the City of Southfield, Pontiac is one of the few large cities in Oakland County that has a large African American population. Additionally, Pontiac has a growing Hispanic community, which made up 20.6% of Pontiac's population in 2022. To make inclusive and equitable economic advancements for Pontiac residents, systematic inequities of the past and present must be acknowledged and addressed within workforce development. Addressing racial disparities in Pontiac's educational systems, hiring, employment, and capital distribution and access is critical in fostering more equitable, economically productive, and socially cohesive local economies.

Table 15: Race and Ethnicity, 2022

	CITY OF PONTIAC	OAKLAND COUNTY	STATE OF MICHIGAN
Total Population	61,965	1,272,264	10,057,921
White	30.6%	71.8%	80.8%
Black or African American	49.0	13.2%	15.4%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.3%	0.2%	1.6%
Asian	4.0%	8.1%	4.1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%	.10%
Other Race	4.1	1.2%	3.8%
Hispanic or Latino	20.60%	4.80%	5.70%
Non-Hispanic or Latino	79.40%	95.20%	94.30%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2022, 5-Year Estimates (Table DP05)

Engagement

Engaging with Pontiac community members provided the Vision Pontiac Master Plan process with numerous creative ideas for the innovative promotion of existing and future workforce development initiatives across the City. Further, the discussions of pain points, such as income levels, educational attainment, and commuter patterns within the City were heard in the narratives shared during public engagement sessions. For example, while the majority of Pontiac-based jobs are held by non-residents, many existing residents experience difficulty accessing the necessary training for, and therefore getting hired to, these positions.

Additional emphasis was expressed by residents across the following priorities for workforce development:

- » Address information and communication gaps between residents and educational and employment resources.
- » Improve upon collaborative economic development, workforce development, and community partnerships, and ensure that the City serves as a key partner.
- » Help align skills with evolving industry needs for emerging and transitioning workers.
- » Address and provide access to the resources that active and potential workers require to fully participate in the local economy (housing, child care, startup/entrepreneurial funds and space, etc.).
- » Foster an inclusive and resilient workforce, including returning or formerly incarcerated citizens.
- » Provide post-education and skills training, bolster public education, and improve access to OCC, Oakland University, and trade schools.
- » Administer additional programming and support to K-12 students and teachers, young professionals, and the existing workforce.



Multiple generations of Pontiac residents stop to share a photo (Source: City of Pontiac)



Word Cloud on Workforce Development from a Steering Committee conversation.

7.2

Workforce Empowerment

Job Training, Education & Income

Levels of skills training and educational attainment are strongly related to income level. As higher levels of skills training and education are obtained, median household income and buying- and investment-power will increase. Currently, there are a number of initiatives at the State, County, and municipal level to administer training and improve employment opportunities. However, further awareness, access, and support is needed to enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives. Notable job training assistance programs include the following:



» **Michigan Works!** A statewide program supported by the State of Michigan and federal funds to connect those looking for work with employment opportunities, job search support, and training services.



» **Pure Michigan Talent Connect.** A statewide program aiming to support employers in Michigan in finding employment candidates by facilitating connections and offering professional development opportunities.



» **Center for Employment Opportunities.** A country-wide program that offers individuals returning from incarceration and re-entering the workforce with job-readiness training, transitional employment, job coaching and placement, and retention services to promote well-being, stability, and social, financial, and personal resilience.



» **Goodwill of Greater Detroit's Flip the Script, Opportunity Center.** A non-profit organization dedicated to fostering second chances for individuals who are either unemployed, underemployed, or justice-involved. Flip the Script has locations in Wayne and Oakland counties, providing educational and workforce development services to help individuals overcome employment barriers, get back on their feet and build a better future. Program participants receive life skills and professional work training as well as the opportunity to receive paid on-the-job training at one of Goodwill of Greater Detroit's nonprofits.



» **Michigan AFL-CIO Workforce Development Institute.** A non-profit organization that seeks to combat economic and environmental injustice by connecting the unemployed or underemployed with the training and resources necessary to find employment while transitioning Michigan to a green economy.

Educational Investment

The Pontiac community has made significant investments in high education for Pontiac students. . In particular, Pontiac Promise Zone provides financial support—including tuition scholarships and book reimbursement—for qualifying students within the Pontiac School District, including those who wish to attend any college or university in Michigan, trade school, or certificate program. The Pontiac Promise Zone reduces barriers to higher education, boosts wealth creation and job readiness within the City, and uniquely serves current and future Pontiac families.

Additionally, further investment and supplemental support is needed for the Pontiac School District and its students. One such supplemental program would be a more robust mentorship program, wherein each high school student is paired with a professional in a field of work in which they are interested. This would aid in job awareness and networking as well as the development of soft skills for high school students. Community organizations, such as Sherrell & Sherrell and the Talent Development Coalition (TDC), already offer apprenticeship and mentorship opportunities; with more robust infrastructure, networks, and engagement with the City, Pontiac teachers, and local parents, programming like this could roll out at a District-wide level.

Furthermore, having access to lifelong learning and training is another important component of income mobility and employment opportunities. Industries have and will continue to emerge and evolve, and having a workforce that can adapt and transition with the economy—or even ahead of the economy—is essential for economic prosperity. Emerging markets currently in the region and the State of Michigan include the renewable energy sector, technology, and data analytics, while healthcare continues to be an evolving field of work. Having dedicated places or information channels with opportunities for upskilling or reskilling for residents is important for a healthy workforce and a request that emerged frequently during this Master Plan public engagement process.

Wealth Creation

A key outcome of impactful workforce development is wealth creation for residents and Pontiac-based businesses. In this context, wealth creation can be defined as opportunities for residents to increase financial earnings and opportunities, obtain financial stability, and build generational wealth. There are a number of ways to increase financial health and generational wealth, across all sectors of society; pertinent to workforce development in Pontiac are actions to uplift residents and allow for ownership opportunities on the individual level and as well as at the community scale.

On an individual level, wealth creation can be achieved through access to capital to support local businesses and entrepreneurs. One way the City can have a role in this is by ensuring access to financial literacy classes, discussing topics such as budgeting, credit management, investment, retirement planning as well as programs to improve credit scores and open access to lending opportunities and other banking services. Additionally, access to low-to-no-cost financial planning workshops, mentorship programs, and other startup services, such as work spaces and marketing support catered to entrepreneurship, can be extremely useful for new small business owners in the early stages of business development.

Residents must be made aware of these opportunities and have easy, affordable access to these services. Having designated and well-advertised spaces, such as business incubators, co-working spaces, shared artisan maker spaces, or startup/pop-up retail spaces can remove barriers to entry for new business owners while fostering entrepreneurial networks of support. The City can be a partner in actively creating these spaces or helping to promote them.



Pontiac's Youth learning to work with their hands. (Source: Pontiac City Hall)

On a community scale, wealth creation can take the form of skills training or upskilling, as discussed, where residents are provided with professional development opportunities to best prepare them for employment in lucrative local sectors. Further, wealth creation must also involve opportunities for property ownership, community land trusts, strategic industry growth, and public-private partnerships that stimulate economic activity and invest in the community. Creating policies and opportunities that encourage local land ownership is favorable for local wealth creation. For example, when selling City-owned land, whether it be commercially- or residentially-zoned properties, it is beneficial towards wealth creation goals to establish a transparent and accessible process that prioritizes residents or local affiliates in the competitive process rather than favoring the highest bidder without filters. Additionally, as the City looks to recruit employers or attract industries, establishing criteria or community benefit agreements that would offer training, advancement opportunities, and competitive compensation to Pontiac residents is another way to contribute to local wealth creation.

Furthermore, the City should create opportunities to highlight Pontiac's unique assets in a way that stimulates the economy and offers local wealth creation opportunities. Pontiac has a rich history, unique historic assets and buildings, and cultural diversity that could engage residents, draw visitors, and amplify Pontiac as a destination. As an example, the City has the opportunity to make concerted efforts to support, showcase, and uplift Black- and Hispanic-owned businesses through the creation of cultural-commercial districts, and by amplifying the work of culturally-affiliated business associations. Coordinated marketing efforts to support these initiatives would be vital for the success of these initiatives.

Job Access & Transit

As noted in the above market demographics, Pontiac currently experiences a reverse commuting pattern in the workforce. This means that the majority of the residents commute outside of Pontiac, and the majority of jobs inside City limits are held by non-residents.

Given that this is the current trend, to alleviate short-term burdens of a "commuter town dynamic", further attention should be given to public transportation options to connect people to their jobs. As it is now, less than 1% of the workforce relies on public transportation for their commute. This is often due to the inconvenience or lack of transit connections and should be further explored. Further analysis and engagement, in partnership with SMART, is needed to re-evaluate routes, especially regional routes, to alleviate traffic burdens and the need to have a personal vehicle to access employment options.

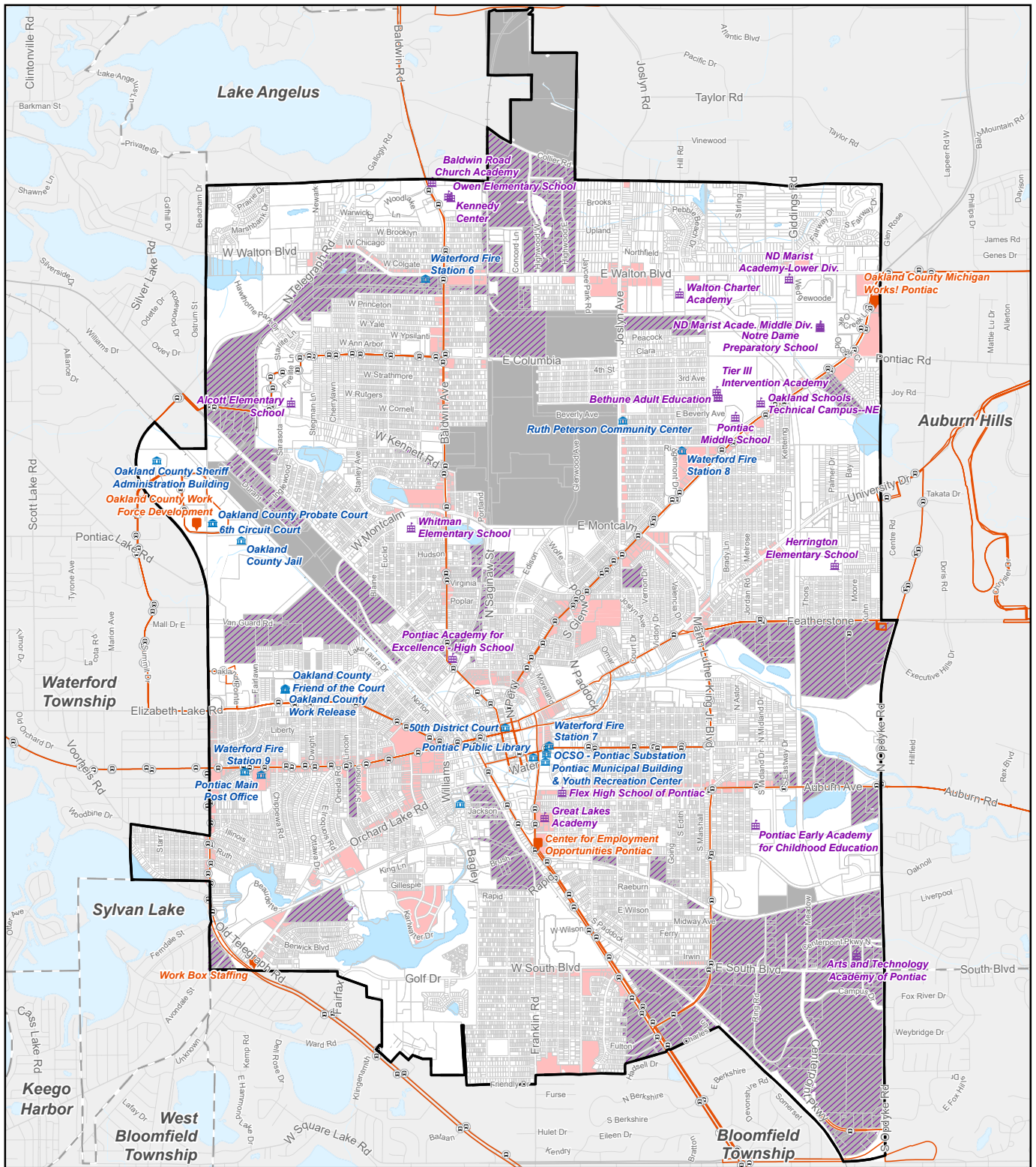
Further attention must also be given to transit connections for residents to be able to access higher education campuses such as Oakland Community College and Oakland University as well as trade skill centers in the County to ensure regular access without having to rely on a personal vehicle.

7.3

Workforce Development Opportunities Map

In recent years, Pontiac has made concerted efforts to develop and administer job training, coaching, and placement services. However, throughout the public engagement events, residents expressed frustration around the difficulty of hearing about and accessing these employment support opportunities. On the other hand, there are challenges in getting residents to attend workforce training events. The following map seeks to begin to bridge this gap by marking notable educational facilities and employment support like MI Works and Center for Employment Opportunities as well as connecting bus routes. Importantly, numerous major corridors are linked to employment resources and opportunities, but lack SMART bus routes.

In addition to these visual representations of workforce development support across the region, a prominent, Pontiac-based location for workforce development opportunities could help to improve the communication with and awareness of residents. The City of Pontiac must focus on developing dedicated, well-resourced, and highly-publicized spaces and contacts for workforce development opportunities.



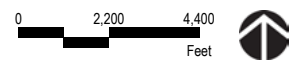
Map 9. Workforce Development Opportunities

City of Pontiac, Michigan

January 3, 2025 - Draft

Legend

- Future Land Use Category
 - Neighborhood Mixed Use
 - Research and Development Campus
 - Industrial
- Workforce Development Site
- Government Facility
- Educational Facility
- SMART Stops
- SMART Route



Basemap Source: MCGI, v. 17a.
Data Source: City of Pontiac 2024,
Oakland County GIS 2024,
McKenna 2024.



7.4

Workforce Development Action Plan

Core Finding and Metric

To improve access to information and opportunities for educational advancements and employment for now and into the future, the following goal statement was co-developed and validated by the Pontiac community:

Core Finding: Address barriers to maintaining an adaptable and prepared workforce, and develop and maintain an effective communication network between businesses and residents to facilitate access to educational and employment opportunities.

Based on this goal and key engagement finding, success in Workforce Development advancements will be measured by the following 2040 metric:

Metric: Growth in median city income that outpaces the growth of the State median income and the rate of inflation.

Action Plan

The overarching goal statement for workforce development will be approached and achieved through the use of a Strategic Action Plan. The Strategic Action Plan shared in this Chapter is based on City and State goals as well as programming, emerging trends, and input received from the Pontiac community. It serves as a roadmap to set better coordination between key stakeholders to make improvements in the prosperity and opportunities for residents. This Action Plan for workforce development cannot be achieved solely by City programs, staff, and officials; Collaboration between key entities and educational institutions will be imperative to making advancements and achieving the goals, objectives, and action items set forth in this Action Plan. The key partners and stakeholders identified at this time include, but are not limited to the following: Educational Institutions. Pontiac School District (K-12 education); Oakland Community College (OCC); Oakland University (OU); OU Preschool Program; Trade Schools

- » **State-Level Entities.** Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC); Michigan Development of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO)
- » **Regional Resources.** Oakland County Economic Development & Community Affairs; Oakland County Habitat for Humanity; Michigan Works!
- » **Existing Industry Leaders in Pontiac.** Automotive; Distribution; Construction; Finance and Healthcare Sector; United Wholesale Mortgage; Trinity Health and McLaren; Amazon; Williams International
- » **Potential Industry Leaders.** Technology, Research, and Renewable Energy Sector

The Action Plan includes a series of objectives with their order set in terms of their priority, highest to lowest, based on input received from the November Open House. Below each objective are action items with a recommended timeline consisting of short-term (1-2 years), medium-term (3-5 years), and long-term (5+ years) commitments.

Goal Statement for Workforce Development

Develop and maintain an effective communication network between local businesses/employers and residents to facilitate access to educational and employment opportunities and address barriers to maintaining an adaptable and prepared workforce.

Objectives and Action Items Table

To accomplish the goal stated above, the following objectives and corresponding action items should be pursued:

OBJECTIVES / ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME	COLLABORATION
Objective A – Ensure access to resources and educational opportunities that meet current and future industry needs, foster economic growth, and promote equitable opportunities for all members of the community to participate in the local economy, such as entrepreneurial spaces, bilingual training, support for those with addictions and returning citizens, etc.		
1) Coordinate resources for the creation of an entrepreneurial, startup businesses.	Medium-term	X
2) Bolster continuing education opportunities for formerly incarcerated residents re-entering society and the workforce.	Medium-term	X
3) Work with community organizations to ensure there are resources and job opportunities for those experiencing substance abuse challenges and addictions.	Medium-term	X
4) Work with Pontiac schools, employers, and other community organizations to coordinate apprenticeship programs, with a special focus on at-risk youth.	Medium-term	X
5) Work with community organizations to host language classes.	Medium-term	X
6) Offer incentives or seek sponsorships from local employers to support continuing education programs offered by the City / Pontiac School District / Oakland Community College.	Medium-term	X
Objective B – Orient job training and funding opportunities to focus on trade skills.		
1) Work with partners to host home repair trainings and funding opportunities for residents in the areas of Pontiac with the greatest need of housing repairs and energy efficiency improvements.	Short-term	X
2) Seek grant and philanthropic funding and scholarships to support residents pursuing healthcare jobs, culinary education, carpentry, construction, and other skilled trades.	Short-term	X
3) Create or support a community partner organization in opening an incubator workspace or shared retail space/market for independent, small local businesses.	Short-term	X
Objective C – Increase business diversity and small business ownership downtown and along commercial corridors.		
1) Coordinate efforts to dedicate a space for a Pontiac Economic Hub, offering small business development support and mentorship programs.	Short-term	X
2) Explore nontraditional leasing structures to promote pop-ups, entrepreneurial coworking and shared retail spaces, and mixed-use buildings with workforce housing.	Short-term	X
3) Create or support a community partner organization in opening an incubator workspace or shared retail space/market for independent, small local businesses.	Short-term	X

OBJECTIVES / ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME	COLLABORATION
Objective D – Explore partnerships to offer continuing education and certification opportunities that align with the emerging industries and employment opportunities.		
1) Capture emerging markets and job opportunities in Pontiac by assembling stakeholder groups to roll-out job trainings on renewable energy technologies (solar, wind, energy storage, home weatherization/electrification).	Short-term	X
2) Partner with community colleges, technical schools, and workforce development agencies to design a curriculum focused on energy-efficient housing repair skills (e.g. insulation installation, air sealing, roofing, and HVAC system improvements).	Short-term	X
3) Work with local universities and State agencies to be responsive to and prepare for large-scale, upcoming employment opportunities, as projects or new employers emerge, by hosting job trainings.	Medium-term	X
4) Work with Oakland Community College and other County and State entities to develop specialized programs that address the evolving needs of the automotive sector, such as electric vehicles and autonomous technologies.	Medium-term	X
5) Establish and support a community housing network to offer financial and credit score improvement training, as well as housing and home repair assistance.	Medium-term	X
Objective E – Administer outreach and engagement campaigns and establish a reliable communication channel to effectively promote workforce development opportunities.		
1) Add announcements related to workforce development and hiring opportunities at regularly scheduled meetings, such as Council meetings.	Ongoing	X
2) Partner with Michigan Works! to create an online portal connected to the City's website to connect people seeking employment with hiring and training opportunities.	Short-term	X
3) Partner with the Pontiac Public School District to allow for shadowing opportunities at City Hall and at County-level Offices.	Short-term	X
4) Assemble new or uplift an existing task force of employers and educational program coordinators to strategize and roll out coordinated efforts to improve outreach, hiring, skill-building, apprenticeships/internships and other educational programs for residents. This task force shall be the conduit between the City, employers, and residents seeking employment or training opportunities.	Short- to Medium-term	X
5) Connect community development organizations and the University / College community services with Pontiac High School to administer a robust mentorship program that matches high school seniors with professional of their desired professions.	Medium-term	X
Objective F – Address barriers to residents entering and staying in the workforce.		
1) Advocate for and seek State resources to supplement the cost of child care services to keep rates affordable.	Ongoing	X
2) Re-evaluate zoning designations and barriers to child care centers to ensure there is adequate access to child care.	Short-term	X
3) Ensure readily available and timely transit lines to employment and continuing education opportunities, including but not limited to Oakland Community College and Oakland University.	Short-term	X
4) Conduct further research to understand factors in local employee retention challenges and opportunities.	Short-term	X
5) Facilitate public-private partnerships to develop housing for the workforce and allow for housing in close proximity to large employers.	Medium-term	X
6) Explore a Community Benefit Ordinance as means to require training, employment opportunities, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives.	Medium-term	X



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